MEETING OF SENATE
MINUTES
Monday, 15 April 2019

1400, Room 4.10, 35 Berkeley Square

Present: The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Chair), Professors Barnes, Barr, Blom, Canagarajah, Cristianini, Eichhorn, Elliott, Hammond, Heslop, Iredale, Jordan, Linthorst, Nobes, Oliphant, Orpen, Pancost, Pantazis, Purdy, Ridley, Robbins, Robinson, Sandy, B Smith, E Wilson;

Dr M Barbour, Mr C Brasnett, Dr D Damen, Dr L Dickinson, Dr S Fitzjohn, Ms W Guo, Mr P Kent, Dr I Lazar, Dr K Lampe, Dr E Love, Dr S McGuinness, Dr F Mohammadi, Dr S Quadflieg, Mr S Singh.

In attendance: Ms L Barling (Clerk), Mr G Atkinson, Ms G Bragg, Ms Tracy Brunnock, Dr J Hallet, Mr D Jennings, Ms L Parr, Ms L Robinson, Mr Martin Wiles.

1. Minutes of the previous meeting on 25 February 2019.
1.1 APPROVED: the minutes of the meeting of 25 February 2019.

2. Chair’s Report
2.1 RECEIVED and NOTED (SN/18-19/032).

2.2 The Chair welcomed Professor Sarah Purdy (PVC Student Experience) and Ms Lucinda Parr (Registrar & Secretary) to their first Senate meeting.

2.3 Members congratulated Professor Ashley Blom who had recently been appointed the interim Head of the Bristol Medical School.

2.3 Senate ENDORSED the appointment of Professor Tansy Jessop as the new Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) from 1 July 2019 and expressed thanks to Professor Sally Heslop for her undertakings in the interim PVC Education role. Senate noted that Professor Heslop had been appointed Associate PVC TQEC (Education & Skills), and Associate PVC Quality & Skills from 1 July 2019.

Brexit update
2.4 The Chief Operating Officer provided an update on the current Brexit situation. The highlights where:

- The UK’s exit from the European Union had been delayed until 31 October 2019. In response the University was scaling back its business continuity planning as there was currently no significant risk for a ‘no deal’ Brexit. The situation would be reassessed in June, and if no withdrawal agreement had been approved, continuity planning would be stepped up again.
- The University had established staff and student (current and prospective) Brexit information web pages which were updated on a regular and ongoing basis:
  - [https://www.bristol.ac.uk/students/brexit-information-for-current-students/](https://www.bristol.ac.uk/students/brexit-information-for-current-students/)
  - [https://www.bristol.ac.uk/study/brexit/](https://www.bristol.ac.uk/study/brexit/)
  - [https://www.bristol.ac.uk/staff/brexit/](https://www.bristol.ac.uk/staff/brexit/)
2.5 The Chair thanked the Chief Operating Officer and those colleagues involved in Brexit continuity planning for their hard work to ensure the University was prepared for different scenarios.

**Freedom of Speech Code of Practice and External Speaker Procedure**

2.6 Members noted that recent events had raised some areas where the implementation of the University's External Speaker Policy might be updated in order to make it more effective and provide more guidance for colleagues. The procedure would therefore be reviewed with any further proposed amendments brought back to Senate for consideration.

2.7 Senate members were encouraged to ensure that they complied by the External Speaker Policy by doing an initial self-assessment of the risk and escalate if appropriate.

**University Governance**

2.8 Members noted that the Board of Trustees was reviewing its committee structures in order to streamline and clarify its governance structures. Senate will receive recommendations/clarifications in due course.

**Grants and Rewards**

2.9 Senate congratulated the PVC Research together with all colleagues involved in the coordination of the EPSRC and UKRI Doctoral Training (CDT) bids, which took the total number of CDTs awarded to the University to 10 at a total application value of over £60m. This was the highest number of bids awarded to the University in the country.

2.10 The PVC Research informed Senate that Research England had very recently awarded the University £29m as part of Research and Partnership Infrastructure Fund (RPIF), which would help to develop research across the University, with a particular focus on TQEC. Senate congratulated the PVC Research and thanked colleagues in RED for their hard work in this area. Members were pleased that this highlighted how much confidence the University’s external partners had for the institution, and noted that this represented a real opportunity for the University to move into a new research phase. A celebration was being arranged for 23 May 2019, and the government would make a public announcement on 10 July 2019. **Members were encouraged to maintain confidentiality on the matter** noting that the information could not be communicated externally until the government had made its announcement in July.

3. **Vice-Chancellor’s question time**

3.1 **Proposal for the university to declare a climate emergency (on file)**

3.1.1 Senate CONSENTED to a motion to discuss a proposal (on file) for the University to declare a climate emergency.

3.1.2 Senate noted that the University was very supportive of the proposal, and if Senate were also to indicate its support, the University would take this forward.

3.1.3 A debate ensued, and the following was highlighted:
- This represented an important opportunity for the University to declare its leadership in this area as the first University in the UK to declare a climate emergency.
- The University had made a commitment to move into net zero carbon by 2030 and it had already reduced its carbon emissions by 27% in absolute terms, which showed significant and important progress. In supporting the motion, this would exemplify the University's existing commitment to carbon measures.
• The University was the first Russell Group institution to fully disinvest from its fossil fuel investments by 2020, which was currently at only 2%. The University was also working with academics and students looking at how it could start to petition USS to start taking more responsible and sustainable approaches to its investments.
• There was an important link between the progress the university was making in the treatment of student mental health and wellbeing, and this ongoing ecological crisis for students.
• Members noted that in February 2019, Bristol SU also voted in a motion to support students in coordinating this campaign as did Bristol City Council in November 2018.
• If the University were to support this motion it would be very well received by our peers and external partners, and would be analogous to multiple pledges the University made during European Green Capital in 2015.
• It would be important for the University to declare the climate emergency but also to take a further step by drafting out what the key parameters might be, whilst clearly defining the key issues. This would allow the University to accept the role that it played in this and therefore create the dialogue and allow staff to challenge one another about these issues.
• The University should think about how climate change might affect the University as this would help it to collectively agree what action needed to be taken.

3.1.4 Senate **UNANIMOUSLY SUPPORTED** the motion to declare a climate change emergency.

3.1.5 The Senior Management Team, together with the Head of Sustainability and the Directors of the Cabot Institute, would consider the timing of the announcement, and would then discuss between them what other work ought to flow from it.

4. **Written questions**
4.1 None had been received. Members of Senate were reminded that they can submit written questions in advance of each meeting, for discussion.

5. **Faculty Board recommendations**
5.1 None received.

6. **Venturers Trust: University Widening Access work**
6.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED** (SN/18-19/033 and PRESENTATION (on file))

6.2 The report was introduced by the Deputy Registrar and Ms Gail Bragg, Chair of the Venturers’ Trust, and supplemented by a PowerPoint presentation. The presentation highlighted the following:

• The Trust was created in September 2017 through the merger of Merchants’ Academy Trust and Colston’s Girls’ School Trust.
• The schools were extremely diverse, serve some of the most disadvantaged communities in the city and span primary, secondary, all age and a special school.
• This diversity was a real strength, the learning communities were inclusive and the Trust had a wealth of expertise to draw on.
• This provided students with a coherent, rich and responsive curriculum that established high aspirations and expectations.
• The University had been a co-sponsor of Merchants’ Academy since its creation in 2008, providing Trustees, governance, guaranteed offers and support to teaching staff.
• The Venturers Trust built on the University’s experience and allowed it to strengthen links across Bristol.
The University’s sponsorship of Venturers Trust was a key part of its widening participation strategy and Access and Participation Plan submission.  
The Office for Students expected all HEIs to work with schools to raise attainment levels and drive educational standards.  
By raising attainment levels, the University would increase the pool of students from disadvantaged backgrounds who were able to enrol at institutions like Bristol.  
There were currently 7 former Merchants’ Academy students studying at the University.  
The University's contribution included:
  o Representation and expertise on local governing bodies, Board of Trustees and throughout governance structure.  
  o Priority for outreach activities including support through UCAS process and revision in the run up to exams.  
  o Continuing professional development opportunities for teaching staff.  
  o Expertise in pedagogy and teaching methods via the School for Education

6.3 Senate members noted that the Venturers Trust was currently looking for Governors and were actively encouraged to get involved themselves or disseminate to other colleagues. Anyone interested was encouraged to contract Doug Jennings.

6.4 The University’s wider WP strategy aimed to diversify student intake and it was seeing significant progress in this area although there was still a long way to go to fulfil all of its ambitions. Since 2014/15 there had been a 27% increase in the number of black and minority ethnic students enrolling at the University. 1,230 students enrolled at the University in September 2018 from the lowest performing schools in the country.

7. University Finance presentation  
7.1 RECEIVED and NOTED (PRESENTATION)

7.2 The Chief Operating Officer presented to Senate an update on the University's financial performance, capital investment, pensions and endowment funds.

7.3 [REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]

8. Staff Survey action plan/people plan  
8.1 RECEIVED (SN/18-19/034)

8.2 The report was introduced by the Chair. Members noted the following:

Staff survey action plan
- The overall University of Bristol action plan to address the issues raised in the 2018 Staff Survey had been created from analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data available. All Faculties and Divisions received data from their areas and were supported to create local action plans on behalf of their staff to deal with issues that could be dealt with in schools and departments, these plans were now being implemented.
- All areas were also asked to feedback through their staff survey representatives on issues that they felt needed support centrally and from that an overall action plan had been created with timeframes and action leads.
- By way of reminder the 2018 Staff Survey indicated that our actions should focus on the lowest positive employee perceptions from the survey for the University as a whole:
  - Change management;
  - Managing stress levels of staff;
  - Communication between different parts of the University; and
Opportunities for staff to feedback their views to Senior Management.

- A number of positive changes were already underway for example the Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy and action plan was approved earlier in the year and was being implemented and monitored. A significant number of communication and engagement events with the senior team were planned and underway.
- The Staff Survey action plan would be closely monitored and regularly updated to show progress.

**People Plan 2019/2022**

- The majority of actions in the staff survey action plan related to the satisfaction and engagement of staff within the University therefore a complementary People Plan had been drafted to support the action plan.
- The People plan built on and developed the original Our Staff and Ways of Working section of the University strategy. Six commitments were made to support the core strength of ‘Our University, our People’. It was intended to be a document that applied to and supports all levels of staff. There were some specific activities that are underway that support our academic staff both now and over the next 12 to 24 months for example agreeing and implementing workload principles.

8.3 A discussion ensued, and the following was highlighted:

- Senate members were broadly very positive and supportive of both the People Plan and the staff survey action plan, in particular the plans highlighted in the document around enhancing communication and ensuring this was consistent across the university.
- Some members commented that the success factors for communications could be presented more clearly/be better articulated in the action plan i.e. these could be SMARTER.
- There was a strong feeling that communications shouldn’t just be about a series of activities and that in order to address concerns such as staff perceiving the senior management team as ‘out of touch’, the communications ought to have an element of ‘authenticity’. Colleagues agreed that Schools and Faculties could therefore reasonably invite members of the senior management team to drop in for informal and formal events (including book launches and inaugural lectures), in order to better enhance their visibility.
- Concerns were raised again about pressures on staff and student particularly around timetabled exams, and the impact on mental health and wellbeing. The DVC and Provost emphasised again that this was in significant part a product of local assessment regimes which colleagues were being strongly encouraged to review. In parallel, the University was reviewing the structure of the academic year in order to try and help alleviate these pressures.

8.4 Senate **APPROVED** the overall Staff Survey action plan and the People Plan 2019-2022 as a working document that would be used to structure the University’s work and to monitor progress against it. A copy of the University Action Plan and the associated Local Staff Action Plans are available on the website: [https://www.bris.ac.uk/positive-working/uob-only/staff-experience-group/staff-surveys/local-action-plans-2018/](https://www.bris.ac.uk/positive-working/uob-only/staff-experience-group/staff-surveys/local-action-plans-2018/).

9. **REF 2021 Code of Practice**

9.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED** (SN/18-19/035).

9.2 The report was introduced by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research).

9.3 Members were reminded that whilst the paper was classified as ‘Open’, members of Senate should not share it outside of the University either before or after the meeting.
The headlines from the report were:

[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]

A discussion ensued, and the following was highlighted:

[REDACTED: likely to prejudice commercial interests]

Members noted that the feedback provided at the meeting today would be used to inform the final draft.

10. Education Committee Report
10.1 RECEIVED and NOTED (SN/18-19/036)

11. Honorary Degrees Committee Report
11.1 RECEIVED and NOTED (SN/18-19/037).

11.2 The report was introduced by the Chair.

11.3 Senate AGREED to RECOMMEND TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES that an honorary fellowship be awarded to Mr Denis Burn.

11.4 Senate AGREED to RECOMMEND TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES that honorary degrees be awarded to those named in the paper.

12. Ethics of Research Committee Report
12.1 RECEIVED and NOTED (SN/18-19/038).

12.2 The report was introduced by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Health).

12.3 Members noted that Dr Birgit Whitman had recently stepped down as the Head of Research Governance and Mr Adam Taylor would take up the position from 24 April 2019.

12.3 Senate APPROVED the Research Governance and Integrity Policy and AGREED to RECOMMENDED TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES.

13. Honorary/Visiting Academic Status Policy
13.1 RECEIVED and NOTED (SN/18-19/039).

13.2 The report was introduced by the Chair.

13.3 Senate APPROVED the changes to the Honorary and Visiting Academic Status procedure, with immediate effect as highlighted in the report.

14. Amendment to Ordinance 22: SS Great Britain Trust
14.1 RECEIVED and NOTED (SN/18-19/040).

14.2 The report was introduced by the Chair.

14.3 Senate AGREED to RECOMMEND TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES, a request for the University to formally associate with the SS Great Britain Trust.

14.4 Senate therefore CONSENTED TO the proposed amendments to Ordinance 22 and NOTED the association agreement with the SS Great Britain Trust.
14.5 Senate noted that a further review of the partners listed in the Ordinance would be undertaken in due course, with a view to taking the detail out of Ordinance so the list could be more easily updated in the future.

15. **Future Agenda Items**
15.1 Senate was asked for any proposed future items to be passed to the Secretary, or to the Governance Team (governance@bristol.ac.uk).

15.2 It was agreed that it would be helpful to ensure that consideration of sustainability matters was also considered by Senate as a standing item at future meetings.

16. **Equality of Opportunity, including consideration of Equality Related Risks**
16.1 Senate considered EDI related risks as part of the item on the Venturers Trust, which focussed on the importance of WP work with Schools, the REF Code of Practice, and the importance of EDI issues in relation to this, and also in the Staff Survey Action Plan, where there was a strong element around working with all protected characteristics groups.

17. **Communication and Consultation**
17.1 Members noted that the Senior Management team would consider how best to communicate the decision made around about the motion on climate emergency, and that advice on this matter would be taken from External Relations and Internal Comms.

17.2 Members of Senate were invited to share what was discussed today with colleagues across the university.

18. **Quality Assurance**
18.1 No matters were raised.

19. **Date of next meeting**
19.1 The date of the next meeting of Senate was due to take place on Monday 10 June 2019, 1400, Room 4.10, 35 Berkeley Square.