UNIVERSITY OF YORK

SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 November 2011

Present:  The Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
          The Deputy Vice-Chancellor
          Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Dr J Grenville
          Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Ms E Heaps
          Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor J Local
          Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor C Mellors
          Academic Coordinator (Sciences), Professor B Fulton

Professor S Bell                     Professor V Gould
Professor M Bentley                  Professor H Graham
Professor C Brown                    Professor A Higson
Dr J Buchanan                       Professor J Hill
Professor S Carroll                  Professor A Jones
Professor B Chambers                 Professor M Maynard
Dr A Charlwood                      Dr R Ogden
Dr S Chong                          Dr F Polack
Dr J Clarbour                       Professor M Savage
Mr T Clarke                          Dr J Schofield
Professor E Corrigan                 Dr A Sowden
Ms K Diaconu                        Professor T Stoneham
Mr T Ellis                          Professor Q Summerfield
Professor M Festenstein              Professor R Taylor
Professor H Fulton                   Professor J Wainwright
Professor M Goddard                  Dr M White

In attendance:  The Registrar and Secretary
                The Academic Registrar
                University Governance Officer, Dr P Evans
                SU Academic Affairs Officer, Mr G Osborn
                Assistant Registrar (Academic Support Office),
                Mrs C Moore (for M11-12/6-8)
                Director of Careers Service, Mrs L Smith (for
                M11-12/9)

Apologies for absence were received from Dr C Fewster, Professor D Howard, Dr R
Jacobs, Dr O Lisagor, Professor J Maltby, Mrs K Mann, Professor J McDermid, Dr P

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Mitchell, Professor M Ormrod, Professor P Sells, Professor D Smith, Professor L Stewart, Professor S Thompson, Professor S Toms, Mr S Town, Mr G Wall and Professor A Webster.

11-12/1 Terms of Reference/Membership

Senate noted its terms of reference as set out in the Charter/Statutes and the new ‘Statement of Primary Responsibilities’ agreed as part of the previous year’s effectiveness review (S.11-12/1).

As it was the first meeting of the 2011/12 academic session, the Vice-Chancellor welcomed new members. It was noted that further student members would be elected before the next meeting.

11-12/2 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2011 were approved.

11-12/3 Review of Senate Effectiveness

Further to M10-11/54, Senate received for information a report on progress to implement the actions arising from the previous year’s effectiveness review (S.11-12/2), noting in particular the outstanding actions that would be completed during 2011/12.

11-12/4 Appointments to Committees

Further to M10-11/55, Senate noted the appointments to committees which had been approved by the Vice-Chancellor since the last meeting (S.11-12/3).

11-12/5 Statement by the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor reported the following matters:

Events/Developments

Sir Alan Langlands (Chief Executive of HEFCE) had officially opened the Ron Cooke Hub on Heslington East.
Work had started on the new Langwith College, the first building in the second phase of Heslington East. Work had also started on the York Sports Village and both were due to be completed in 2012.

The University and Seoul National University had held a joint workshop in Korea on current and future environmental risks.

The Centre for Lifelong Learning and Department of Physics were working with the National Science Learning Centre on a project funded by the National HE STEM programme to re-engage adults with science.

The University was part of an experimental tissue engineering centre established by Arthritis Research UK to develop treatments for osteoarthritis.

The University had received a national award from the Institute of Physics for its work to reduce gender inequality among staff and students in university physics.

People

Professor Jim Woodcock (Computer Science) and Professor Andy Marvin (Electronics) had been elected Fellows of the Royal Academy of Engineering.

Dr John Cooper (History) had been elected Fellow of the Royal Historical Society.

The University had welcomed a record number of five Fulbright Scholars for the new academic year (Claire Farago, Leslie Gaston, Melinda Luisa de Jesús, Doug Spaniol and Natalie Stokes).

The Director of the York Plasma Institute, Professor Howard Wilson (Physics), had received a Wolfson Research Merit Award from the Royal Society.

Dr Euan Polson (Biology), a member of the YCR Cancer Research Unit, had won the prize for the best presentation of prostate cancer research at the World Congress on Urological Research.
National HE Developments

The Vice-Chancellor outlined the following current issues in higher education nationally:

- HE White Paper (M10-11/56 refers) and implications for student recruitment;
- UK Border Agency regulations and implications for recruitment of overseas staff and students;
- implementation from 2012/13 of the new Key Information Set (KIS);
- UUK report on post-qualification application (PQA).

It was noted that 2011/12 would be a difficult financial year in the context of new student number controls, preparations for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) and government funding cuts introduced ahead of the new fees regime.

11-12/6 National Student Survey 2011

Senate considered a report from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor on the 2011 National Student Survey (NSS) results (S.11-12/4).

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor highlighted the following points:

- response rate of 74% (national average: 65%);
- rise of 1% in overall satisfaction (87%), improving national ranking from 29th to 27th;
- 89% satisfaction for ‘the teaching on my course’;
- very tight distribution of outcomes across the sector;
- scores across all dimensions 2006 to 2011 (Table 1 refers);
- departmental outcomes relative to national sector quartiles (Table 2 refers);
- consequences for institutional outcome of poor performance in departments with large student cohorts;
- Deputy Vice-Chancellor and other relevant colleagues meeting with those departments showing poor results (in some cases whole staff meetings also involving the Vice-Chancellor);
- development and implementation of departmental action plans;
- inclusion from 2012 of NSS data in the new KIS, with associated implications in respect of student choices/recruitment;
- importance of, and methods for, improvement in the dimensions of assessment and feedback and learning resources (especially as regards positive promotion of library resources);
- significance of departmental leadership and culture to improving the student experience.

During discussion the student representatives supported the Deputy Vice-Chancellor’s overall assessment and emphasised that the tight distribution of results across the sector allowed small improvements to generate significant increases in position. The Vice-Chancellor also observed that improving the University’s position needed to be a shared and collaborative process with the student body.

**11-12/7 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey**

Senate considered a report from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor on the 2011 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) results (S.11-12/4), noting in particular the following:

- response rate of 54% (national average: 32%);
- structure of survey around specific questions, including in respect of meeting expectations;
- analysis of University results relative to sector averages (Appendix 3 refers), showing a very positive picture compared to the Russell and 1994 Group averages in general and especially in respect of the provision of teaching opportunities;
- areas for improvement with regard to library stock, financial support and thesis examination in a few specific departments;
- departmental variations across the different dimensions (e.g. in respect of supervision);
- meetings between the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and senior staff in the few departments with poor results in key dimensions;
- plans to run a Postgraduate Taught survey in 2011/12;
- guidance on which aspects of the survey outcome might be used in publicity materials.

During discussion the GSA President confirmed the positive opinion of postgraduates in respect of teaching opportunities but suggested that the question of postgraduate employability was an area for further improvement. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor supported this view and drew attention to the wide departmental variations under the heading ‘Professional Development and Careers’ (Appendix 4, Section 7 refers).
The Academic Registrar reported in this context that the Employability Coordination Group was reviewing departmental employability plans, with particular reference to careers support for postgraduates.

11-12/8 QAA Institutional Review: Self Evaluation Document

Senate considered the University’s draft Self-Evaluation Document (SED) for the QAA Institutional Review that was scheduled to take place in January and February 2012 (S.11-12/5).

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor reminded Senate of the methodology for the review (M10-11/59 refers) and drew attention to the different sections of the SED which corresponded to the QAA’s expectation of an evidence-based rather than narrative presentation. It was noted that the document was still being developed and further work would be undertaken to finalise it ahead of the submission deadline (21 November 2011) and members with detailed comments were asked to submit them directly to the Academic Support Office (ASO).

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) The level of interaction with individual departments would emerge when specific requests arose during the review process.

(b) Senate members were invited to submit suggestions to the drafting team in the ASO of examples of evidence which were relevant to the factors outlined.

(c) The introduction seemed somewhat defensive and lacking in confidence as regards current management arrangements, and it was suggested that this might be re-visited in further drafting. One particular sentence under the heading ‘Size, structure and culture’ ("The ‘distance’ between UTC and departments...") required further clarification in this context.

(d) Further evidence would be added to the thematic element on the first-year student experience, and members were invited to submit suggestions.

(e) The student submission being prepared by the SU/GSA followed the same evidence-based, non-narrative structure and had been commented on by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and ASO colleagues.
Subject to the above points and completion of further drafting work, Senate approved the SED for submission to the QAA.

11-12/9

Destination of Leavers from Higher Education

Senate considered a report on the Destination of Leavers from Higher Education 2010 (5.11-12/6).

Attending the meeting to present the report, the Director of Careers (Liz Smith) drew particular attention to the following:

- data was gathered six months after graduation and, following review by HESA, this would remain the case in future years;
- there were differences between the survey’s target population and the population used by HESA to calculate employment indicators for institutions (as used in newspaper league tables);
- the data would gain a higher profile from its future inclusion in the KIS (including salary data for the first time);
- compared to the figures for 2008/09, the unemployment rate had dropped from 10.7% to 8.1%, while graduate-level destinations had risen by 2.7% (from 68.8% to 71.5%);
- the University’s results for 2010 leavers showed a more significant improvement in its HESA employment performance indicator (EPI) than any of its comparator group;
- considerable work had been undertaken to improve employability since the 2009/10 cohort had graduated, and it was hoped this would continue to improve employment outcomes for York graduates.

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) The task of encouraging graduates to complete the survey was undertaken via the Alumni Relations Office. Graduates could also be advised on the validity and nature of their responses (e.g. in respect of volunteering or working for family businesses).

(b) The new question on salary level was likely to require a 50% response rate in order to be publishable, and it was thought this level of response was unlikely to be achieved.
(c) The recent improvement in the University’s EPI relative to its comparators had been reported to the Director of External Relations for use in publicity materials.

(d) The full DLHE data set had been uploaded by the Planning Office into Tableau visual exploration software and would in due course be made available via the HoDs Gateway.

(e) Graduate employability was a high priority for the University and the Careers Service was making the transition towards supporting all students through more proactive collaboration with their academic departments (e.g. the new employability module). This new approach was intended to ensure that York students were enabled to compete effectively in the graduate job market.

11-12/10 Business from Committees

Senate noted and approved business from the following committee meetings (S.11-12/7):

- Teaching Committee: 17 October 2011
- Planning Committee: 20 July and 12 October 2011

11-12/11 Amendment to Regulation 5.8(b)

Senate approved the recommendation from the Examinations Office (S.11-12/8) that Regulation 5.8(b) be re-worded as follows:

“Before the receipt of an award parchment, all students are required to make suitable arrangements with the Finance Department for the clearing of all tuition fee debts.”

11-12/12 Periodic Review Reports

Senate received for information periodic review reports in respect of Language & Linguistic Science, Languages for All and Physics (S.11-12/9).

11-12/13 Date of next meeting

It was noted that the next meeting of Senate was scheduled for Tuesday 31 January 2012 at 3.15pm.