



**MEETING OF SENATE
MINUTES
Monday 20 June 2022
14.00, virtual Zoom meeting**

Present:

Professors: Allen, Banissy, Barbour, Bickers, Birdi, Blom, Bond, Brady, Butts, Cater, Clark, Cristianini, Dermott, Dillingham, Faul, Flack, George, Grierson, Jessop, Juncos, Manley, Manzini, Marklof, Mellor, Munafò, Mundell, Nairn, Peters, Pleydell-Pearce, Powell, Raven, Ridley, Robbins, Ross, Savery, Schönle, Schwarzacher, Smart, Spear, Squires, Tavare, Taylor, O'Toole, Tormey, Wilding

Dr M Allinson, Mr J Barrie, Dr N Carhart, Dr N Dahnoun, Dr N Davies, Dr M Dudley, Dr V Erlandsson, Mr E Fay, Dr C Fricker, Dr F Ginn, Dr S Hannuna, Dr T Hodos, Ms S Johnson (Clerk), Mr C Lai, Dr J McManus, , Dr K Opie, Ms L Parr, Mr A Pearce, Dr D Poole, Dr S Proud, Ms G Walter, Dr M Werner, Dr K Whittington, Dr J Yon, Dr L Zuccolo

In attendance:

Ms C Buchanan (Chief People Officer), Ms L Collins, (Director of Home Recruitment and Conversion), Paula Coonerty (Academic Registrar), Professor I Craddock (Academic Trustee), Dr J Hallett, Maxine Gillway (Director Centre for Academic Language and Development), Doug Jennings (Deputy Director of Home Recruitment and Conversion), Shana Johnson (Senate Secretary), Mr R Kerse (Chief Operating Officer), Ms A O'Grady (Executive Director of External Relations), Professor Caroline Relton (Academic Trustee)

Apologies:

Miss S Bain, Professor C Chapman, Professor J Foot, Mr D Freda, Professor M Hickman, Ms S Howarth, Mr R Humphreys, Ms J Inglis, Professor S Key, Professor S Kunutsor, Dr J Khawaja, Professor A Linthorst, Professor M Luckhurst, Mr Barra Mac Ruairi, Ms L Macey, Professor E McGirr, Dr R Murray, Professor J Norman, Professor R Pancost, Professor T Parkin, Professor H Piggins, Professor S Purdy, Professor T Tahko, Professor D Wilson

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING ON 25 APRIL 2022.

1.1 APPROVED the minutes of the meeting of 25 April 2022.

2. CHAIR'S REPORT

2.1 RECEIVED: paper ref: (SN/21-22/039).

2.2 NOTED Chair's Action in relation to Key University Dates 23/24

2.3 NOTED the report of the Vice-Chancellor and the following key issues:

- The outstanding REF results and congratulations on a whole institute effort and success. In particular thanks to Professors Tim Peters and Paddy Ireland, Jane Hallett, and Sophie Collet for their leadership.
- The ongoing dispute between the EU and the UK over the Northern Ireland protocol continued to delay UK association to Horizon Europe. It was anticipated that an

alternative to association would be published on the 22 July. This presented a significant risk to the University in terms of funding, recruitment, and retention.

- The Higher Education Freedom of Speech Bill had passed through the Commons and a new clause required universities to disclose the name of foreign donors for amounts greater than 50k to the Office for Students (this included research funding and academic and cultural partnerships). This would increase the burden of reporting for universities.
- The House of Commons Education Committee had held an Accountability Hearing with Michelle Donelan MP, Minister of State for Higher and Further Education, Department for Education and she confirmed that she had asked the Office for Students to introduce a new registration condition that would cover issues like sexual abuse, sexual assault, harassment and bullying, and it would also cover antisemitism
- Nicola Dandridge had stepped down from her role as Chief Executive – Office for Students and had been appointed to the post of Professor of Higher Education Policy at the University with effect from October 2022.
- Michael Gove MP, Minister for Levelling up had attended an important event in the City which had included the development of and ambitions for the TQ Campus.
- There were ongoing negotiations with the West of England Combined Authority (WECA) in terms of how the University could support WECA ambitions.
- The referendum on the political system for the City Council had resulted in a vote for the ‘committee system’ not the current mayoral system. As a result, the University would be exploring how best to align civic engagement activities with new governance structures during the next two years.
- Professors Ian Craddock and Caroline Relton (Academic Trustees on the Board of Trustees) updated Senators on the meetings of the Board of Trustees held on the 26th and 27th May which had been held away from the main campus at Langford and Barton Hill micro campus. The Board development day on the 26th had focussed on Bristol Innovations and Sustainability and Net Zero targets. The Board meeting on the 27th had received a detailed briefing on the Natasha Abraham Judgement (Friday 20 May) and its implications. The Board had also considered an update on the University Strategy, the REF result, Widening Participation, proposals for the new University Library and the University Budget. The Board of Trustees had approved the Engineering Faculty re-structure and an additional one-off payment to staff in recognition of their hard work under pressurized circumstances.
- In response to a question from a Senator on how the University was going to address pay scale erosion, it was confirmed by the Academic Trustees that this issue was very much in the sight of the Board and there would be ongoing discussions. The Chief Operating Officer clarified that pay scales were linked to collective bargaining but that the University was looking at a Reward Strategy which would go to the Board of Trustees for approval.

3. STRUCTURE OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR

3.1 RECEIVED: paper ref: (SN/21-22/040).

3.2 The Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Pro Vice-Chancellor Research & Enterprise introduced the paper.

3.3 ENDORSED the proposals in the report with the comments as set out below.

3.3 NOTED this was a decision for the Vice-Chancellor as Chair of Senate and that Senate's comments would be provided to him prior to making a final decision. Contingent on that decision, a SAY project board would be formed, resourced by SPP, with a business case to be submitted for approval by Academic Portfolio Board by December 2022.

3.4 The following key issues were highlighted by the PVC Education and PVC Research

- The drivers for the proposals which included maintaining quality education and robust student outcomes, meeting ambitions to enhance the curriculum and the academic student experience, managing and improving research capability and capacity, reducing work-level stress. These were all essential to sustaining the reputation of the Institution, making sure there was not a reduction in research income and resources, which could then see a reduction in our global reputation and maintaining recruitment targets for students and ensuring the University is able to recruit and retain the very best academic colleagues going forward.
- The proposals were transformative – it was not about putting what we currently have into a shorter timeframe.
- The SAY model assumed that programmes would reduce the volume of assessment and introduce more integrated and programmatic forms of assessment, in line with the principles of the Curriculum Enhancement Programme. Colleagues would need to be bold with accreditation bodies and tell them what we were doing and why. Schools and programmes would be supported to redesign assessment and curricula through the SAY and CEP programme teams and by BILT.
- The model entailed redesign of curriculum and assessment rather than the current content and assessment compressed into shorter time frames.
- The model was also designed to ensure that positive student wellbeing is foregrounded in the design of teaching, assessment, and student-facing operations.
- Other Universities had a SAY similar to that being proposed and had no worse and some better NSS scores.
- Research-active staff should also benefit from a longer period in the year in which they were less constrained by teaching and assessment activity.
- In terms of consultation responses, people were generally positive about semesterisation and the positive effects on student health and well-being, whilst staff had some concerns about the burden of marking in the holiday period and lack of a break between TB1 and TB2. There was very little support for using Saturdays during the assessment period and as a result this had been taken out of the proposals.
- There was a mixed response in terms of Reading Weeks and as a result The week in which reading/consolidation weeks occur would be harmonised across the University, but these could be used at the discretion of Schools.
- An equality impact assessment would be done on the implementation proposals of the SAY going forward.

- Senators **DISCUSSED** the proposed model, consultation feedback and responses to that feedback. The following key issues/questions were raised by Senators and responded to:
 - It was not clear from the proposal if there was not a Reading Week would teaching finish earlier?
 - Harmonisation of Reading Week with school holiday dates would be welcomed by both academics and students with children of school age.
 - Whether because of issues of scale it would be feasible to do assessments in one week (Proposal TB1)

- Compression of teaching and assessment in TB1 could lead to unintended consequences and impact negatively on student experience.
- 8 weeks from the first exams and results in June seemed like a long time and there was an argument to look at the processes around mark handling as this took a significant amount of academic and professional services time.
- Concerns that September and December were key grant writing periods, and the proposals could impact on this. It was not evident where the large chunks of extra time for making research bids would be found in the new model
- Concern about modular degrees and maintaining compliance with the QAA framework. There was currently an expectation that students would do some work over Xmas and Easter, but if this time is shortened then it could mean we were asking students to study up to 46 hours week to meet the requirements of the QAA framework. There was also not much spare time to catch up if students were ill for example.
- Concern about modular assessment models and consistency of approach.
- Concerns about the timeline and whether it was achievable in 2 years given the impact on so many areas of University activity and capacity to deliver.
- **The following comments were made by the PVC Education and PVC Research in relation to the issues/questions raised above**
- In relation to whether teaching would finish earlier if there was no reading week it was confirmed that the proposal was to have a 10-week teaching block. Reading and Revision weeks were in addition to this. There was potential to use other weeks flexibly.
In relation to comments made about assessment it was emphasised that the changes to the SAY were predicated on changes to the way in which assessment were carried out and changes to programme content and the ways in which teaching was carried out. There was no reason modules of the same value needed to be assessed in the same way. New modes of assessment (online, open book, timed assessments) could reduce the cognitive load of memorising for exams and contribute to learning gains. The QA team would assist schools in ensuring that any assessment proposals were within the QAA Framework. There was evidence from other Universities that a 5-day assessment window could work effectively e.g., UCL, Exeter.
- In relation to increasing research capacity the new SAY would be complemented by other initiatives such as reducing research bureaucracy and increasing capacity for sabbaticals.
- In relation to the comment about timescales for implementation it was recognised that this was an ambitious project which touched on many areas of the University and as such a SAY project board would be formed, resourced by SPP, with a Business Case to be submitted for approval by Academic Portfolio Board by December 2022.
- Following consultation with RED there was no evidence that January was any more heavy than other months in terms of research grant deadlines.
- In terms of potentially negative impact on student well being feedback from the Student Union and Students was they were broadly in favour of semesterisation and preferred to have a winter break free of exam stress.
- Simplifying programme complexity would address concerns related to shared UG and PG units.
- Work on the PGT SAY was broadly welcomed, especially the start of dissertations earlier, and the potential for a more integrated process of dissertation work which linked to units throughout rather than sitting alongside them.

4. PROFESSIONAL SERVICES, UNIFORM SERVICE EFFECTIVENESS SURVEY

4.1 The Chief Operating Officer and Registrar & University Secretary presented.

4.2 NOTED the presentation.

4.3 A concern was raised that the presentation had not been shared prior to the meeting and the Registrar and University Secretary confirmed that more detail could be shared with the Senator who raised this issue.

5. ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN UPDATE

5.1 RECEIVED: paper ref: (**SN/21-22/041**).

5.2 NOTED the Action and Participation Plan Update

5.3 DISCUSSED

- The issue of contextual offers and noted that this was only one of the initiatives in the portfolio to increase access and participation.
- The University had not met its target in relation to black students and was a full percentage point below. It was recognized that more progress needed to be made in this area and there were a number of different interventions to encourage black students to apply to the University, for example including BTEC's in contextual offers and mentoring.

6. REF REPORT

6.1 RECEIVED: paper ref: (**SN/21-22/042**)

6.2 The Pro-Vice Chancellor Research introduced the item. Jane Hallet was also in attendance to answer questions.

6.3 NOTED

- The outstanding REF result and that analysis was now ongoing to understand what the result told us about our research, including areas where further improvements could be made e.g., impact and environment and identifying best practice to share across the institution.
- It was not clear yet how the result would translate into funding and more would be known in July. There would probably be some reshaping of funding from Russell Group Universities to other Universities.
- Early planning was key, and preparations would start in the autumn for the next REF. A deep dive had already taken place with Deans and Faculty Research Officers.
- The rules of the REF would likely change so there needed to be flexibility built into the approach.
- Whilst research quality was excellent, research power (volume) was in 11th position. The outstanding quality had mitigated against growth which other institutions had achieved.
- Early decisions would be made on roles and responsibilities in Schools, and reducing bureaucracy, increasing sabbatical opportunities and the revised SAY would all contribute to a supportive process and give people the time they needed to ensure another successful REF.

7. RESEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT

7.1 RECEIVED: paper ref: (**SN/21-22/043**).

7.2 The Pro-Vice Chancellor Research & Enterprise introduced the item.

7.3 NOTED the report.

8. EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

8.1 RECEIVED: paper ref: **(SN/21-22/044)**.

8.2 The Pro-Vice Chancellor Education introduced the item.

8.3 NOTED the report.

8.4 ENDORSED and RECOMMENDED the Degree Outcomes Statement to the Board of Trustees

- The report tracked degree outcomes and issues such as grade inflation which the regulator (Office for Students) was very interested in. Grade inflation was below the Russell Group average and sector average.
- A working group had been established to look at student attendance and engagement and good ideas were being generated particularly around issues such as goal setting and building pedagogical relationships. It was noted that student engagement was also about staff engagement.
- An evaluation of hybrid teaching had noted in particular that online learning (particularly with high numbers of international students accessing learning online) meant that students did not feel as much a part of the University community. There were also high levels of exhaustion.

9. ANNUAL REPORT DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS

9.1 RECEIVED: paper ref: **(SN/21-22/045)**

9.2 The Registrar and University Secretary introduced the paper.

9.3 NOTED the report.

9.4 The increase in the volume was largely due to breaches of Covid 19 regulations. It had been challenging to recruit the right staff to support the increase in volume.

10. ANNUAL REPORT PHILANTHROPIC SCHOLARSHIPS

10.1 RECEIVED: paper ref: **(SN/21-22/046)**

10.2 NOTED the report.

11. ANNUAL REPORT ON APPOINTED EMERITUS PROFESSORS & HONORARY APPOINTMENTS

11.1 RECEIVED: paper ref: **(SN/21-22/046)**

11.2 NOTED the report.

APPROVED BY SENATE ON: 10 October 2022

SIGNED: PROF E.WELCH (Vice-Chancellor, Chair)