UNIVERSITY OF YORK

SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held on 27 January 2015

Present: The Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Dr J Grenville
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor D Smith
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching & Learning), Professor J Robinson
Dean (Social Sciences), Professor S Bell
Dean (Sciences), Professor B Fulton
Dean (Arts & Humanities), Professor M Ormrod

Dr R Aitken Professor A Jones
Professor I D’Amico Dr O Lisagor
Professor E Annandale Mr S Maguire (SU President)
Professor K Atkin Dr J Moir
Professor D Attwell Professor K Mumford
Professor M Bentley Dr B Pownall
Professor C Brown Professor E Prettejohn
Professor S Carroll Professor J Schofield
Mr T Clark (student rep) Dr J Schofield
Professor E Corrigan Professor P Sells
Professors G Currie Professor T Sheldon
Professor I Davies Professor L Stewart
Professor N Ellison Professor Q Summerfield
Professor C Fewster Professor R Taylor
Dr A Field Professor S Thompson
Mr S Harper (student rep) Dr R Vann
Dr T Helgason Dr R Waites
Professor A Higson Mr G Wall
Ms J Horvatic (GSA President) Dr A Woods
Professor C Hunter Mr R Yates
Professor R Jacobs

The Registrar and Secretary
The Academic Registrar

In attendance: University Governance Officer, Dr P Evans
SU Academic Officer, Mr G Offer
SU Student Engagement Development Coordinator, Mr R Quayle
Vice-Chancellor’s Executive Officer, Ms H Brian

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Apologies for absence were received from Dr J Clarbour, Professor C Dytham, Professor M Festenstein, Professor R Godby, Professor M Goddard, Dr J de Groot, Professor D Howard, Mr S Town and Ms A Zaman (student rep).

14-15/25 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 21 October 2014 were approved.

14-15/26 Appointments to Committees

Further to M14-15/3 (Appointments to Committees), Senate approved the recommendation that Professor Deborah Smith (Pro-Vice-Chancellor/Research) be appointed as the Pro-Vice-Chancellor member of the University Council with immediate effect until 31 July 2017 (S.14-15/22).

14-15/27 Statement by the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor reported the following matters:

- Work was progressing well to develop an implementation plan for the new University Strategy (M14-15/5 refers), with initial focus on the three key objectives. Strategies in these areas would then be integrated and timelines, targets, risks and resources identified.

- UCU had extended its suspension of industrial action until 30 January 2015 while it consulted its members on a potential joint proposal for reform of the USS pension scheme. In the consultation 67.1% of those taking part had voted to accept the proposal. The next Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) meeting would be held on 29 January 2015, at which a vote on the proposed reform package would be undertaken. The next stage would be consideration by the USS Trustee Board and then statutory consultation by employers with scheme members.

- The University had achieved a successful outcome in the 2014 REF. A number of financial scenarios were now being modelled ahead of the anticipated receipt in March 2015 of confirmation from HEFCE of the funding formula/QR settlement.

- There remained considerable uncertainty around the future funding of HE ahead of the general election in May 2015. The Labour Party had announced that it might seek to reduce tuition fees to £6k, although its
plans to fund the ensuing funding gap were unclear. It was generally assumed that no single party or coalition would seek to increase the fee level, and the University’s assumption of an inflationary increase had therefore been removed from financial forecasts. Regardless of the electoral outcome, it was also assumed that austerity measures would continue, with a likely cut to the BIS budget anywhere in the range of 2-26% (potentially affecting HEFCE and research funding).

- Given the uncertainty in respect of future income from QR funding and tuition fees, it had been decided to defer decisions on the funding of strategic initiatives proposed by academic departments until there was greater financial clarity.

- Work led by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (T&L) was ongoing to support departments in addressing the outcome from the last NSS. The current year’s survey was now live for completion by final-year students.

14-15/28 Research Excellence Framework 2014

Senate considered a report on the outcome of the Research Excellence Framework 2014, including comments from the meeting the Research Committee held on 14 January 2015 (S.14-15/23).

Presenting the report, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) commented that the overall outcome had been positive, although there was potential for further improvement. It was noted that Research Committee would conduct further detailed data analysis in order to identify the most appropriate future direction for individual departments ahead of the next assessment exercise (anticipated in 2020). Further consideration would be given to aspects such as submission rates, accuracy of grade predictions, building on success in the impact measure and identification of departments for formal review. In response to a query on the 2020 REF, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor confirmed that there would be stronger direction from the University on the level of attainment and submission expected of individual departments.

14-15/29 Contingency Framework for Assessment

Senate considered an updated version of the Contingency Framework for Assessment and Examinations (S.14-15/24).

Presenting the document, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (T&L) noted that the general principles underpinning the Framework remained unchanged from the
previous version (2012), but it had been updated to accommodate the modular scheme (section B3 refers). The overarching aim was to provide clear policy and guidance as regards the treatment of missing marks in the event of disruption to assessment for any reason. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor offered thanks to the Standing Committee on Assessment for developing the more technical aspects of the policy as regards procedures for student awards and progression. In response to a query, it was confirmed that it remained essential for external examiners to be involved in the assessment process.

Senate approved the revised Framework.

**14-15/30 Teaching Performance Expectations**

At the request of the Vice-Chancellor as Chair of the Performance Excellence Steering Group, the University Statement on Teaching Performance Expectations was considered for formal endorsement (*S.14-15/25, report from Teaching Committee refers*).

Presenting the Statement, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (T&L) commented that it had been subject to consultation with departments before approval by Teaching Committee. The aim of the Statement was to provide a clear and transparent definition of the expected level of performance of University teachers, as well as a framework for responding to underperformance and recognising excellent performance.

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) One member encouraged Senate not to endorse the document in its current form, suggesting that it required further consultation with teaching staff in departments in order to guarantee collective ownership. It was also suggested that the language relating to performance management was not appropriate as a measure of good teaching. In response to the suggestion of insufficient consultation with teaching staff, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (T&L) outlined the structured and collegial consultation process that had been followed with Boards of Studies and the meetings that had been held with individual departments in response to the comments they had submitted. It was also noted that the Teaching Committee members who had been involved in development of the Statement were all active University teachers.
(b) Some concern was expressed that staff might appeal against judgements of underperformance if they felt that other, external factors were constraining their teaching (e.g. resourcing or workload issues). It was also proposed that the document might be referred to the newly established Faculty Boards for a further round of consultation. It was noted in response that the framework provided a transparent process for considering all influencing factors, whether structural or individually focused, with escalation as necessary from an initial informal response.

(c) A number of Heads of Departments expressed their support for the Statement, in particular the capacity for departments to modify the wording of some elements to match their specific arrangements and the acknowledgement that the University also had a responsibility to provide an appropriate environment for high quality teaching (section 4 refers).

(d) It was suggested that reference to English language competency did not seem to fit in the section referencing pedagogical principles (§8[d] refers) and might be more suitably located in the previous section relating to core competencies. This proposed amendment was generally supported.

(e) As a means of pro-actively addressing issues raised by students (especially those in open comments in the NSS), the Statement was commended for providing a framework that prevented such concerns being side-lined or simply ignored. For this to be effective, however, it was essential for the associated management procedures to be implemented in a developmental and supportive manner with teaching staff.

(f) The SU sabbatical officers, who had been involved in the development of the Statement through Teaching Committee, welcomed its implementation across the University.

Following the above discussion, the Vice-Chancellor invited Senate members to vote on the proposition that the Statement be approved without a further round of consultation. Members voted as follows:

for: 42
against: 3
abstain: 2

The Statement on Teaching Performance Expectations was therefore approved.

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14-15/31 Business from Committees

Senate noted and approved business from the following committee meetings (S.14-15/25):

- Teaching Committee: 13 October and 11 December 2014
- Research Committee: 15 October and 26 November 2014
- Planning Committee: 4 and 26 November, 18 December 2014 and 6 January 2015

14-15/32 Periodic Review Reports

Senate received for information Teaching Committee periodic review reports in respect of the School of Social and Political Sciences, the Department of Education, the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice and Preparing Future Academics Programmes, the Hull York Medical School and the Centre for Lifelong Learning (S.14-15/26).

14-15/33 Date of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of Senate was scheduled for Tuesday 5 May 2015 at 3.15pm.