

Senate

22/3 A meeting of the Senate was held via Teams, on Wednesday 2 March 2022 at 2.15 pm.

Present:

The Vice-Chancellor (Chair)

Dr Tabarak Ballal
Professor Adrian Bell
Professor Cindy Becker
Professor Kat Bicknell
Professor Helen Bilton
Professor John Board
Professor Ingo Bojak
Dr Simon Clarke
Professor Phil Dash
Dr Yota Dimitriadi
Professor Peter Dorward
Ilan Dwek
Dr David Field
Professor Richard Frazier
Professor Clare Furneaux
Dr Francesca Greco
Professor Becky Green
Paul Inman
Dr Chris Jones
Dr MARRISA JOSEPH
Dr Daniela La Penna
Dr Allan Laville
Dr Tim Lees
Professor Elizabeth McCrum
Dr John McKendrick
Dr David Marshall
Professor Annalisa Marzano
Professor Peter Miskell
Dr Mary Morrissey
Professor Simon Mortimer
Dr Jeanne-Louise Moys
Professor Keiichi Nakata
Professor Adrian Palmer

Professor Helen Parish
Dr Karen Poulter
Dr Sharon Sinclair-Graham
Professor Amy Smith
Professor David Stack
Professor Vesna Stojanovik
Professor Katja Strohfeldt
Dr Maria Vahdati
Dr Shixuan Wang
Dr Karin Whiteside
Professor Adrian Williams
Professor Paul Williams
Professor Parveen Yaqoob
Professor Dominik Zaum
Dr Ruvy Ziegler

Students:

Bethany Nugus, RUSU Education Officer
Ben Knowles, RUSU President
Amy Sheffield, RUSU Activities Officer
Grace Loweth, RUSU Welfare Officer
Rusafa Karim
Pierre Looper
Oscar Minto

In attendance:

Louise Sharman (Secretary)
Sam Foley
Dr Richard Messer
[redacted, section 40] (interpreter)
Sally Pellow

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed members to the Senate and outlined the format of the meeting.

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

Dr Simon Lee – Simon was a former undergraduate at the University. He returned to the University in 1987 working within the School of Arts, Communication and Design as a Senior Lecturer and Senior Tutor. During the mid-late 1990s Simon was Head of the History of Art Department. He retired in 2017.

Paul Mercier – Paul joined the University in the mid-1960s as a Senior Lecturer within the Department of Education and retired in 1985.

Dr Timothy Ryder – Timothy joined Classic as a Reader in 1990. He retired in 1995.

Dr John Seeley – John joined the Physics Department in 1964 before becoming a Lecturer in the Department of Engineering and Cybernetics in 1977, he became a Reader in 1987 and retired in 1993.

Bill Watts – Bill joined the University in 1972 as an Administrative Assistant, in 1989 he became Sub-Dean, Deputy Registrar in 1996, and Secretary to Council in 2003. He retired in 2008.

22/4 The Minutes (21/43 – 21/60) of the meeting held on 3 November 2021 and (22/1 – 22/2) of the meeting held on 5 January 2022 were approved.

Items for presentation and discussion

22/5 Updates on the Expectations and Workload Pathway Projects (Item 4)

The Senate received a verbal update on progress with the Expectations and Workload Pathway Pilot Projects from Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Dominik Zaum who highlighted a few key points, in particular:

- A final paper had not yet been submitted to the Strategic Foundations Programme Board; a full report would be expected at the June meeting of Senate.
- The Expectations Framework Group led by Phil Newton and Becky Jerrome had worked with a number of colleagues in developing a high-level framework on academic expectations (teaching and learning, research, citizenship) which would align with the academic promotions processes.
- The Framework had been discussed at the Programme Board who were keen to develop an implementation plan. There were difficult questions relating to how expectations were set and benchmarking of data sets at the disciplinary and individual level
- An implementation group had been established with initial focus on running pilots in two areas (Meteorology and Education) from this September.

22/6 Verbal Update on the Review of Senate (Item 5)

At its meeting in November 2021 the Senate had approved the establishment of a review of the effectiveness of Senate in 2021/22, undertaken by the Senate itself.

Professor Katrina Bicknell and Professor Richard Frazier gave an update to the Senate on the discussions to date, in particular:

- The Group had met on four occasions to date. Early meetings had looked at the previous review of Senate, reflected on individual experiences as Senators, and looked at Senate arrangements at other institutions.
- The Group had agreed that improvements could be made to induction processes setting out – where Senate sits in terms of decision making, role of Senate, its powers, remit, obligation of Senators, structure of Committees feeding in, and how representatives would benefit from a handover.
- The format and conduct of meetings had been discussed especially in regard to the pandemic and how big decisions had to be made at speed. The Review Group were of the opinion that many papers were not submitted in time to allow a full discussion and consideration of business with too many items a ‘fait accompli’. Senators felt rushed into decision making with several feeling that their voice was not being heard.
- Consideration should be given to receiving interim reports to allow Senate to contribute at an earlier stage in discussions.
- There was some support for retaining certain meetings online, with meetings at the start and end of year in person.
- The Group were in favour of a pre-meeting to discuss items of business ahead of the formal meeting.
- The Group had discussed the diversity of Senate and was in favour of agreed ambitions around D&I rather than specific targets. Discussions had focused on how underrepresented groups could be included and consideration was being given to membership categories as well as co-option.
- Professor Frazier reported that the Sub-Group looking at Senate/Council effectiveness had met and was reviewing how Senate could provide assurance to Council on matters of academic governance and standards. There was a need to understand what both Senate and Council were doing, where there were gaps or overlaps, and how they could work most effectively together. A survey of Senate members had been issued to gather some views.

The following comments were made:

- In regard to diversity more could be done at the start of the process in seeking names and through the election process.
- It was important to recognise that the OfS required formal sign-off for items which in the past would have been agreed by the Senate. The Senate/Council Sub-Group would need to look at how that landscape had changed in driving more decisions to Council than had previously been the case and how scrutiny should be taken in the future.
- There was confusion over the relationship between Senate and Council. Professor Mortimer enquired whether the view of Senate on the Portfolio Review Pathway Projects had been relayed to Council in January. Professor Frazier confirmed that they had seen the full Minutes of Senate and that the matter had also been discussed in a pre-meeting. It was the role of the Senate representative on Council to answer any

questions they had.

The Senate recorded its thanks to all those available in the review. It was anticipated that a final report would be available by the end of the Summer Term.

22/7 Report of the Vice-Chancellor (Item 6)

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

Conflict in Ukraine – The Vice-Chancellor reported that he tended not to comment on ongoing political issues but decided that the situation in Ukraine was an exceptional situation where he felt that he should issue a statement; the statement was posted on the Portal on 1 March 2022.

The Senate noted that the University was supporting all students (Ukrainian and Russian; the University did not have any students from Belarus) and that it had one partnership arrangement with the Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO). The University would continue to support humanitarian responses. Members of the Senate circulated links to the Reading Ukrainian Community centre

Major Recovery Team (MRT) - Spring Term started with teaching on campus going ahead as timetabled with some minor exceptions. With the Government's announcement of uplifting of restrictions in late February, the MRT had issued guidance which included what to do if individuals tested positive and other measures the University was keeping in place such as face masks, reporting of positive cases, the use of hand sanitiser, online first approach to meetings and enhanced ventilation and cleaning.

UCU action on USS pension - The UCU's seven-day strike period finished last week. Given that most of the strike days coincided with Week 6, the impact on student teaching had been limited.

Leadership Group Appointments – Professor Peter Miskell had been appointed the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience), in a job-share with Elizabeth McCrum. Professor Trish Reid as Head of the School of Art, Communication and Design; Andrew Casselden as Director of Estates. Professor Adrain Bell had been re-appointed as Research Dean, Prosperity and Resilience for a further six-year period.

Diversity and Inclusion – the University had been awarded a silver award in the Stonewall Workplace Equality Index.

Admissions update – As at the UCAS equal consideration deadline for undergraduate applications (26th January) the University had a [redacted, section 43] in applications compared to a small -1% decline nationally. For postgraduate taught programmes, applications overall were [redacted, section 43] compared to last year. Applications from Home applicants were [redacted, section 43] and applications from International applicants were [redacted, section 43]. [Redacted, section 43]. For postgraduate research applications, applications were [redacted, section 43] overall.

REF – the outcome of REF would be published on 12 May 2022.

Open Research – the University was to receive £230k from a multi-million-pound funding award to drive open research practices.

Queens Anniversary Prize – the University had received the formal award of the Queens Anniversary Prize for 2021 – Tackling the Impacts of Climate Change – from Global to Local.

OfS - On the 20 January, the OfS launched three consultations on outcomes and teaching excellence: the future of the Teaching Excellence Framework; the OfS B3 regulations for student outcomes; and the data indicators underpinning TEF and the B3 Regulations. While the TEF consultation sets out the approach being taken for the next iteration of the exercise. The B3 proposals were focused on setting minimum quality thresholds in terms of continuation, completion and progression to further study or graduate employment and the regulatory to enforcing standards.

Sector news/Augar Review – It had been almost three years (1001 days) since of the release of the Augar Review of post-18 education and funding in England, the Government had now announced several significant changes to student finances.

1) Student Loans

New students enrolling in university from the 2022-23 academic year would see:

- their repayment term for students loans extended from 30 to 40 years
- a lower student loan repayment threshold, from £27,295 to £25,000
- a cut in interest rate on repayments to the Retail Price Index only, rather than the current RPI plus up to 3%.

These changes would see some students pay more than under the current system. It was expected that the changes would impact students from lower socio-economic groups and would have implications around widening participation.

With the increasing headline cost it would be important to emphasise student employability and career pathways.

2) Maintenance Grants

The Government had made no public reference to maintenance grants which was surprising given that Augar had commented on the reinstatement of maintenance grants. Colleagues needed to be mindful that increasingly students would need to work to support themselves through their studies. The University would continue to recruit its own students through Campus Jobs.

3) Tuition Fees

The Government also confirmed that the current tuition fee cap would be frozen at £9,250 for a further two years, up to and including 2024/25. While there had been a commitment to an uplift in grant funding, this was too little to offset the impact of fee stagnation – the £9250 fee would be worth £6000 by 2025.

The £10M challenge to offset inflation would continue and would be planned for in the work of the Strategic Foundations Programme and within the financial forecasts.

4) Consultations

At the same time, the government also launched two consultations on:

- Student number control
- Considering the introduction of minimum eligibility requirements
- Foundation Programmes

Savings needed to be found to fund plans to deliver the Lifelong Loan Entitlement (LLE).

The University was unlikely to face significant impact from the outcome of the announced consultations on minimum entry requirements, which was for students to achieve grade 4 English and maths GCSEs, or two A-levels at grade E, in order to access student loans. However, the cap on fees, and potentially also on student numbers, represented very real financial pressures for the University, in addition to existing challenges like increasing inflationary burdens and the ongoing impact of COVID. All of this inhibited the University's ability to reinvest to the extent it should, including in those facilities and services that benefited colleagues and students.

5) Post Qualifications Admission

Post-qualification admissions plans had been dropped in England.

In regard to specific questions raised:

- It was expected that Government would propose that income from foundation programmes be reduced to a level similar to access diplomas.
- It was expected that the £10M challenge would increase alongside increasing costs more broadly e.g. energy.
- Increasing student recruitment, particularly international and postgraduate, would be a way to offset the financial challenges and becoming more independent of Government policy.

Items for report and approval

22/8 Report of the University Executive Board (Item 7)

There was no report on this occasion.

22/9 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 25 January 2022.

The Senate noted updates from UBTLSE on:

- Portfolio Review Pathway Implementation Plan – this took into account the points raised at the last meeting of Senate
- Arrangements for examinations and assessment in 2021/22
- Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Risk Register

- Changes to policies
- Attendance Management and Engagement Project
- Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework
- University Annual Quality Assurance Review Report 2020/21
- Graduate outcomes 2018/19 Cohort – sector-level comparison
- UG and PG student surveys
- Sustainable Citizen ('Green') and Global Citizen ('International') Awards
- Education for Sustainable Development
- Extenuating Circumstances Redesign Project
- Student Voice and Partnership
- Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies
- Sector bodies and national initiatives
- PLaNT Project Scheme award winners 2020/21

The Senate were asked to approve and recommend to Council the Annual Learning and Teaching Report for Spring 2022, and to approve the appointment of internal and external examiners.

The Senate approved the appointment of the internal examiners.

The Senate recommended to the Council the Annual Learning and Teaching Report.

22/10 Report of the University Board for Research and Innovation (Item 9)

The Senate received the report of the University Board for Research and Innovation held on 27 October 2021.

In particular, the Senate noted that the Board:

- Had received papers relating to academic staffing at the University with specific reference to research:
 - The reintroduction of a 5% overhead incentive from research grants to investigators. A proposal in respect of supporting TI colleagues was being discussed with Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor McCrum.
 - Improving the recruitment of Early Career Research Fellows. Pilot projects were being undertaken in a number of areas tying into existing recruitment plans. Consideration would be given to fellows who started at another institution on a case-by-case basis.
- Received an update on the Expectations and workload pathway of the Strategic Foundation Programme.
- Agreed the planned priorities and allocations for the Research Endowment Trust Fund in 2021/22 and 2022/23
- Received an update on progress with the Concordat to support research integrity and the Concordat to support the career development of researchers.
- Ratified the selection processes in Themes for the Research output prize for Early Career Researchers.
- Discussed the proposed policy for the Acceptance of research and related funding

- Received an update on UKRI's Open Access research policy and recent related University activity.
- Received an update on the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021.
- Received an update on recent matters of business considered by the University Committee for Research and Innovation.

22/11 Report of the Global Engagement Strategy Board (Item 10)

The Senate noted that there was no report on this occasion but that an annual report would be submitted to the June meeting.

Items for note

22/12 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.

22/13 Report of the Student Appeals Committee (Item 12)

The Senate received the Report of the meeting of the Student Appeals Committee held since the last meeting and noted the outcomes of the Committee's decisions.

22/14 Items approved by Chair's Action (Item 13 a)

The Senate noted the following items had been approved by Chair's Action: appointment of Professor Frazier to the University Personal Titles Appeals Committee to 31.7.23

22/15 Retirement of Professors (Item 13 b)

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

Professor Neal Crosby (1.3.22)

22/16 Committee Vacancies (Item 13 c)

The Senate were reminded that a vacancy remained on the Joint University/UCU Committee

Student representatives withdrew from the remainder of the meeting

RESERVED BUSINESS

22/17 The reserved minutes (21/61 -21/62) of the meeting held on 3 November 2021 were approved.

22/18 Reports of Examiners for Higher Degrees by thesis (Item 16 b)

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