UNIVERSITY OF YORK

SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 February 2011

Present: The Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Dr J Grenville
Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor J Local

Professor M Beck
Professor S Bell
Dr J Buchanan
Professor R Burrows
Professor C Brown
Mr J Calhoun (GSA)
Professor B Chambers
Dr J Clarbour
Professor S Donkin
Dr C Fewster
Dr A Frisch
Professor B Fulton
Professor M Goddard
Professor C Godfrey
Dr D Hall
Professor M Hallett
Professor A Higson
Professor J Hill
Dr R Jacobs
Dr B Kewell
Ms E Leishman (SU)
Mr O Lisagor
Professor M Luckhurst
Professor M Maynard
Dr P Mitchell
Dr R Ogden
Mr G Osborn (SU)
Dr S Parker
Professor J Robinson
Professor W Sheils
Professor T Stoneham
Professor Q Summerfield
Professor R Taylor
Mr S Town

In attendance: The Registrar and Secretary
The Academic Registrar
University Governance Officer, Dr P Evans
SU Academic Affairs Officer, Mr B Humphrys

Apologies for absence were received from Professor D Attwell, Professor J Everard, Professor M Festenstein, Ms E Heaps, Professor A Jones, Professor C Mellors, Mr T Ngwena, Professor J Richards, Professor D Smith, Professor L Stewart, Professor S Toms, Professor J Wainwright and Mr H Whitwell.

10-11/20 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 November 2010 were approved.
Higher Education Funding

Further to M10-11/5, Senate received an update report on developments in respect of the future HE funding regime in England (S.10-11/18), noting the following minor corrections:

- section 1, para 3, first bullet: ‘student fees’ to read ‘student fee cap’;
- section 1, para 4: ‘10% cuts in teaching’ to read ‘10% cuts in teaching and research’;
- section 3, sub-section A: ‘progressively over three years from 2012’ to read ‘progressively over four years from 2011’;
- section 3, sub-section B: ‘additional 15 academics’ to read ‘additional 15 (fte equivalent) academics’.

Senate noted the University’s strategic response thus far to the emerging situation as set out in the report and the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that no decision would be made about tuition fee levels until after publication of the government’s White Paper and clarification of HEFCE funding for 2011/12 and beyond (both expected in March 2011). It was however noted that a series of actions was already in train in respect of teaching quality, widening access, enhancing the student experience and ensuring the long-term financial sustainability of the University.

During discussion of the report the following points were noted:

(a) The government’s decision to raise the fee cap related only to undergraduate and integrated master programmes: no decisions had so far been made about postgraduate fee levels, although there were likely to be knock-on effects from the developments at undergraduate level.

(b) Future funding support from the research councils in respect of postgraduates was set out in their recently published delivery plans for 2011-15. It was noted that support for PhDs in the arts and humanities was expected to come largely via doctoral training centres, as in the social sciences.

(c) The latest funding letter from BIS to HEFCE (December 2010) had confirmed a flat-cash settlement for research, but, as this was inflation-protected for MRC and Department of Health research, this represented a significant real-terms cut in other areas. Government priorities for research were more sharply focused on ‘impact’ and societal improvement, with associated implications for the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework (REF).
(d) It had recently been confirmed that future support from the Higher Education Innovation Fund (HEIF) would be based on performance outcomes as regards interaction with industry, not on inputs and capacity-building measures as before.

(e) As it was currently difficult to predict future demand for the University’s undergraduate programmes in the emerging new funding regime, all departments needed to avoid complacency and demonstrate flexibility in enhancing the quality and attractiveness of their curriculum in response to the more competitive student recruitment market.

The Vice-Chancellor concluded the above discussion by reiterating that the University currently had a strong financial and academic position relative to many other HEIs and that this provided a solid basis from which to approach the challenging new environment.

**10-11/22 Statement by the Vice-Chancellor**

The Vice-Chancellor reported the following matters:

**Events/developments**

The University had been named University of the Year in the Times Higher Education Awards 2010, and was in the top 100 in both the Times Higher Education/Thomson Reuters and the QS World Rankings.

New academic buildings for the Departments of Computer Science and Theatre, Film and Television and the York Law School and the York Management School on Heslington East had welcomed their first students on the first day of the autumn term. The Ron Cooke Hub had become operational during November.

The new building for the Centre for Immunology and Infection had been opened by Dr Robert Ridley, Director of TDR, the World Health Organization’s Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases.

Three departments had received awards from the Athena SWAN charter in recognition of their commitment to supporting women in science. Chemistry received a Gold award, and Biology and Psychology received Silver awards.

The University had launched the Jiangning Foundation, in memory of History of Art student Jiangning Wang who died in 2009. It would promote cultural links between the UK and China.
The University of York and the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC) had established a partnership to create a world-leading, interdisciplinary plasma research centre, the York Plasma Institute.

The Chemical Industry Education Centre had received a special award from the Chemical Industries Association for its work in schools.

People

Professor Jonathan Bradshaw (Social Policy and Social Work) had been elected a Fellow of the British Academy.

The British Academy had elected Professor Sue Mendus (Politics) as Vice President (social sciences).

Professor Pratibha Gai (Physics and Chemistry) had been awarded the Institute of Physics 2010 Gabor Medal and Prize for her environmental transmission electron microscopy research.

Professor Duncan Bruce (Chemistry) had been awarded the Royal Society of Chemistry Tilden Prize.

Professor Mark Sculpher (Centre for Health Economics) had been elected President of the International Society of Pharmacoeconomics and Outcomes Research.

Professor Henry Leese (Biology) had been awarded the Marshall Medal of the Society for the Study of Reproduction and Fertility.

Professor Michael Drummond (Centre for Health Economics) had been elected a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academies in the USA.

David Hickman, a senior lecturer in the Department of Theatre, Film and Television, had won a Grierson award for Best Science Documentary, for his Channel 4 film Race and Intelligence: Science's Last Taboo.

The University’s Registrar and Secretary from 2003 until 2008, Sally Neocosmos, had been awarded an OBE for 'services to Higher Education' in the 2011 New Year’s Honours List.

10-11/23  HEFCE Consultation on Public Information

Senate considered a report on a current HEFCE consultation on changes to the public information provided by institutions about programmes and teaching quality (S.10-11/19).
Presenting the report as Chair of the working group which had drafted the institutional response, Dr Grenville (Pro-Vice-Chancellor/Students) reported that, while supporting the general intention of enhancing such information for prospective students, the working group had identified a number of concerns relating to:

- nature of the research that had informed HEFCE’s proposals;
- the highly quantitative and instrumentalist approach adopted in the document;
- lack of information on intellectual content of programmes;
- disjunction in timing between NSS results (retrospective) and teaching, learning and assessment information (forward plans in response to NSS);
- usefulness of the proposed information for quality assurance and enhancement purposes;
- failure to accommodate different degree pathways and combined degrees;
- appropriateness of DLHE results as basis for information on employment and salaries;
- use of SU election turn-out figures as a proxy indicator for the student experience.

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) There was a risk that the proposed key information set might actually represent harmful ‘misinformation’ that could be misused (e.g. by competitors, league tables etc).

(b) A wider sector view would be more likely to influence HEFCE (the 1994 Group would be providing a common response from its members).

(c) As it was unlikely that much improvement could be expected in developing a standard data set that sought to cover such a diverse sector, the University should instead concentrate on ensuring that the information it made available offered a clear picture of its programmes.

(d) Changing terminology to a standard format (e.g. in respect of seminars, tutorials, supervisions etc) would involve high transaction costs and cultural change at an institutional level.

(e) The assumption of a 40-hour study week did not correlate with recent studies on this matter (e.g. by the Higher Education Policy Institute) which revealed a wide disparity of experience across programmes and institutions.
(f) Chairs of Boards of Studies had been asked by the working group to draft concise descriptors of the nature and quality of all programmes to reinforce and elucidate the key information set.

(g) In developing bespoke marketing strategies and clear messages for individual departments it was important to ensure partnership working between academics and students and the professional service colleagues from offices such as External Relations, Communications and Student Recruitment.

(h) In addition to marketing its curriculum, an holistic approach needed to be adopted to presenting an image of the University to the outside world, including improved use of new social media and continuation of the current improvements to the University web presence.

Following the above discussion Senate noted that the public information working party would continue in existence beyond the HEFCE consultation in order to maintain focus on this area of activity, and it was suggested that its membership be increased to include input from the External Relations directorate.

10-11/24 Review of Senate Effectiveness

Further to M09-10/66, Senate considered a report setting out proposed arrangements for a light-touch review of Senate effectiveness arising from a review of corporate governance conducted by the University Council in 2010 (S.10-11/20).

Presenting the proposal the Registrar reported the intention to consult with the broader Senate membership and to produce a final report for consideration by the end of the current academic year.

Senate approved the proposed terms of reference for the review and the membership of the review group as follows:

1. Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
2. Registrar & Secretary
3. 1 Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Dr Jane Grenville, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Students)
4. 1 Head of Department (Professor John Robinson, Electronics)
5. 1 elected member of Senate (Dr Beth Kewell, Management)
6. 2 student members (SU & GSA Presidents: Tim Ngwena and John Calhoun)
   [Secretary: University Governance Office, Dr Philip Evans]

10-11/25 Business from Committees

Senate: 1 February 2011
Senate noted and approved business from the following committee meetings (S.10-11/21):

1. Planning Committee: 10 November and 8 December 2010
2. Teaching Committee: 8 November and 13 December 2010
3. Student Services Committee: 18 November 2010
4. Special Cases Committee: 3 December 2010
5. HYMS Joint Senate Committee: 20 January 2011

10-11/26 Periodic Review Reports

Senate received for information periodic review reports in respect of Chemistry, Health Sciences and Music (S.10-11/22).

10-11/27 Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of Senate was scheduled for Tuesday 17 May 2011 at 3.15pm.