

Senate

20/01 A meeting of the Senate was held in G06 Chancellor's Building, on Wednesday 4 March 2020 at 2.15 pm.

Present:

The Vice-Chair (Chair)

Professor Cindy Becker
Professor Adrian Bell
Dr Rebecca Berkley
Professor Helen Bilton
Professor Ingo Bojak
Professor Claire Collins
Professor Ben Cosh
Dr Giuseppe Di Fatta
Professor Mark Fellowes
Professor Richard Frazier
Professor Clare Furneaux
Professor Louise Hague
Professor Rebecca Harris
Professor Chris Harty
Dr Chloe Houston
Professor Carmel Houston-Price
Dr Katherine Hyde
Ms Rebecca Jerrome
Professor Gunter Kuhnle
Dr Allan Laville
Professor Elizabeth McCrum
Professor Simon Mortimer
Dr Karen Poulter
Professor Jane Setter
Dr Mark Shanahan
Dr Stephanie Sharp
Professor Simon Sherratt
Professor Vesna Stojanovik
Dr Maria Vahdati
Professor Sue Walker
Dr Hong Wei
Professor Adrian Williams
Professor Paul Williams
Dr Hon Yang
Professor Parveen Yaqoob
Professor Dominik Zaum

Students:

Molli Cleaver
Fifi Bangham
Daisy O'Connor
Zeid Sharif

In attendance:

Ms Louise Sharman (Secretary)
Ms Sam Foley
Dr Richard Messer

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed members to the Senate.

The Vice-Chancellor paid tribute to the following who had died since the last meeting of the Senate:

Mrs Joan Van Emden – Visiting Lecturer in Construction, Management and Engineering to 2007

Andrew Palmer – Member of the University Council 1998-2008, supporter of MERL, Chairman of the Friends 2005-2016, Visiting Fellow in SPEIR, recipient of an Honorary Degree – Doctor of Laws

Emeritus Professor Frank Palmer – Professor of Linguistic Science in 1965, Dean of the Faculty of Letters and Social Sciences 1969-1972, Head of the Department of Linguistics from 1975, retired in 1987.

Emeritus Professor Colin Gray – Professor in the School of Politics, Economics and International Studies

20/02 The Minutes (19/43 - 19/58) of the meeting held on 6 November 2019 were approved.

Items for Presentation and Discussion

20/03 Review of Quality Assurance Processes and Structures (Item 4)

The Senate received a presentation from the Director of Quality Support and Development, Teaching and Learning Dean (Professor Strohfeltdt), School Director of Teaching and Learning (Ms Jerrome) on a proposed project to review and redesign the University's quality assurance policies, processes and structures for teaching and learning.

The Senate noted that the principle drivers for the review were:

- a) Changes in the regulatory environment – created an opportunity to rethink quality assurance policies, processes and structures. The University's current

quality assurance processes were largely shaped by the needs of the previous national regulatory regime, which focussed primarily on an institution's policies and processes, their alignment with the (then very detailed) UK Quality Code for Higher Education, and the need to evidence compliance across the institution. The new regulatory environment, at least in principle, focused primarily on performance measures and student outcomes, with a secondary interest in process. The UK Quality Code for Higher Education had been radically revised and provided universities with greater freedom to adopt different approaches to quality assurance

- b) Current University quality assurance processes were disproportionately burdensome - This view was shared by senior management, Schools, and those Functions with responsibility for supporting quality assurance and enhancement. Some aspects of the processes involve duplication and redundancy, yield limited value (particularly in relation to enhancement), and neither represented the best use of academic staff time nor took full account of reduced capacity to support such processes.
- c) Increasing the focus on quality enhancement and embedding the Curriculum Framework more fully - would improve the effectiveness of our quality assurance policies, processes and structures. Quality assurance policies and processes needed to ensure that programmes and pedagogical practice continued to be shaped by the Curriculum Framework beyond its project phase. Current work on student voice and partnership had implications for the structures and processes through which students engage with, and share in, quality assurance and enhancement. Initiatives on the management of teaching and learning data and on evaluation and impact offer important support for assurance and enhancement.

The Senate noted that a Steering Group had been established to guide the review. It was anticipated that the substantive work of the project would be completed within one calendar year and would be followed by a period for further implementation. The first phase of the project would involve consultation with key stakeholders (Heads of School, School Directors of Teaching and Learning, Programme Directors, staff in relevant Functions). On the advice of RUSU students would be consulted at a later stage as new policies and processes were being developed. The second phase of the project would involve redesigning the policies, processes and structures. In the third phase, the redesigned processes would be implemented with early priorities implemented for 2020/21 and the remainder for 2021/22.

It was noted that key considerations in developing revised/redesigned policies, processes and structures were that they should:

- a) eliminate duplication and redundancy, reduce the administrative burden on academic staff, and free up time for teaching and research;
- b) support quality enhancement. They must help to drive continuous improvement in the University's educational provision and in pedagogical practice, and support staff in fulfilling these ambitions;
- c) be rigorous and effective in monitoring quality and standards, addressing issues which arise, and ensuring that Schools and Functions with responsibilities for teaching and learning were accountable to the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience, to Senate, and to Council;

- d) satisfy the requirements of the University's regulators in respect of its educational provision (OfS, QAA, Ofsted, ESFA) and a range of external stakeholders, including PSRBs, and provide the basis for public confidence in the value of our awards. The processes would assure fulfilment of the Quality Code Expectations and qualifications frameworks, and would have due regard to widely recognised, but non-mandatory, reference points, such as QAA's Advice and Guidance on the Quality Code and Subject Benchmark Statements. The processes would support improvements in the University's performance in the NSS, PTES and TEF.
- e) be agile in facilitating change and responding to new opportunities.

Members of the Senate were asked for their views to the following questions:

1. What are the current strengths of the University's QA processes?
2. What are the current issues and obstacles in the University's QA processes?
3. What ideas do you have to improve the current QA processes?

The following comments were made:

- The review should consider a risk-based approach to QA - for e.g. a lighter touch approach in some areas, with more detailed work in areas where data fell outside a threshold level.
- Different Schools had different accrediting bodies. The work done as part of accreditation could be used for QA purposes in avoid repetition.
- Focus also needed to be given to PGT, not just UG.
- It would be helpful to introduce greater flexibility into processes, for e.g. being able to act on student feedback more quickly.
- It would be helpful to reflect on the Impact, Planning and Evaluating Report.
- Need to identify what the problem is and what outcome is being sought in order to review processes.
- Data and initial interpretations should be provided to Schools, who should then be asked to based discussions on specific points rather than simply providing a volume of data for a free ranging discussion.
- SPELT/AQAR/SPS 5 Year Plan should be combined to avoid repletion.
- University processes were mainly QA rather than QE
- The review should ascertain what other HEIs have done
- The University should produce a more visual layout of processes
- Committee members should be tasked with gathering more feedback from the constituencies they represent, so that processes don't feel top down.

Additional feedback from Senate members was gathered and would be fed into the review.

The Senate thanked all those involved in the review.

20/04 Preparations for REF 2021 (Item 5)

The Senate received an update on progress with preparations for REF 2021. In particular it was noted that:

- The REF Code of Practice was finalised in May 2019. The CoP included provisions to ensure that the University adhered to the principles of transparency, consistency, accountability and inclusivity in all aspects of REF preparations, and in particular with regards to the processes to determine significant responsibility for research, research independence, effects of personal circumstances, and output selection. The University's Code was approved by the funding bodies in September 2019. This enabled its full implementation during the Autumn term of 2019/20.
- The CoP established that the University would return 100% of its eligible staff, namely all Teaching & Research staff and all Research Only staff who were deemed to be Research Independent.
- In September 2019, relevant staff were invited to submit evidence to enable assessment against the criteria for research independence identified in the Code of Practice. A total of [redacted, section 43] staff provided information for assessment. The REF Planning Group determined Research Independence in [redacted, section 43] cases. Outcomes were notified to staff and no appeals against decisions were made. As described in the Code, a further round of assessments will take place in the Summer term 2020 to capture those colleagues who recently join the University and those whose circumstances have changed over the past few months.
- In October 2019, all eligible staff were invited to voluntarily declare personal circumstances which had impacted in their ability to research productively. Through this process, [redacted, section 43] staff declared personal circumstances.
- In line with the CoP, the pool of eligible outputs for each UoA was established.
- In January 2020, a REF mock exercise was undertaken. The exercise was a fixed control point, bringing current information about all the submission elements in order to: Determine the likely shape and quality of the University's submission; Assess the current status of preparations under each element against the requirements of our submission; Assess where further refinements and improvements could be made; Review risks at University and UOA level and agree mitigation actions for the remaining of the planning period; Review the degree of adherence to the Code of Practice in UOAs; Provide with fixed point data to undertake an interim equality impact assessment.
- In February 2020, the REF Planning Group reviewed all UOA submissions. Based on mock exercise data, the University would return [redacted, section 43]. As indicated above, [redacted, section 43] staff were confirmed as research independent. There would be small changes as staff joined and left over the coming months, and as the second round of research independence assessments was run. Based on the voluntary declarations of personal circumstances it was expected that reductions requests would be made for the March 2020 deadline for [redacted, section 43] UOAs where the impact of these circumstances had been significant. Based on the current FTE, the institutional output requirement was 1,723.
- [redacted, section 43]
- Environment statements were drafted in early January. Overall, environment statements were of good quality, with room for improvements in all UOAs. The exercise has enabled the REF Planning Group to identify those UOAs where

further support in the development of narratives was required and put in place actions to progress these.

- During the Spring Term work would be undertaken on: the interim Equality Impact Assessment; a mock audit; continue to work with UoA leads to address risks identified as part of the mock exercise; assess research independence; review any further voluntary declarations of personal circumstances.

20/05 Report of the Vice-Chancellor (Item 6)

The Senate received the Vice-Chancellor's address to the Senate, noting in particular:

- a) New senior appointments - The new PVCs Education, Professors Elizabeth McCrum and Julian Park, started in post on 1 January 2020. Following an unsuccessful recruitment process for a PVC International with Student Experience, UEB and Council had reconsidered the approach for these portfolios. For the international portfolio, a recruitment process for recruiting a full-time PVC International would start shortly. This role would be advertised internally and externally. On student experience, it had been agreed that the PVCs Education would assume responsibility for Student Experience, increasing their FTE to 0.8FTE and would have the amended title of PVC Education and Student Experience. Professor Parveen Yaqoob had also been appointed as Deputy Vice-Chancellor from 1 January.
- b) Coronavirus - A Major Incident Team had been established, led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The MIP was following Government and PHE advice in regard to the rapidly changing situation. Six work streams had been established - Teaching operations, international partnerships, communications, health, exams and graduation, recruitment and events. An information session for the Leadership Group was due to be held on 5 March 2020.
- c) Diversity and inclusion - Dr Allan Laville had now been appointed as Dean for Diversity and Inclusion. The University continues to be among Stonewall's Top 100 Employers. In December 2019 the University submitted an institutional-level Athena SWAN application for a Silver award.
- d) Enhanced study space - Additional temporary study space had been opened in the URS Building to accommodate anticipated additional student demand during peak period. Study@URS would open on Monday 2 March and would provide an additional 250 study spaces.
- e) Government reshuffle - Local MP Alok Sharma had been appointed Energy Minister at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and had been given the responsible for COP26. Universities Minister Chris Skidmore had lost his job. Amanda Solloway, MP for Derby North, would replace him at the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, and Michelle Donelan, MP for Chippenham, would take on responsibility for the sector in the Department for Education (DfE). Gavin Williamson was retained as Secretary of State at DfE.
- f) Fees and TEF - Following the General Election result, it was likely that there would be renewed interest in the coming months in implementing some of the ideas of the Augar Review on post 18 education and funding, possibly including the proposal for reduced student fees. The government had recently confirmed that the provider-level TEF exercise would not run in 2020.

- g) Brexit – The Government had now published how it wished to engage with the EU after 1 January 2021. Within that document reference was made to: wanting to be part of Horizon 2020; remaining part of Erasmus + for a time limited period; continuing to participate in Copernicus.
- h) [redacted, section 43]

Items for report and approval

20/06 Report of the University Executive Board (Item 7)

The Senate received a Report of the meetings of the University Executive Board held between 4 November 2019 and 17 February 2020.

20/07 Report of the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (Item 8)

The Senate received the Report of the meetings of the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (UBTLSE) held on between 29 October 2019 and 27 January 2020.

The Senate approved internal and external examiners for 2019/20.

The Senate noted that findings from the subject-level pilot 2018-19 were awaited with the future TEF framework consultation due for publication in April 2020.

20/08 Report of the University Board for Research and Innovation (Item 9)

The Senate received the Report of the meetings of the University Board for Research and Innovation.

In particular, the Senate noted that work was progressing with the implementation of the Concordat to support the Career Development of Early Career Researchers.

20/09 Report of the Global Engagement Strategy Board (Item 10)

The Senate noted that there was no report on this occasion.

Items for note

20/10 Report of the Senate Standing Committee on Examination Results (Item 11)

The Senate received and noted a report from the Senate Standing Committee on Examination Results summarising cases since the last Senate.

20/11 Report of the Student Appeals Committee (Item 12)

The Senate received the Report of the meeting of the Student Appeals Committee held on 13 January 2020 and noted the outcomes of the Committee's decisions.

20/12 Retirement of Professors (Item 13 a)

The Senate approved that under the provisions of Ordinance B7 the title of Emeritus Professor be conferred with effect from the date indicated on:

[Redacted, section 40]

20/13 Other Retirements (Item 13 b)

The Senate approved that that the following be accorded the title of Honorary Fellow for a period of five years with effect from the date indicated:

[Redacted, section 40]

[Redacted, section 40]

[Redacted, section 40]

[Redacted, section 40]

20/14 Items approved by Chairs action

The Senate noted the following items had been approved by Chair's Action:

- Appointment of Professor Julie Lovegrove and Dr Geoff Botting as joint Chairs of the University's Research Ethics Committee
- Appointment of Dr Kim Jackson to the University's Research Ethics Committee.

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Student representatives withdrew from the remainder of the meeting
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RESERVED BUSINESS

20/15 The reserved minutes (19/59-19/60) of the meeting held on 6 November 2019 were approved.

20/16 Reports of Examiners for Higher Degrees by thesis (Item 16 b)

The Senate approved recommendations for the award or otherwise of Higher Degrees.