UNIVERSITY OF YORK

SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 July 2014

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

Professor E Annandale Dr T Helgason
Professor M Bentley Professor A Higson
Professor C Brown Professor D Howard
Professor B Chambers Professor C Hunter
Dr J Clarbour Dr R Jacobs
Mr T Clark (student rep) Dr O Lisagor
Mr T Clarke Mr S Maguire (SU President)
Professor E Corrigan Professor G Ozkan
Professor C Fewster Professor E Prestejoh
Dr A Field Professor J Schofield
Professor G Gaskell Dr J Schofield
Professor R Godby Professor P Sells
Professor M Goddard Professor T Sheldon
Professor V Gould Professor L Stewart
Professor H Graham Professor T Stoneham
Professor I Graham Professor R Taylor
Dr J de Groot Mr G Wall
Mr S Harper (student rep) Mr R Yates

In attendance: The Registrar and Secretary
The Academic Registrar
University Governance Officer, Dr P Evans
SU Academic Officer, Mr G Offer
SU Student Engagement Development Co-ordinator, Mr R Quayle
Business Intelligence Unit, Mr A Knock & Mr D Cashdan (for M13-14/50)

Apologies for absence were received from Professor S Bell, Professor J Bennett, Professor C Dytham, Professor C Mellors, Dr J Moir, Professor M Ormrod, Professor S Thompson, Mr S Town and Ms A Zaman.

Senate: 15 July 2014
13-14/44 Membership

On behalf of Senate, the Vice-Chancellor thanked those members who were attending their last meeting.

13-14/45 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2014 were approved.

13-14/46 University Strategy

Further to M13-14/35, the Vice-Chancellor reported that there had been high levels of engagement from the University community in the consultation process regarding the new University Strategy. Senate noted that the response would be considered in detail and the next iteration of the strategy submitted to its next meeting.

13-14/47 Academic Probation

Further to M13-14/36, Senate received for information a note of clarification from the HR Directorate (S.13-14/32) regarding the coverage of the updated Academic Probation Policy, which confirmed that the policy applied to newly-appointed lecturing staff who undertook both teaching and research.

13-14/48 Appointments to Committees

Further to M13-14/38, Senate approved the following appointments to committees (S.13-14/33):

Health Safety and Welfare Committee
Dr John Schofield (Archaeology)

Planning Committee
Dr Ambrose Field (Music)

Teaching Committee
Professor Chris Fewster (Mathematics)

Special Cases Committee
Dr Sam Hellmuth (Language & Linguistic Science)
[All appointments for a period of three years from 1 August 2014 until 31 July 2017 unless otherwise stated.]

It was noted that as more nominations had been received than there were vacancies for the following positions, a ballot would be held:

- Academic Promotions Committee (one from social sciences and two from arts and humanities)
- Research Committee (one from sciences and one from arts and humanities)
- Teaching Committee (two from social sciences)

It was also noted that vacancies remained on the following committees:

- Court (one member of Senate)
- HYMS Joint Senate Committee (one academic member)
- Nominations Committee (one academic member)

Senate decided to delegate authority to the Vice-Chancellor to make appointments to the remaining vacancies and the Vice-Chancellor asked members to notify the University Governance Officer (philip.evans@york.ac.uk) of any nominations as soon as possible.

13-14/49 Statement by the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor reported on the following matters:

- The government had supported a Leeds City Region/York and North Yorkshire and East Riding LEP bid for £8m of Local Growth Fund capital funding towards a new ‘BioHub’ building on Heslington East. The new development would provide bioeconomy business incubation space, areas for other bioeconomy support organisations and a larger base for the Bio-Renewables Development Centre. The success of the bid demonstrated the University’s world-leading capabilities in this area and would provide the means to access further funding opportunities.

- In response to a speech from the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the N8 group of northern universities was collaborating to present radical, transformative ideas for outstanding scientific research in the north (to counter-balance such developments in the south as the new Crick Institute). It was noted that the development process was fast-moving and had already identified three areas of high quality research where
there were appropriate synergies and potential for further collaborative development (agritech, ageing and materials). It was noted that the Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) were leading the initiative, and that the Research and Enterprise directorate was contacting relevant academic colleagues in relation to this new opportunity.

- Plans were in place to manage clearing and adjustment, with the intention of achieving a balance between achievement of student number targets and maintaining high entry standards. The Vice-Chancellor emphasised the importance of swift decision-making in departments and careful management to mitigate some of the risks that were intrinsic to the current admission environment which was, in part, moving towards a post-qualification system.

- Following conclusion of the performance excellence project in the professoriate, the process would be reviewed and discussed with campus trade unions before implementation under an agreed framework with other academic staff groups.

- Thanks were offered to all staff who had participated in the recent Open Day, which had brought 10,000 visitors on to campus and had been a very positive event.

- A number of notable and distinguished individuals would receive honorary degrees during the summer graduation and academic colleagues were encouraged to attend the ceremonies in which their students graduated.

- On behalf of Senate the Vice-Chancellor congratulated the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Head of the Department of Health Sciences on their award of honours in the Queen’s Birthday Honours List.

13-14/50 Undergraduate and Postgraduate Degree Outcomes

Senate considered the annual statistical report on undergraduate and postgraduate taught outcomes and postgraduate research submission rates (S.13-14/34, 35 and 36).

Presenting the reports, which had been previously considered by Teaching Committee, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (T&L) highlighted the main points, including:
**Undergraduate**

- a ‘deep analysis’ was currently underway in an attempt to understand if any student characteristics were determinate of degree outcomes;
- the percentage of good degrees awarded (80.4%) compared well with Russell Group comparators;
- in terms of departmental variation, Teaching Committee would ask departments to look in more detail at their own profile, especially the small number that seemed to be ‘outliers’ in relation to the comparator set;

**PGT**

- the relatively stable completion rate (93.7%) compared well with the Russell Group (94%);
- the data provided an additional indicator of standards that supported other quality indicators (e.g. external examiners);

**PGR**

- the doctoral submission rate (71%) also compared well with comparators, with a 4% increase in timely submission and a 2% decrease in withdrawals;
- the data by subject area and department was noted, although it was noted the raw numbers were small in some cases;
- there was some doubt about the validity of HEFCE’s future projections of qualifications for UK/EU full-time research students (the University’s performance having been better than the projections for the first two years of this new data set).

During discussion the following points were **noted**:

(a) The deeper analysis of undergraduate outcomes would include consideration of entry tariffs.

(b) Much of the data was publicly available to potential applicants, including via league tables.

(c) The precise rationale for HEFCE’s projections of PGR completions was uncertain, although it was likely to be linked to the research councils and also a record of poor submission rates at some HEIs. (It was noted that
the modelling methodology for the projections was provided via a link in the paper.)

(d) It was suggested that the variation between departments in terms of timely PGR completions might relate to the adequacy of supervision in some areas. It was noted that new process requirements for supervisors and thesis advisory panels had been introduced. The new Graduate School would also play a role in this area. It was also agreed that the reasons for withdrawal or late submission could be personal/financial, and that it would therefore be useful to examine such data in greater detail.

(e) As regards the data on undergraduate outcomes, it was noted that some departmental variation would always exist and some outcomes could not be simplistically characterised as ‘under performance’. The data nevertheless could raise questions about the quality assurance of standards in some areas.

Senate thanked the Business Intelligence Unit for compiling the report and noted that the deeper analysis would be considered during the next academic year.

13-14/51 Provostal Membership of Senate

Senate considered a recommendation from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor that its constituency be amended to replace the current two Heads of Colleges/Provosts (elected from amongst themselves) with one elected Head of College/Provost and the Senior Principal ex officio (S.13-14/39).

During discussion it was noted that the Heads of Colleges/Provosts serving on Senate should not represent the interests of the Heads of Colleges/Provosts but rather the college system itself. It was also agreed that the newly created post of Senior Principal would be the individual best able to provide Senate with an overview across the whole college structure.

Noting the renewed emphasis on colleges in the current University Strategy, Senate decided that the best solution would be for the College Principal to become an ex officio member in addition to the two current elected Provosts/Heads of Colleges. It was also agreed that, as with other elected Senate members, the elected Provosts/Heads of Colleges should serve for a fixed three-year term.
13-14/52 Business from Committees

Senate noted and approved business from the following committee meetings (S.13-14/37):

- Teaching Committee: 19 May and 23 June 2014
- Research Committee: 30 April and 11 June 2014
- Planning Committee: 7 May and 6 June 2014
- Special Cases Committee: 6 June 2014
- HYMS Joint Senate Committee: 1 May 2014

13-14/53 Election of Academic Members

Senate received for information the result of the election of academic members to serve for three years from 1 August 2014 (S.13-14/38).

13-14/54 Dates of Meetings in 2014/15

The dates of Senate meetings in 2014/15 were noted as follows:

- Tuesday 21 October 2014
- Tuesday 27 January 2015
- Tuesday 5 May 2015
- Tuesday 7 July 2015