UNIVERSITY OF YORK

SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 October 2016

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
Dean (Sciences), Professor B Fulton
Dean (Social Sciences), Professor S Bell
Director of Information Services, Mrs H Fraser-Krauss

Dr R Aitken                      Dr G Hurst
Professor E Annandale            Ms R Ibrahim (GSA President)
Professor K Atkin                Ms M Lewis (student rep)
Professor D Attwell              Professor J MacBryde
Ms M Beach (SL President)        Professor N Mackay
Professor Y Birks                Professor W McGuire
Professor L Black                Professor K Mumford
Professor D Brown                Professor M Nazarov
Dr E Brown                      Dr S O’Keefe
Professor D Bruce               Dr F Polack
Professor C Dytham                Dr G Richardson
Dr D Efird                      Professor J Schofield
Professor N Ellison              Mr T Shutt (student rep)
Professor A Field                Professor L Stewart
Professor M Freeman              Professor Q Summerfield
Professor K Gibson               Professor J Swaffield
Professor M Goddard              Dr R Vann
Dr J Hardman                   Professor S Velani
Mr M Hodges (student rep)        Mr G Wall
Professor M Hodson              Dr R Waites
Professor C Hunter

In attendance: Registrar & Secretary, Dr D Duncan
Academic Registrar, Mrs K Dodd
Governance Officer, Dr P Evans
Dean of Graduate Research School, Professor T Stoneham
SU Academic Officer, Ms T Laycock
VC Executive Officer, Ms H Brian

Senate: 18 October 2016
Apologies for absence were received from Professor I D’Amico, Dr K Attwood, Professor J Clark, Professor A Higson, Professor M Ormrod, Professor T Sheldon, Dr B Szczepk Reed, Professor J Timmis, Professor S Thompson and Professor M White.

16-17/1 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.16-17/1).

As it was the first meeting of the 2016/17 academic session, the Vice-Chancellor welcomed new members.

16-17/2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2016 were approved.

16-17/3 Appointments to Committees

Further to M15-16/47, Senate noted committee appointments approved by the Vice-Chancellor under Chair’s Action and also the outcome of the ballot for membership of the Promotions, Research and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committees (S.16-17/2).

16-17/4 Statement by the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor reported the following matters:

➢ Thanks were offered to all staff who had contributed to the successful student recruitment round for 2016/17. As a consequence of the improved financial position, the University Executive Board (UEB) had decided to lift the four-month hold on staff recruitment.

➢ Professor Tracy Lightfoot (Health Sciences) had been appointed to the newly created post of Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching, Learning & Students. A new Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Partnerships & Knowledge Exchange would shortly be recruited.

➢ Brexit remained a matter of considerable uncertainty and concern. Further details were provided in respect of the main issues for the University, including the future of EU and international student numbers; the status of current EU staff and future recruitment of
international staff; potential loss of research income (11% currently from EU sources); and general economic uncertainty (e.g. in respect of pension liabilities and the value of sterling). The Vice-Chancellor reported on his participation in Russell Group visits to meet key individuals in Brussels (such as the President of the European Research Council) and on other activities by UUK that sought to influence the government’s future negotiating position on areas relevant to higher education.

- The University was considering how it might best respond to the recent government policy announcement that universities wishing to charge higher fees would be required either to establish a new school or sponsor an existing underperforming school. As it already had strong links with a number of schools through its widening participation activities, the University would be seeking to make a positive contribution to this new agenda.

- Following the Stern Review, a consultation would shortly be launched in respect of the Research Excellence Framework (REF), with details of the assessment framework to be published in July 2017, submissions in November 2020 and results published in December 2021.

- The University had publicly confirmed that it would participate in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2, for which the application deadline is December 2016 (for fees relating to student entry in Autumn 2018). The TEF assessment panels had been announced and these would report their institutional ratings (gold, silver or bronze) in April 2017.

- The Higher Education and Research Bill had passed through the committee stage and was expected to be scrutinised in the House of Lords early in 2017, with an expectation that it would enter into law around March 2017. The key risk arising from the Bill was the potential loss of market share to new private providers in certain low-cost subject areas.

- The further development of distance learning provision, an element of the University Strategy, was underway through a tendering process for a preferred partner. It was expected that a partner would shortly be appointed following assessment of the six bids submitted, which would then lead to development of online content in departments interested in preparing such new provision.
After eight years’ service the Registrar & Secretary (Dr David Duncan) would be leaving the University in March 2017 to take up a new post at the University of Glasgow.

The following matters were identified as the main areas of senior management focus in the coming year:

- REF
- TEF
- campus master-planning/development
- financial strategy
- institutional fundraising campaign
- improving entrant quality

During discussion of the Vice-Chancellor’s report, it was noted that the NSS data to be used as a TEF metric was clearly specified and prescribed, although the University could also submit its own narrative document in support of the raw data. The SU President reported in this context that the SU would not be supporting the boycott of the NSS passed at NUS conference, but had instead called for an evaluation of the impact of such action.

16-17/5 National Student Survey 2016

Senate considered a report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning & Students) on the 2016 National Student Survey (S.16-17/3).

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

- increase in Overall Satisfaction of 1% (to 89%) and in Assessment & Feedback of 5% (to 75%);
- sector ranking by dimension confirmed the University’s broad strength;
- notably high performance in the departments of Archaeology, Chemistry, Language & Linguistic Science and Psychology;
- despite general improvement, failure of most departments to meet the improvement targets agreed by Senate in 2014, with new targets to be set for 2018 in the context of the NSS categories to be used as TEF metrics (i.e. Teaching, Assessment & Feedback and Academic Support);
- engagement with individual departments on the new targets as part of strategic planning meetings;
acknowledgement of the various factors and initiatives that had helped to deliver general improvement over the last two years.

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) It was generally accepted that the means by which data was gathered and reported in the survey tended to generate a focus on the least engaged and satisfied students, which was potentially problematic and unhelpful for the wider student body.

(b) The new 2017 NSS questionnaire would include some rewording of previous questions and also two new dimensions: Learning Community and Student Voice. These changes had been influenced by the UK Experience Survey which emphasised the importance of student engagement to learning gain.

(c) SU and GSA officers confirmed that they would be working with course representatives over the coming year to respond to the inclusion of a new question on the effectiveness of student unions in representing students’ academic interests.

(d) As regards the effective communication of changes in a course or teaching (Q17 of the survey) in the context of the roll-out of the institutional pedagogy, it was noted that this would be partly achieved through active student involvement in the design of programmes.

(e) In terms of influencing future survey design at a national level, it was noted that the University was participating in HEFCE and Russell Group projects exploring the concept of learning gain, which was expected to become more prominent in the future.

16-17/6 Destination of Leavers from Higher Education

Senate considered a report on the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education in 2014/15 (S.16-17/4).

Attending the meeting to present the report, the Director of Employability and Careers (Tom Banham) highlighted the following points:

➢ national policy changes relating to collection of better data at lower cost (including linkage to HMRC salary data), changes to timing of
the survey and use of employability outcomes as one of the three core areas of TEF metrics;

- 1.2% increase in positive destinations (7.4% increase over five years, but from a low base);
- 5% decrease in further study over five years (also evident among competitors);
- provision of additional data on salaries and year in industry;
- female graduates significantly more likely to be in non-professional work;
- 16.5% uplift in positive destinations among students completing a year in industry;
- the need to revise targets if the University was to achieve a mid-table position within the Russell Group for employability (current ranking: 20/24).

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) In the context of the required 80% response rate, consideration was currently being given to the precise timing of the circulation and follow-up of the survey.

(b) Contact with graduates could be maintained by encouraging them to sign up for the ‘email for life’ offered to alumni. Other alternatives might be considered such as extension of previous University email addresses or automatic forwarding to alumni accounts. It was however noted that, as most responses were achieved via telephone, consideration might also be given to alternative means of organising this contact process.

(c) There was currently no official reporting mechanism for capturing graduates on unpaid summer internships.

(d) A number of factors influenced the proportion of female graduates in non-professional work, including relative numbers studying STEM subjects.

(e) The effect of degree class on positive destinations was notable and provided a strong message here regarding the importance of sustaining high academic standards.
Senate considered a report on the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2016 (S.16-17/5).

Presenting the report, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (TLS) commended departments on the excellent outcome, with the University achieving the highest score in the Russell Group in five of the eight categories. With the usual proviso regarding sample size/response rate, departments were encouraged to consider internally their own quantitative and qualitative datasets. Particular congratulations were offered to the departments of Health Sciences, History and History of Art for achieving 100% overall satisfaction rates and to the departments of Education and Management (the departments with the largest number of respondents) for showing notable improvement. It was noted that Teaching Committee would consider more detailed analysis of under-performing departments in order to identify suitable targeted interventions.

Senate considered a report on a proposed review of its own effectiveness as the University’s academic governing body (S.16-17/38).

The Registrar & Secretary commented that the proposed review represented one of the agreed recommendations arising from a similar effectiveness review undertaken by the University Council during 2015/16. Senate noted the intention to start the review work in Spring Term 2017, with the aim of bringing a final report back to Senate before the end of the academic year.

Senate approved the proposed scope of the review and the constituency for the review group.

Senate noted and approved business from the following committee meetings (S.16-17/7):

- Teaching Committee: 6 October 2016
- Research Committee: 27 September 2016
- HYMS Joint Senate Committee: 20 July 2016

Senate: 18 October 2016
16-17/10 Periodic Review Reports

Senate received for information periodic review reports in respect of the Departments of Music and Chemistry (S.16-17/8).

16-17/11 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting was scheduled for Tuesday 31 January 2017 at 3.15pm.