UNIVERSITY OF YORK

SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2016

Present: The Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost, Professor S Tendler
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor D Smith
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning & Students), Professor J Robinson
Dean (Arts & Humanities), Professor M Ormrod
Dean (Social Sciences), Professor S Bell
Director of Information Services, Mrs H Fraser-Krauss

Dr R Aitken
Dr H Altink
Professor I D’Amico
Professor E Annandale
Professor D Attwell
Dr K Attwood
Dr E Brown
Professor D Bruce
Professor B Doherty
Dr A Field
Professor I Graham
Dr J de Groot
Mr F Hamza (student rep)
Professor A Higson
Dr G Hurst
Dr R Ibrahim (GSA President)
Mr B Leatham (SU President)
Professor T Lightfoot
Dr O Lisagor

Miss M Liu (GSA rep)
Dr J Moir
Professor K Mumford
Professor M Nazarov
Dr F Polack
Professor E Prettejohn
Dr G Richardson
Professor R Sainsbury
Dr J Schofield
Professor P Sells
Professor M Smith
Professor Q Summerfield
Professor J Swaffield
Dr B Szczepke Reed
Professor S Thompson
Dr R Vann
Dr R Waites
Mr G Wall
Professor J Woodcock

In attendance: SU Academic Officer, Mr T Ron
Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Officer, Ms H Brian
Dean of Graduate Research School, Professor T Stoneham

Apologies for absence were received from Professor G Currie, Dr D Efird, Professor B Fulton,
Professor M Goddard, Dr T Helgason, Professor M Hodson, Professor M Matravers, Professor L Stewart and Professor J Timmis.
Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 October 2015 were approved.

Statement by the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor reported the following matters:

External Context

- The University had not been directly affected by the flooding in York in late December, but had worked with various organisations in the city to assist the recovery process. Students were thanked for providing voluntary help and the SU President commended for his work to provide reassurance to those students resident off-campus. In response, the SU President commended the work of the professional support services.

- Overall the funding settlement for HE in the government’s Comprehensive Spending Review had been more benign than anticipated, although it had included a number of elements detrimentally affecting students (e.g. freezing of loan repayment cap and conversion of maintenance grants to loans). Research council funding had been largely protected, but uncertainties remained around the Global Challenges Fund (£1.5bn). The Resource Accounting and Budgeting (RAB) charge had been amended, which had generated substantial savings for BIS. The University’s response to these funding issues was being led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost through the annual financial planning process (Q1 review) and efforts to achieve further efficiency savings in service delivery.

- Colleagues were thanked for their contribution to the University’s response to the government Green Paper. The institutional response had been circulated to all staff via email and identified a number of concerns in relation to the TEF proposal (especially its proposed linkage to fee levels and potential reputational damage to the sector), the conversion of grants to loans and cuts to the Student Opportunity Fund (both counter to widening participation) and the use of metrics as imperfect proxy measures for teaching quality. Concern had also been expressed about the possible separation of responsibility for teaching and research funding into different agencies and the politicisation of grant distribution through the involvement of a new ministerial committee. The University had welcomed maintenance of the Haldane principle and dual-support
funding for research, although here too concern had been expressed about the risk of funding decisions becoming subject to political interference.

- Discussions had been held with the BIS ministers (Jo Johnson and Sajid Javid) on the development of degree apprenticeships. The University would play a dual role as both a contributor to the new Apprenticeship Levy (0.5% of the pay bill) and as a potential provider of apprenticeships (allowing some of the levy costs to be re-couped). The government was evidently keen for Russell Group institutions to engage with this agenda and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning & Students) had been nominated to BIS as the institutional lead on this matter.

- The Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost had accompanied BIS ministers on a trip to India that had sought to repair some of the damage done by immigration policy to the perception of UK HE in that country. There was however continuing tension and conflict on such matters within government as the Home Office pursued its separate agenda to curb immigration.

**Internal Context**

- The implementation of the new faculty structure was currently being reviewed by SMG, with a report to be submitted to the next Senate meeting. Consideration of cross-faculty projects would be considered as part of the review.

- The ‘York Talks’ event had been highly successful and thanks were offered to all contributing academics and research students.

- Following his inauguration as University Chancellor, Professor Sir Malcolm Grant had become actively involved in fundraising activities and had recently presided over his first degree ceremonies.

- Following the withdrawal of two female honorary degree recipients at short notice from the January degree ceremonies, the remaining seven recipients had all been male. This unfortunate situation had highlighted a gender imbalance in the number of nominations received (although data confirmed that approval rates for male/female nominations were roughly equal). Although some attempts had been made to redress the imbalance through additional nominations from SMG and the Equality & Diversity Committee (leading to an overall female nomination rate of 35% in the
most recent cycle), departments and individual nominators would henceforth be more actively encouraged to pay greater attention to equality issues when submitting nominations.

- Following expansion of the scope of the Athena SWAN Charter to include all disciplines, support staff and a broader definition of gender equality, SMG had approved a new support structure involving a central steering group (chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor/Research), a University-wide good practice forum and new faculty working groups to help prepare departmental submissions. A full-time Athena SWAN Coordinator would also be appointed in the Equality & Diversity Office.

- As regards equality and diversity more generally, a proposal would shortly be considered by the University Council for amendments to the terms of reference and constituency of its Equality & Diversity Committee (including that the role of Chair be assumed by the Vice-Chancellor). It was noted that the current structure of having a number of sub-groups of the Committee focusing on specific protected characteristics (e.g. race/ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation etc) would be continued and further developed.

- The University had submitted two large funding proposals to support the development of a BioVale Centre on the Heslington East Campus, with the Bio-Renewables Development Centre operating as the ‘anchor tenant’ in a new building designed to link academic research to the biotechnology industry.

- The prospectus for the International Pathway College had been published and the Head of the College appointed (Matthew Perry).

- A new University policy had been developed to ensure compliance with the ‘Prevent’ statutory duty to prevent people being drawn into terrorism (under the Counter Terrorism and Security Act 2015). An initial risk self-assessment had been submitted to HEFCE as required and staff training would be developed. The new policy sought to adopt a pragmatic and proportionate approach with a strong emphasis on safeguarding vulnerable individuals. Due consideration would also be given to issues of academic freedom as they pertained to teaching and research topics and materials.
The University had been placed 93rd in the THE’s ‘International Outlook’ league table (based on proportions of home/international staff and students and internationally co-authored research papers).

As part of its support for refugees announced in 2105, the University would shortly be welcoming two academics from Syria to the Department of Biology (facilitated by partnership with the New York-based Institute for International Education).

Congratulations were extended to Professor Karen Mumford (Economics) and Dr Adrian Whitwood (Chemistry) on their receipt of, respectively, a CBE and BEM in the New Year’s honours list.

15-16/21 Special Cases Committee Annual Report

Senate considered the annual report for 2014-15 from the Special Cases Committee (S.15-16/16).

Attending the meeting to present the report as Chair of the Committee, Professor Mike Bentley (Physics) drew attention to the following points:

- The Committee’s workload the previous year could be summarised in statistical terms roughly as follows: approximately 1,000 student cases; ⅔ from taught students, ⅓ from research students; ⅓ appeals, ⅓ leave of absence requests and ⅓ other special cases.

- The number of appeals appeared to have levelled off in 2014-15, with the number upheld remaining at a relatively consistent level in recent years.

- Swift and effective communication with Boards of Studies was essential to the smooth running of the process and it was important that departments heeded the professional advice from special cases administrators (e.g. in respect of the possibility of repeat study).

- Most research student cases related to requests for extensions occurring at the end of the period of study, a situation that might be addressed by earlier intervention (e.g. via leave of absence).

- The current year was the first year of operation of the new two-stage appeals process introduced to comply with OIA best practice guidance. The process would be reviewed at the end of the year.
During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) The previous target of processing appeals within six weeks had proved impossible in the context of rising workload and increased complexity of cases. This had now been replaced with the target recommended by the OIA of 90 days.

(b) Work was currently ongoing in collaboration with the Director of Registry Services to draft definitive guidance relating to the implications for visa requirements and accommodation of international students taking leave of absence.

(c) It was generally agreed that development of an online submission system would greatly ease the efficiency of the process at both departmental and central level. The Director of Information noted that no such developmental request had been submitted to IT Services, but that it could be considered in the context of other competing priorities for new systems development.

(d) The SU President confirmed that the rise in number and complexity of special cases had also been experienced by the SU staff involved in the provision of advice and support to students. It was suggested that the data provided on submission forms as to whether SU/GSA had been sought by the student applicant might also usefully be included in future annual reports.

15-16/22 International Committee

Senate considered a proposal to establish a new International Committee as a sub-committee of Senate (S.15-16/17).

Presenting the proposal, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost commented that the primary role of the new committee would be to coordinate all aspects of international activity, including recruitment, mobility and partnerships. Linked to the activity of the proposed new committee, three new part-time (0.2FTE) roles of Associate Provost were also to be created, each responsible for a different geographical region (Americas, Asia/Australasia and Europe/Middle East/Africa).

During discussion the following points were noted:
(a) YUSU could nominate a representative of its choice to serve on the new committee, with one of its International Student Officers as the most likely appointee.

(b) In the event that the UK left the EU following a referendum (so-called ‘Brexit’), this would have a profound effect on UK relations with other countries and would inevitably become a major focus of the committee’s activity. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the University did not intend to adopt a position in the EU referendum debate but would rather respect the democratic process. Nevertheless, the University would identify and clarify the implications for its own core activities of any change in the UK’s relationship to the EU.

(c) Appropriate prior experience and expertise in the relevant geographical area would be factored into the recruitment of the three Associate Provosts, with further training opportunities to be provided as the roles developed.

(d) As regards appropriate international experience in the teaching area (e.g. collaborative degree programmes, distance learning etc), the intention would be to identify such expertise among the three faculty representatives on the new committee.

(e) The job title ‘Associate Provost’ had been agreed after much discussion as most likely to convey the relevant status and credibility in overseas territories.

Following the above discussion, Senate approved the establishment of the new International Committee and noted the associated creation of the Associate Provost roles.

15-16/23 Business from Committees

Senate noted and approved unreserved business from the following committee meetings (S.15-16/18):

- Teaching Committee: 12 November, 3 December and 10 December 2015
- Research Committee: 4 November and 9 December 2015
- Planning Committee: 4, 20 and 25 November 2015
- HYMS Joint Senate Committee: 4 November 2015
- Promotions Committee

Senate: 26 January 2016
- Special Cases Committee: 9 December 2015
- Arts and Humanities Faculty Board: 26 November 2015
- Sciences Faculty Board: 12 December 2015
- Social Sciences Faculty Board: 3 December 2015

15-16/24 **Re-appointment of Board of Studies Chair**

In accordance with the requirements of University Ordinance 1.9, Senate approved the re-appointment of the Chair of the Board of Studies in the Department of Biology (Professor Richard Waites) for a third consecutive period of office.

15-16/25 **Periodic Review Reports**

Senate received for information a Teaching Committee periodic review report in respect of the Department of English (S.15-16/20).

15-16/26 **Date of Next Meeting**

It was noted that the next meeting of Senate was scheduled for Tuesday 3 May 2016 at 3.15pm.