

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

MEETING OF SENATE

Minutes of a meeting held on
Tuesday 2 March 2021 online via Teams

Present: Nishan Canagarajah (Chair)

Y Amrani	H Barton
P Baker	E Bunce
E Burke	N Chakraborti
J Challiss	S Davies
J Devlin	N Donohue
A Ellis	S Fishwick
M Flanagan	R Fryer
A Goodall	S Handa
K Herbert	C Hewitt
R Holland	E Jones
S Kyd	D Lambert
G Lewis	L Liu (partial)
J Marshall	L Masterman
C Morley	M Nembhard
A Ng	H O'Connor
J Prados	A Rahman
K Paterson	M Purnell
J Schwabe	J Shaw
I Somerville	A Thomas
C Wilkins	G Wynn

In attendance: G Green (Registrar and Secretary), L Gibson (DPVC Research), E Stevens (Interim Director of HR), S Tailor (IT support), R Lord (Assistant Secretary) and A Benson (Secretariat).

Observing: B Hassan (Unison representative), D Harvie (UCU representative), and A Patel (UCU representative).

Apologies for absence were received from N Armstrong, S Garrett and S Dudley.

Partial apologies for absence were received from L Liu.

RESERVED BUSINESS

21/M01 RESERVED BUSINESS ITEM – *minuted separately*

UNRESERVED BUSINESS**21/M02 WELCOME**

Professor Canagarajah welcomed the following members to their first meeting of Senate:

- Dr S Fishwick (Head of School of Geography, Geology and the Environment)
- Professor Jayne Marshall (Head of School of Allied Health Professions)
- Dr Catherine Morley (Head of School of Arts)
- Professor Kevin Paterson (Head of Department of Neuroscience, Psychology and Behaviour)

21/M03 STANDING BUSINESS

(a) Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

(b) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Senate **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 3 November 2020 as an accurate record.

Senate **approved** the minutes of the Urgency Committee meeting held by correspondence in January 2021 as an accurate record.

(c) Matters Arising

Senate **noted** the following verbal updates provided on the matters arising from the meeting held on 3 November 2020:

(i) 20/M33 – Update from President and Vice-Chancellor

The President and Vice-Chancellor and De Montfort University had recently been contacted by the Chief Constable of Leicestershire Police regarding inappropriate student behaviour.

Senate was assured that the University was taking appropriate action and was closely monitoring the situation. The University had been made aware of concerns relating to student house parties and had clear procedures in place for responding, including disciplinary where required. Multiple Temporary Suspension Orders (TSOs) had been issued as sanctions to COVID breaches.

It was **noted** that student behaviour had been responsible on the whole, but that the University would continue to work closely with the police to address any issues.

(ii) 20/M34 c) Academic Response to Covid 19: Teaching/Education

Senate **noted** that the action had been taken forward as part of the Ignite evaluation work conducted in the previous term. The Education Strategy Unit had set up Teams areas for each School to provide comments. All feedback provided would be reviewed and highlights shared with Schools by Easter 2021.

(d) Chair's Business

(i) Update from President and Vice-Chancellor

The President and Vice-Chancellor reported on key University developments.

Professor Canagarajah thanked colleagues for their support at the recent offer-holder days. Further support would be welcomed given the importance of converting offers to registrations.

It was **noted** that graduation ceremonies for July 2021 would not be held as normal as further government guidance was not expected until June 2021. This was a disappointing outcome but feedback from previous virtual events had been positive and various options for having different on-campus celebrations were also being considered.

The President and Vice-Chancellor invited Professor Lisanne Gibson, DPVC Research, to provide comments on the current REF submission. It was **noted** that the final submission content had been approved and work was underway to complete the submission online by 31 March following final approval by Executive Board on 15 March. It was reported that the return was felt to be the best possible based on the available material, and that an institutional ranking of between 40 and 50 was anticipated. This would represent a good outcome compared to the previous REF ranking in 2014 of 53.

On behalf of Senate, the President and Vice-Chancellor thanked the DPVC Research and all Professional Services and Academic Colleagues for their work in completing the submission.

(ii) Q & A session

No questions were received.

(e) Summary Report of Items for Approval

Senate **considered** and **approved** a summary report of matters brought forward for approval from subcommittees and other areas:

1. Undergraduate External Examiners Report - Education Committee

Senate **noted** the report and **approved** the recommendation for it to be submitted to Council.

2. Updates to Senate Regulation 10 - Education Committee

Senate **approved** the recommended changes to the regulation which were proposed to build in good practice following on from recent appeals cases.

3. Updates to Senate Regulation 7 - Education Committee

Senate **approved** the recommended changes to the regulation which were being proposed to confirm anonymity in Boards of Examiners.

4. Student Protection Plan - Education Committee

Senate **approved** the proposed changes to the University's Student Protection Plan which had been put forward following its annual review. Changes included adjustments to the tone of the document and some structural amendments such as expanding the risk section.

5. Education Safeguard Proposal - Education Committee

Senate **noted** the approval of the Education Safeguard Proposal which had been considered by Senate in February 2021 following recommendation for approval from Education Committee.

6. Proposed Changes to Senate Regulation 9 – Research and Enterprise Committee

Senate **approved** the recommended changes to the regulation which proposed making Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training mandatory for PGR students and Professional Services staff acting as second supervisor where appropriate.

7. Proposed Changes to Terms of Reference – Research and Enterprise Committee

Senate **approved** the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference and membership of the Research and Enterprise Committee for the 2020/21 academic year

21/M04 BUSINESS TO CONSIDER**(a) Review of Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) compliance**

Senate **noted** a report outlining the University review of CMA compliance.

It was **noted** that a letter had been received from the OfS on 14 January 2021 which required the University to complete a review of its obligations under the OfS Condition of Registration C1 (Consumer law).

The report set out the approach to the review, which the Academic Registrar was leading with support from colleagues including Heads of School.

The outcome of the review would be circulated to Senate members in April 2021 for consideration prior to it being reported to Council in May 2021.

(b) Education Update

Senate **noted** an update from the Pro-Vice Chancellor Education, Professor Graham Wynn, on matters relating to Education.

(i) Covid response, including Education Safeguard

Senate **noted** thanks from the President and Vice-Chancellor for all colleagues involved in the work on the Education Safeguard. The Safeguard had received a good response from the student community and represented a thoughtful and considerate response to supporting students during the pandemic.

Following the latest Government Guidance, it was reported that some students would return to laboratory teaching from 8 March 2021. The University would not require students to return should it be reasonable for them to continue learning online.

An outline was provided on teaching and assessment activity for the Summer Term. Focus would be on wellbeing and careers support activities for students. Assessments were expected to be online with few exceptions and consultation was underway with Schools on the assessment windows for Boards and Panels.

It was reported that the Education Safeguard was the University's version of a "no detriment" or "safety net" policy for 2021 and the principles for undergraduates were highlighted. The QSSC was putting together proposals on the exact conditions to trigger non-automatic elements of the Safeguard at University-level. These proposals would be presented to Senate for consultation and approval. A letter to External Examiners explaining the Safeguard was due to be sent and further guidance on implementation would be shared shortly with Schools.

It was noted that the high level planning principles would be updated for 2021/2022 following the Government roadmap and lessons learned from 2020/2021. The University would build on the blended learning approach and retain those parts which had worked well, such as enabling online assessment where possible.

Data analysis was provided for 2020/21, showing an increase in Blackboard activity during Semester 1 as had been anticipated. It was noted that withdrawals in the period Aug-Nov 20/21 was lower than the same period over the last 4 years.

It was reported that the Ignite evaluation had revealed themes that were consistent with the national picture. Within the positive themes was feedback on the flexibility and convenience of the programme. The main negative themes were students missing social interaction and their mental health/wellbeing. Courses and modules with very clear, timetabled, structures had worked best and in-year changes made by Schools were highlighted. Guidance would be updated for 2021/22 with the key action points being to ensure structure, clarity, consistency of approach at programme-level.

(ii) National Student Survey (NSS) 2021

It was noted that NSS 2021 had launched nationally on 6 January 2021 and would close on 30 April 2021. The response rate thus far was 30.8% versus 45.1% at the same point following launch last year. A booster phase would be conducted by Ipsos Mori should responses remain below 43% by mid-March 2021.

The possible implications of failing to meet the publication threshold of at least 10 student responses and a 50% overall response rate were highlighted, including that internal data would not be received for subjects failing to meet the threshold.

Senate **noted** that student support remained a high priority and that consideration was being given to an accommodation rebate as well as additional support for student transition over the summer.

It was noted that information about suspensions at College and School level would be shared with members, including for first year cohorts. [ACTION: PVC Education]

Senate noted that the student mindset may have changed over the academic year and there was concern in particular during term 2 around student fatigue. This would continue to be closely monitored.

(c) Shaping for Excellence

Senate **noted** a progress report on the Shaping for Excellence programme.

The role of Senate within the governance processes of the programme was highlighted and it was noted that the discussion would be framed around this.

The principles of the governance approach to the change project were outlined. This included the following four areas where Senate had a governance role to play:

- i) Closing individual courses
- ii) Closing any academic unit defined as a College, Department, School, Institute or Centre
- iii) Creating a new academic unit defined as a College, Department, School, Institute or Centre
- iv) Merging existing academic activity into an approved new department or other academic unit

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor highlighted the two recommendations in the report. Senate was asked to **note** that a Special Meeting of Senate would potentially be required at the end of April, to consider and/or note appropriate aspects of the proposed changes.

A UCU observer raised a question related to the structure of the programme processes and the role of Senate, referring to an individual case currently under consultation. The comments were noted and the role of observers was outlined. It was highlighted that only matters related to the role and remit of Senate in the process were appropriate for discussion in the meeting, and that matters raised about the individual case should be raised at the upcoming dispute resolution meeting between UCU and the University. It was noted that no decisions could be made on the final outcomes of the cases for change until the consultation process had concluded. Any decisions required by Senate would be brought for consideration to members as outlined in the report.

A UCU observer referred to Senate's overall role in upholding the University's academic integrity. It was noted that the report had accordingly highlighted the academic governance role of Senate as required by the University's governing documents.

The President of the Students' Union outlined the Students' Union official position which opposed any threat to academic integrity and stood in solidarity with UCU and other staff unions in opposing the proposed changes.

Senate **noted** that a Special Meeting of Senate would be convened should any of the governance requirements outlined in the report be triggered. It was confirmed that Senators would have full access to material required in order to ensure appropriately informed consideration, and would be provided with sufficient time to consider any proposals ahead of a Special Meeting in accordance with the Senate Standing Orders.

Comments raised in the chat were noted. Attendees were requested to send detailed questions or comments in advance of meetings where possible, to enable sufficient time for colleagues to respond fully and/or for them to be directed to the appropriate forum.

Senate **noted** the report.

(d) Strategic review of Library Collections Strategy

Senate **noted** a report which proposed the establishment of a Task and Finish Group of Senate, which would oversee and advise on a new approach to the strategic development of Library information resource collections to support education and research.

It was noted that the library needed to be both strategic and sustainable, underpinning the University's education and research, and the review would gather evidence to enable decisions to support the future strategic direction of the University Library.

Senate **noted** that the proposal had been endorsed by Executive Board and the terms of reference for the Group were noted. Senate agreed to receive a report from the Group at its meeting in November 2021. [*Forward Business*]

Senate **approved** the proposal and the terms of reference for the Task and Finish Group.

21/M05 BUSINESS TO NOTE**(a) Reports from Committees****i) Education Committee**

Senate **noted** reports from the meetings of Education Committee held on 21 October 2020, 17 November 2020 and 29 January 2021.

ii) Research and Enterprise Committee

Senate **noted** reports from the meetings of the Research and Enterprise Committee held on 29 October 2020 and 3 December 2020.

iii) Reputation, Recruitment and Performance Board

Senate **noted** the reports of a meeting of the Reputation, Recruitment and Performance Board held on 7 December 2020.

(b) University Officer appointments

Senate **received** for information a list of all the University Officer appointments made since 3 November 2020.

(c) Programmes Approved and Withdrawn

Senate **noted** the report of programmes approved in principle, in full and those withdrawn since its last meeting.

(d) Outcomes of Senate Discipline Panels

Senate **received** the outcomes of recent Senate Student Discipline Panels.

21/M06 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Senate noted the meetings scheduled for 2020-2021 were as follows:

Wednesday 23 June 2021, 2pm

CHAIR

Duration of meeting: 70 minutes