UNIVERSITY OF YORK

SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2012

Present: The Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor J Robinson
Director of Information, Mr S Town

Professor S Bell          Dr R Jacobs
Professor C Brown        Mr D Johnson
Professor B Chambers     Mr H Kesvani
Dr A Charlwood          Mr O Lisagor
Mr I Choto              Mr P Mitchell
Dr J Clarbour           Professor P O’Higgins
Professor E Corrigan    Dr A Parsons
Ms K Diaconu            Dr F Polack
Dr C Dytham             Professor J Richards
Mr T Ellis              Professor P Sells
Dr C Fewster           Dr A Sowden
Professor V Gould       Professor T Stoneham
Professor H Graham       Professor Q Summerfield
Professor A Higson      Professor S Thompson
Professor D Howard      Mr H Toynton
                       Professor J Wainwright

In attendance: The Registrar and Secretary
The Academic Registrar
University Governance Officer, Dr P Evans
Head of the Academic Support Office, Mr N Dandy (for M11-12/35)
Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions, Mr S Willis (for M11-12/36)
Deputy Director of Corporate Planning, Mr J Busby (for M11-12/40)
Chair of the Standing Committee on Assessment, Dr Steve King (for M11-12/40)
Apologies for absence were received from Professor J Bennett, Dr S Chong, Mr T Clarke, Professor B Fulton, Professor M Goddard, Professor M Hallett, Ms E Heaps, Professor A Jones, Professor J Local, Professor M Maynard, Professor J McDermid, Professor C Mellors, Professor M Ormrod, Mr G Osborn, Professor D Smith, Professor R Taylor, Professor S Toms, Mr G Wall, Dr M White and Professor A Webster, Professor R Wooffitt.

11-12/33 Membership

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed the following newly elected student members:

- Harry Toynton
- Hussein Kesvani
- Itai Choto

Senate also received for information the result of the election of members to serve for three years from 1 August 2012 to 31 July 2015, as follows (S.11-12/22):

- Professor Michael Bentley (Physics)
- Dr Christopher Fewster (Mathematics, re-elected)
- Professor Rex Godby (Physics)
- Dr Oleg Lisagor (Computer Science, re-elected)
- Dr Mary Pownall (Biology)

11-12/34 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 January 2012 were approved, subject to the following corrections to M11-12/24 (Special Cases Committee Annual Report):

- “117 academic appeals” (3rd bullet point) to read “117 undergraduate academic appeals”;
- paragraph (e) to be deleted (the reporting format will be amended in future years to remove the ambiguity referenced in this paragraph).
QAA Institutional Review

Further to M11-12/21, Senate received for information a report on the outcome of the institutional review conducted by the QAA in February 2012 (S.11-12/23).

Attending the meeting to present the report, the Head of the Academic Support Office (Nigel Dandy) drew Senate’s particular attention to the following:

- The full final report had been published on the QAA website and would be submitted to the next meeting with the associated action-plan.
- The ‘Key Findings’ included instances of good practice and recommendations for consideration by the University.
- The formal judgements in respect of academic standards and the quality and enhancement of learning opportunities represented an excellent outcome and reflected the hard work across the University to deliver high quality teaching and learning.

Noting the positive outcome, Senate joined the Vice-Chancellor in offering its particular thanks and congratulations to Mr Dandy and his team in the Academic Support Office and also to the lead student representatives, Graeme Osborn (SU) and Karin Diaconu (GSA).

Student Recruitment

Further to M11-12/22, Senate received for information an update on the undergraduate admissions cycle for entry in 2012.

Attending the meeting to present the report, the Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions highlighted the following:

- uncertainty and unpredictability of the current admissions round in the context of the new funding environment;
- the University’s overall performance ahead of national and competitor averages;
- the current projection that 9 admissions units might fall short of their MTP targets;
• possible changes that could arise during the confirmation and clearing stages of the process;
• positive projections of the market for 2013 based on bookings for campus tours and open days and attendance at HE fairs.

During discussion of the report the following points were noted:

(a) It was too early in the cycle to identify possible reasons why the decline in EU applications to York (down by 23%) was greater than the national decline for English universities (down by 17%), although it was likely to be related to subject mix.

(b) The considerable increase in applications to Health Sciences (37%) was probably related to the availability of funding through NHS bursaries.

(c) Each department’s recruitment position was individual, with differences relating to a wide range of variables (e.g. market position, changes in entry requirements, changes in firm reply rates year on year etc).

(d) Membership of the Russell Group was likely to be positive in terms of recruitment, especially overseas (although the degree to which there was ‘brand recognition’ of the Russell Group in EU countries was uncertain).

(e) Applications could be reviewed when A-level (and equivalent) results were confirmed, with the possibility to admit students below their original offer, depending on departmental capacity and targets. Typical offers were also reviewed over the summer period before the following year’s cycle.

(f) Although detailed comparator information was not available in respect of the achievement of widening participation (WP) targets, overall UCAS had reported that, against expectations, the decline in applications from the most socially advantaged groups had been greater than the decline in applications from the least socially advantaged groups.

(g) The confirmation period would be more complex than in previous years due to limits on core recruitment, issues around AAB
equivalence of non-A level qualifications and HEFCE penalties for over-recruitment.

(h) Speculation about applicants seeking to study more locally had not been borne out by the application statistics for York; national data on this question was not available.

(i) Looking ahead to the next admissions cycle for entry in 2013, it was reported that HEFCE had recently announced an increase in contestable places with a shift from AAB to ABB, further opening up the market at the top end. It was thought that this development would generally benefit the University and its WP aspirations.

11-12/37 Student Representation Policy

Further to M11-12/23, Senate noted that the new student representation policy would be re-submitted to the next meeting of Senate following further consideration by Teaching Committee.

11-12/38 Regulation 7: Student Discipline

Further to M11-12/25, Senate considered a revised version of University Regulation 7 which incorporated amendments proposed at the last meeting (S.11-12/25).

Presenting the revised draft, the Academic Registrar reported that, following advice from the University’s Legal Administrator and the Data Protection Officer, it had been agreed that records of disciplinary matters should not be kept on students’ academic records in SITS. The approach to keeping and storing such records elsewhere would be clarified in the guidance notes that would be drafted to accompany the revised regulation.

During discussion of the draft the following further amendments were noted:

(a) ‘in which where’ in the second sentence of the preamble to read ‘in which’;

(b) consistency of capitalisation to be applied to the word ‘regulation’ throughout;
(c) consistency in use of ‘Registrar & Secretary’ throughout;

(d) §7.2.3(p) rendered otiose by the phrase in brackets in §7.2.3(j);

(e) ninth bullet-point under §7.1: remove reference to confiscation of weapons as this follows logically from the preceding offence of possession of such weapons;

(f) correct spelling of ‘statute’ throughout (two occurrences of ‘statue’);

(g) re-phrase final sentence of opening preamble as follows:

‘This community extends beyond the bounds of the University campus. The scope of this regulation can include, but is not limited to, incidents on University-related business or events, or between students.’

(h) clarify fifth bullet-point under §7.1 by insertion of ‘inappropriate’ before ‘posting or distributing’ and by deletion of ‘without the University’s prior written consent’;

(i) ‘and’ in §7.2.3(l) to read ‘an’.

Subject to the above amendments, Senate approved the revised regulation for incorporation in the 2012/13 edition of the University Ordinances and Regulations.

11-12/39 Statement by the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor reported the following matters:

Events/Developments

The University had been invited to become a member of the Russell Group of leading UK universities.

The University was celebrating the Queen’s Diamond Jubilee with the creation of a ‘Diamond Wood’ on its Heslington East campus.

The Departments of Physics, Psychology and Computer Science had received awards from the Athena SWAN Charter in recognition of their support for women in science.
The University was strengthening research ties with Brazil after signing a far-reaching scientific cooperation agreement with the São Paulo Research Foundation (FAPESP).

The Institution of Engineering and Technology had accredited the Department of Electronics with academic partner status.

People

Professor Chris Thomas (Biology) had been elected a Fellow of the Royal Society.

Professor Helen Weinstein (Institute for the Public Understanding of the Past) had been appointed to the Advisory Board of BBC Worldwide.

Dr Koki Imada (Physics) had been awarded a European Fusion Development Agreement (EFDA) Fellowship.

Dr Bob Phillips (Centre for Reviews and Dissemination) had been awarded ‘Faculty Member of the Year’ for his work in the Faculty of Research Methodology in the Faculty of 1000 (a service for researchers providing commentary on scientific research papers).

Sophie Coulombeau (Centre for 18th Century Studies) had won Route’s ‘Next Great Novelist Award’ for her book *Rites*.

Stepping Down

Professor Cantor confirmed his recent announcement that he would be stepping down as Vice-Chancellor at the end of the 2013 calendar year (M11-12/44 below also refers).

Government policy on student number controls

It was noted that, in addition to HEFCE’s announcement of an increase in contestable places with a shift from AAB to ABB (M11-12/36 above also refers), the core and margin would also reduce significantly with only an additional 5,000 places top-sliced and opened up for lower-cost bids. The University would continue to monitor and respond accordingly to such ongoing changes in government higher education policy.

*Senate: 15 May 2012*
Undergraduate Degree Classifications

Senate considered the annual report on undergraduate degree classifications prepared by the Planning Office (S.11-12/26).

Attending the meeting to present the report, the Deputy Director of Corporate Planning (John Busby) and the Chair of the Standing Committee on Assessment (Dr Steve King), drew Senate's attention to the following key points:

- 74% average of good (i.e. first and upper second class) degrees awarded in 2010/11, but with wide variation across departments;
- slightly higher than average percentage of good degrees awarded compared to 1994 and Russell Groups;
- proposals for deeper analysis based on 2012/13 results (to accommodate full implementation of the new modular scheme) and for an agreed academic outcome reporting schedule in 2012/13.

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) The proposed deeper analysis would include subject-level comparisons with the wider HE sector to separate out local and systemic issues.

(b) The equitable application of academic standards was becoming an issue of greater interest to stakeholders from outside the sector (e.g. employers).

(c) HESA data on the percentage of good degrees was used by the compilers of certain league tables, with varying and inconsistent approaches to its treatment.

(d) The proposed deeper analysis would attempt to control for differing levels of A-level achievement across students in different disciplines in order to avoid the distortion caused by using an aggregate entry tariff. No comparator information would, however, be available in this area.

(e) Distinguishing levels of achievement within the large upper second category (52.8 % at York in 2010/11) would be easier if data were drawn exclusively from the new modular scheme as proposed.
(f) The timing of the proposed deeper analysis would have an impact on the capacity and priorities of the Planning Office. External specialist statistical expertise would also have to be bought in as part of the project.

Following consideration of the implications of different options for the timing of the proposed multi-level analysis, Senate approved (by clear majority vote) the proposal that the analysis be applied to 2012/13 undergraduate degree classifications. It also approved the proposed timeline for academic outcome reporting (UG, PGT and PGR) in 2012/13, in accordance with Annex B to the main report.

11-12/41 Business from Committees

Senate noted and approved business from the following committee meetings (S.11-12/27):

- Teaching Committee: 16 January and 12 March 2012
- Research Committee: 1 & 21 March and 11 April 2012
- Planning Committee: 7 March 2012
- HYMS Joint Senate Committee: 19 January 2012

11-12/42 Forthcoming Committee Vacancies

Forthcoming vacancies for committee appointments to be made by Senate commencing 1 August 2012 were noted (S.11-12/28).

Members of Senate wishing to make nominations were asked to:

(a) check the current membership and terms of reference of the committee in question at:

http://www.york.ac.uk/about/organisation/governance/sub-committees/

(b) submit nominations to Philip Evans (Registrar's and Planning Office, philip.evans@york.ac.uk) by Friday 29 June 2012 (last day of Summer Term) at the latest.

It was noted that the nominations received would be presented to Senate for approval at its meeting on 10 July 2012. Where more than one nomination was received for a single vacancy, a ballot paper would be circulated to Senate members after the July meeting.
11-12/43 Register of Validated Programmes

Senate received for information the 2011/12 register of taught programmes of study involving collaboration, including validated programmes (S.11-12/29).

11-12/44 Process for Recruitment of the next Vice-Chancellor

Note: The Vice-Chancellor left the meeting for discussion of this item of business [tabled] and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor assumed the Chair.

Further to Professor Cantor’s recent announcement that he would be stepping down as Vice-Chancellor at the end of 2013, the Registrar & Secretary reported the process that would be followed to recruit his successor, as follows:

- The process would be led by the Chair of Council and a recommendation to Council for the appointment would be agreed by a Joint Committee of Senate and Council, in accordance with University statutes. The Registrar & Secretary and the Director of HR would support the process, and external advisory input might also be sought.

- The Joint Committee would comprise the following members:
  - Chair of Council (Chair)
  - 3 other lay members of Council
  - 4 Senate appointees
  - 2 student Presidents (SU and GSA)
  - 1 member of support staff

- The process would be as open and inclusive as possible, while at the same time maintaining respect for the candidates’ confidentiality.

- The intention would be for the Joint Committee to submit a recommendation to Council before the end of the 2012 calendar year.

- Recruitment consultants would be appointed and a job description and person specification drawn up following consultation with staff and students by means of a series of forums.

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With regard to the four Senate appointees to the Joint Committee, Senate members would shortly be invited to self-nominate to join a small group to identify four suitable academic members.

Noting that some suggestions for the appointment had already been received, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor invited Senate members to send any further suggestions directly to her via email.

11-12/45 Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of Senate was scheduled for Tuesday 10 July 2012 at 3.15pm.