UNIVERSITY OF YORK

SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2017

Present: The Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor D Smith
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning & Students), Professor J Robinson
Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning & Students), Professor T Lightfoot
Dean (Social Sciences), Professor S Bell
Dean (Arts & Humanities), Professor J Buchanan
Dean (Graduate Research School), Professor T Stoneham
The Director of the International Pathways College, Dr M Perry
The Director of Information Services, Mrs H Fraser-Krauss

Professor N Audsley
Professor L Black
Professor D Brown
Dr E Brown
Professor D Bruce
Dr T Cantrell
Ms C Chamberlain (GSA President)
Professor I Davies
Professor A Field
Professor M Freeman
Professor K Gibson
Professor M Goddard
Professor I Graham
Dr J Hardman
Professor A Higson
Professor M Hodson
Professor J Hudson
Professor C Hunter

Professor P Johnson
Dr S O'Keefe
Dr S King
Dr O Lisagor
Professor M Nazarov
Dr F Polack
Mr J Porch (SU Academic Officer)
Dr M Roodhouse
Professor J Schofield
Professor H Smith
Professor M Smith
Mr C Stickels (student faculty rep)
Professor J Swaffield
Mr A Urquhart (SU President)
Dr J Wardman
Ms H Weatherley
Ms B Wright (student faculty rep)

In attendance: Registrar & Secretary, Ms J Horsburgh
Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Officer, Ms H Brian
Planning & Governance Administrator, Ms B Carter Ellis
Deputy Academic Registrar, Ms V Cotter
University Governance Officer, Dr P Evans

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Apologies for absence were received from the Pro-Vice Chancellor/Partnerships & Knowledge Exchange (Professor J Timmis), the Dean/Sciences (Professor B Fulton), the Finance Director (Mr J Lindley), the Academic Registrar (Mrs K Dodd), Professor K Atkin, Dr K Attwood, Professor Y Birks, Professor M Burton, Professor N Mackay, Professor U Macleod, Professor G Richardson, Professor L Stewart, Professor A Tyrrell, Professor S Velani, Professor M White and Mr M Worrall (student faculty rep).

17-18/1 Membership

Senate noted its terms of reference as set out in the Charter/Statutes, the ‘Statement of Primary Responsibilities’ and its annual cycle of business (S.17-18/1).

As it was the first meeting of the 2017/18 academic session, the Vice-Chancellor welcomed new members.

17-18/2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2017 (S.17-18/2) were approved.

17-18/3 Academic Promotions Review

Further to M16-17/S4, Senate considered a further report on academic titles and the role of Reader (S.17-18/3).

Presenting the report as Chair of the review group, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor reported that further consultation via written comments and focus groups had confirmed consensus on the role of Reader, while a wider range of views had been expressed about academic titles (specifically as regards the Assistant/Associate Professor title). It was also reported that the review group would be undertaking further work to articulate more clearly the requirements of the Reader role and how it differed from a professorial role.

In response to a query on the appropriateness of Research Fellows being able to adopt the hybrid Assistant/Associate Professor title, there was general support for this proposal in the context of the wide ranging role of such Fellows and how the title could support their activities in some areas (e.g. grant applications, conference attendance etc). It was also noted that the hybrid professorial title could be used in recruitment, if this was deemed appropriate in the context of the post in question.

Following discussion Senate approved the recommendations in respect of:

(a) voluntary adoption of hybrid/alternate titles (Assistant/Associate Professor);
(b) continuation of the role of Reader.

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Further to M16-17/55, Senate received a presentation from the Director of Estates and Campus Services (Stephen Talboys) on progress to develop the campus masterplan (S.17-18/4).

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) The concept of ‘gateways’ to Campuses West and East related to the development of clearly signposted arrival points for a range of people, including external visitors. Enhanced transport/parking arrangements for Campus East would also be considered in collaboration with the city council (including in respect of the unusually high volume of traffic during the undergraduate arrival weekend).

(b) Reference to student residences, as opposed to colleges, related to the need to distinguish between accommodation units of different sizes (e.g. smaller ones which might be annexed to existing colleges). The terminology “residence” was being used in the current procurement process for new student accommodation and a decision had not yet been taken as to whether the accommodation would constitute a new college or be part of an existing one. The University remained committed to the original collegiate concept in which spaces for academic and student life were clustered together for greater staff/student interaction, while also acknowledging that new residence blocks were likely to be separate buildings (often due to the funding arrangements with external partners). The new masterplan framework would also be designed to support inter-disciplinary working and respond flexibly to contemporary educational/pedagogic developments.

(c) Detailed consideration had not yet been given to the currently undeveloped eastern side of Campus East, although the site would provide opportunities in the later years of the plan. The initial priorities for development would be the new student residences on Campus East and development of an improved gateway to Campus West via University Road.

(d) It was likely that some form of student hub shared by the student associations and University facilities would emerge as a key point in further consultation, acknowledging that at other universities such shared facilities were a focal point for campus life.

(e) The intention was to retain some CLASP buildings, partly as a statement about the history of the original campus design concept, but with considerable refurbishment and re-purposing of the current buildings.

(f) In terms of the overarching timescale, the plan extended over twenty years but was likely to be delivered in five-yearly phases, in accordance with operational and financial constraints.
(g) As regards the key planning assumptions set out in the Director’s report (e.g. in respect of the teaching timetable), these would be further discussed with academic departments as the framework was developed further.

17-18/5 Repeat Study for Undergraduates

Further to M16-17/57, Senate received a report on the further consultation that had been undertaken with academic departments on the proposal to allow undergraduates failing to progress from Stage 1 to repeat the teaching and assessment of that Stage (S.17-18/5). It was noted that, following approval by the Vice-Chancellor via Chair’s Action on behalf of Senate, a pilot of the new arrangements would be undertaken for two entry cohorts, with an evaluation in Autumn 2018.

The Chair of the Standing Committee on Assessment (Dr Steve King) outlined the different options that had been considered to address the concerns expressed by some departments, with associated new rules added to the Guide to Assessment. It was also noted, in accordance with the original proposal, departments could apply to the University Teaching Committee for an exception to the repeat-study scheme. The termly forum for Chairs of Boards of Examiners would also provide an opportunity for feedback on the implementation of the new arrangements.

17-18/6 Appointments to Committees

Further to M16-17/61, Senate noted committee appointments approved by the Vice-Chancellor under Chair’s Action and also the members nominated by Faculty Executive Groups to serve on the Academic Promotions Committee, in accordance with the recommendations arising from the academic promotions review in 2016/17 (S.17-18/6).

17-18/7 Vice-Chancellor’s Report

In accordance with the Senate Effectiveness Review in 2016/17, Senate received a written report from the Vice-Chancellor (S.17-18/7) covering the following topics:

- current year’s student recruitment round
- REF2021
- TEF
- campus masterplan (M17-18/4 above also refers)
- finance strategy
- planning and budgeting process
- online learning
- collaboration with Maastricht University
- government Science and Innovation Audit
- new senior appointments

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During discussion the following additional matters were noted:

(a) Inappropriate behaviour by some York students at the start of term had received coverage in local and national media, exposing the University to reputational risk. Matters were being dealt with via internal disciplinary procedures and, in one case, by the police. The Vice-Chancellor reported that the University would collaborate with YUSU to reinforce messaging to all students on the kinds of behaviours that were unacceptable and would not be condoned.

(b) In the context of Brexit, analysis of staff data had confirmed that more EU staff had arrived at the University than had left, which had not been the case at other institutions and provided some reassurance as regards effective messaging to prospective staff and students. In response to queries in respect of the figures and trends for research staff, international (non-EU) staff and application (as opposed to appointment) rates, it was decided that a full update, broken down by category, would be submitted for information to the next meeting.

17-18/8 National Student Survey 2017

Senate considered a report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning & Students) on the 2017 National Student Survey (S.17-18/8).

Presenting the report, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor drew attention to the following points:

- emphasis in the report on departmental responses and plans, as a means of sharing good practice;
- reduced weighting of NSS scores in future TEF assessments (with the latter consequently becoming more a measure of employability outcomes, M17-18/11 below also refers);
- implications of the benchmarking element of TEF, which counter-acted the University’s strong absolute performance in some measures;
- institutional trends in satisfaction and sector ranking since 2012;
- reduction in satisfaction with Teaching on My Course following the introduction of a new question (“my course has challenged me to achieve my best work”), with implications for further developmental activity relating to learning gain;
- relatively high aggregated University performance when compared to the Russell Group;
- variance in departmental performance (some sustained, others improving or slipping in the rankings), with additional direct support to be targeted in the coming year for some departments;
- weaker institutional performance in the three newly included dimensions (Learning Opportunities, Learning Community and Student Voice) to be subject to further analysis in collaboration with YUSU;

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➢ Further work required to deliver the target of comprehensive excellence across all dimensions in all departments (as demonstrated by Table 1 in the report showing the sector quartile position for York subjects).

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) It was expected that with its emphasis on programme design and student work the new institutional pedagogy would in due course facilitate improvements in the new dimensions of the survey.

(b) Particular attention would be paid to unpicking the possible reasons for the markedly lower score in the new Student Voice dimension (sector ranking 49th), especially as this related to institutional and departmental responsiveness to student feedback, which had been the subject of a targeted campaign in recent years (‘You Said, We Did’).

Following discussion, the Vice-Chancellor commented that overall the University was making progress in the right direction with its sector ranking improving from ≈25th to 17th, and thanks were offered to departments for their work to drive continuous improvement of the student academic experience.

17-18/9 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2017

Senate considered a report on the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2017 (S.17-18/9).

Presenting the report, the Dean of the Graduate Research School (Professor Tom Stoneham) reminded Senate that the survey was a voluntary, biennial, cross-cohort survey run by the Higher Education Academy (HEA), and that there were specific guidelines on external use of its results. The following points were also noted:

➢ Although the relatively low response rate (33%) did not affect the overall institutional result, the data for some departments was based on relatively low numbers.
➢ For the first time an analysis of the outcome by faculty had been undertaken (Appendix 3 to the report refers).
➢ The University had achieved the highest score in the Russell Group in a number of dimensions and individual questions, including for Overall Experience. It had also achieved the highest score in the sector in respect of Research Culture.
➢ With regard to comments on progression and clarity around the role of Thesis Advisory Panels (TAPs), this matter would be addressed in student handbooks and improved communications.
➢ There had been a decline under the heading Resources, with some negative reporting in respect of specialist library resources, particularly in the Arts and Humanities.
➢ In the area of professional development it was important to note that RCUK emphasised the key role to be played by supervisors.
Work would be undertaken to ensure that all PGRs undertaking teaching/demonstrating had received formal training, in accordance with University policy.

The survey had identified a number of areas of specific focus for the Graduate Research School (GRS) during the coming year, including broadening engagement with centrally provided professional development and career planning for the contemporary workplace.

Although not explicitly referenced in the survey, the important role of the Graduate Students’ Association was acknowledged in representing the postgraduate student voice and fostering a sense that PGRs were supported and valued.

On behalf of Senate the Vice-Chancellor offered thanks and congratulations to the GRS and PhD supervisors generally for the successful outcome.

17-18/10  
League Table Update

Senate considered a report on the University’s current league table rankings (S.17-18/10).

Attending the meeting to present the report, the Acting Director of Corporate Planning (Alistair Knock) drew attention to the small year-on-year improvements in the main domestic tables (Times, Guardian, Complete) and the decline in the more volatile international tables (QS, Times Higher). The following points were also noted:

- Of the twenty-eight York subjects appearing in the Guardian table (including medicine), nine appeared in the top ten nationally.
- As the Guardian table was, unusually, derived from the subject scores, one approach could be to drive improved performance against specific metrics in chosen departments, in order to improve the overall institutional score.
- A range of enhancement activities were underway in relation to league tables, with a detailed action-plan currently being developed by External Relations and Business Intelligence.
- The University’s anomalously low scores in HESA data for ‘value added’ were subject to further analysis.
- Relative performance indicators and sectoral benchmarking were now an integral part of the annual planning process.
- For the wide range of different reasons set out in the paper, it was clear that there would be much greater movement and turbulence in league tables in the coming years.

17-18/11  
Destination of Leavers from Higher Education

Senate considered a report on the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education in 2015/16 (S.17-18/11).
Attending the meeting to present the report, the Director of Employability and Careers (Tom Banham) highlighted the following points:

- The overall outcome was positive, which was important in the context of the strong and growing emphasis on employability outcomes in the TEF assessment (following the reduced weighting of the NSS element).
- Departments had collaborated effectively with Careers to improve the data collection for the survey.
- There had been a fairly significant increase of 3.2% in further study (from 21% to 24.2%), possibly as the result of the new availability of postgraduate loans.
- There had been positive improvements in almost all departments, as reflected in the Times Graduate Prospects table in which the University had moved from 43rd to 23rd.
- PGR results were particularly impressive (95% positive outcomes) compared to first degree students.
- In terms of student characteristics, higher degree classification and completion of placement years continued to have a significant positive impact.
- The data provided by the new Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) survey confirmed York’s strong performance (2nd in the RG for sustained employment and further study after one and three years), but also implied that the University might be stronger at preparing graduates for further study than for employment. Average median salary was another metric in this new dataset where York graduates were not performing as well as competitors (mid/bottom end of the RG).

In discussion it was noted that the reported introduction of a new grade inflation metric into the TEF might introduce a degree of tension with the employability metric that confirmed the positive impact of higher degree classifications (although the correlation was somewhat confounded by the fact that some students achieved employment before receiving their final degree results).

### 17-18/12 Student Employability Strategy

Senate considered the Student Employability Strategy (S.17-18/12).

The Director of Employability and Careers reported that the strategy had undergone wide consultation, including with employers, and sought to focus on new activities rather than simply providing a catalogue of the available opportunities. There was also linkage with other relevant strategies (e.g. equality, diversity and inclusion) to ensure that the strategy reached all students, including those who might not ordinarily engage with employability. Senate noted the three key objectives, including the ‘York Futures’ element which aimed to bring together all the available development activities, and also the summary ‘infographic’ presentation of the strategy, which had been welcomed by employers and confirmed the overarching target outcome (i.e. to be in the top ten for employment outcomes across all league table metrics by 2022).
During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) Further consideration would be given to promoting study abroad experience as it was known to have positive impact on graduate outcomes.

(b) In terms of the types of employers providing placements and the relation of this to the University’s ethical values (e.g. in respect of sustainability), it was ultimately the choice of students as adults to decide which sort of employers they chose to engage with.

Senate approved the Student Employability Strategy 2017-22.

17-18/13 Business from Committees

Senate noted and approved business from the following committee meetings (S.17-18/13):

- Teaching Committee: 5 October 2017
- Research Committee: 27 September 2017
- Planning Committee: 5 July and 27 September 2017
- International Committee: 27 June 2017
- HYMS Joint Senate Committee: 26 July 2017

17-18/14 Amendments to Regulation 2 (Research Degree Awards)

Senate approved minor amendments to Regulation 2 in respect of research degree awards (S.17-18/14).

17-18/15 Periodic Review Reports

Senate received for information periodic review reports in respect of the Departments of Physics, Mathematics, Economics and Language & Linguistic Science (S.16-17/8).

17-18/16 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 30 January 2018 at 2.15pm.