

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

MEETING OF SENATE

**[Unconfirmed] Minutes of a meeting held on
Tuesday 3 November 2020 online via Teams**

Present: Nishan Canagarajah (Chair)

N Armstrong	Y Amrani
M Barer	H Barton
P Baker	E Bunce
E Burke	N Chakraborti
J Challiss	S Davies
J Devlin	N Donohue
S Dudley	A Ellis
M Flanagan	I Forsythe
R Fryer	S Garrett (partial)
I Gillespie	A Goodall
M Halliwell	S Handa
K Herbert	C Hewitt
R Holland	E Jones
S Kyd	D Lambert
G Lewis	L Liu
L Masterman	A Ng
H O'Connor	J Prados
A Rahman	M Purnell (partial)
J Shaw	I Somerville
R Thomas (partial)	C Wilkins
T Webb	G Wynn

In attendance: G Green (Registrar and Secretary), S Tailor (IT support), A Erdlenbruch (Chief of Staff), R Lord (Assistant Secretary) and A Benson (Secretariat).

Observing: B Hassan, Unison representative and N Adkins, UCU representative.

Apologies for absence were received from S Barry and M Nembhard.

Partial apologies for absence were received from S Garrett, R Thomas and M Purnell.

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

20/M31 WELCOME

Professor Canagarajah welcomed Professor Karl Herbert, Dean of Education for the College of Life Sciences and Dr Yassine Amrani, Head of Department, Respiratory Sciences, to their first meeting of Senate.

20/M32 COURTESIES

On behalf of the Senate, Professor Canagarajah congratulated the following on new academic appointments:

- Professor Sally Kyd, Head of School of Law
- Professor Chris Wilkins, Head of School of Education
- Professor Sarah Davies, Pro-Vice Chancellor Head of College, College of Science and Engineering

20/M33 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 24 June 2020 as an accurate record.

Senate **approved** the minutes of the Urgency Committee meeting held on 17 July 2020 and the minutes of the Urgency Committee held by correspondence in October 2020 as accurate records.

(c) Matters Arising

There were no matters arising to report.

(d) Chair's Business

(i) Update from President and Vice-Chancellor

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

The academic and professional services staff response to the second national COVID-19 lockdown was commended, particularly in relation to student support. The acute impact on first-year undergraduate students was discussed and colleagues were urged to continue to prioritise student welfare, support and communications. It was reported that positive feedback on the University response had been received from many students and their families as well as from Leicester City Council.

The process leading to the University's recent move into Tier 2 of the Department for Education guidelines was outlined. It was highlighted that Government guidance to the HE sector was not always timely and that issues were often referred back to individual institutions for decision.

It was noted that HEU undergraduate student recruitment for 2020/21 had outperformed expectations to date but that significant uncertainty remained in relation to international student numbers, January PGT starts, and the potential impact of continued lockdowns on student retention.

(ii) Q & A session

Colleagues were reminded that the on-campus COVID-19 screening programme had capacity and that it was planned to develop further testing arrangements in the Oadby Student Village.

It was noted that, following work carried out by the Workload and Progression Task and Finish Group, guidance on academic career progression during the pandemic would be issued shortly.

It was reported that some colleagues were encountering resistance from students when attempting to clarify COVID-19 safety measures in place. It was agreed that this would be raised through relevant staff fora. [ACTION: Registrar and Secretary]

(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. Terms of Reference - Learning and Teaching Committee

Senate **approved** the proposed changes to the Terms of Reference of the Learning and Teaching Committee for the 2020/21 academic year, subject to the updating of the Dean's job titles and the addition of the Head of the Education Strategy Unit, Dean of Flexible and Distance Learning, and Dean of Personal Tutoring to the Terms of Reference.

2. Access and Participation Plan Governance, 2020-21, and Renaming of University Learning and Teaching Committee

Senate **noted** the establishment of the Access and Participation Plan Steering Group, with immediate effect, in the light of the disestablishment of the TEF & APP Strategy Group.

Senate **approved**, in light of these changes and the launch of the new Education Strategy in 2021, that:

(a) The University's Learning and Teaching Committee be renamed Education Committee from January 2021;

(b) College- and School- Learning and Teaching Committees be renamed College/School Education Committees from January 2021.

3. Postgraduate Research Sub-Committee Matters referred to Research and Enterprise Committee

Senate **approved** the proposed changes to Regulations as recommended by the Research and Enterprise Committee (paper S/20/42 App 1):

- Changes to physical thesis submission requirements – students no longer to be required to submit two perfect bound copies for examination and a final hardbound copy to the Library
- Changes to student, supervisor, and PGR Tutor responsibilities – the addition of a requirement to use MyPGR for supervisory meeting records, confirmations, and requests to make changes to student registration.

4. Senate nominations to Council

Senate **approved** the election of Professor Stephen Garrett, Head of Mathematics and Actuarial Science and Head of Engineering, to fill the vacancy, subject to completion of Council's formal confirmation process.

20/M34 BUSINESS TO CONSIDER**(a) Annual Assurance Report**

The report was contextualised as the basis of the annual Senate academic assurance report to Council, related to quality and standards as set out in the relevant OfS conditions of registration (B1-B6). It was noted that this assurance was a key academic governance responsibility of Senate.

The governance route for assuring the report through the Senate substructure was set out. It was highlighted that changes in approach to assessment and teaching programmes had been required given the particular COVID-19 challenges of the 2019/20 year.

Members commented on the lessened efficacy of using the LUMES feedback system, noting that this system was under review and that academic schools and the Students' Union would be involved in forthcoming consultation.

Senate **approved** the Annual Assurance Report for presentation to Council.

(b) National Student Survey (NSS) 2020

It was reported that OfS was currently consulting on the future direction of the NSS and the associated bureaucratic burden in particular. Individual colleagues were encouraged to contribute prior to the 13 November closing date and it was noted that the Education Strategy Unit (ESU) was coordinating the University response, working closely with other institutions as appropriate.

It was **noted**, however, that the NSS would take place in 2021 and that further guidance had been received on that process, which would begin in January 2021 and would be overseen by ESU. It was highlighted that institutions were not required to promote NSS internally to the same degree as in previous years.

Colleagues were reminded that some school action plan submissions were now overdue and should be submitted as soon as possible via relevant Learning and Teaching Committees. [ACTION: Heads of School]

It was highlighted that the 2020 survey results displayed a significant disparity between individual schools within the University and that work was required to close these gaps. It was **noted** that, although the overall gap in satisfaction rates between different student demographics had closed in 2020, this had been primarily attributed to a decrease in reported satisfaction for students identifying as white, rather than an increase in satisfaction for those identifying as BAME.

(c) Academic Response to COVID-19**i) Teaching/Education**

Senate **noted** an update from the Pro-Vice Chancellor Education, Professor Graham Wynn, on the Education response to the Covid 19 pandemic.

It was **noted** that the timely preparation and approval of DfE Tier 2 plans had enabled the effective transition to Tier 2 and had placed the University ahead of some institutions.

Information on the latest government guidance relating to education was shared, including a letter that had been received by the University from Michelle Donelan, the Minister of State for Universities. It was **noted** that guidance was expected imminently on the student departure ahead of the Christmas break.

It was reported that focus within DfE Tier 2 would be on ensuring educational continuity, giving clear information to students and providing clear access routes to students for support. The emphasis on a shared journey with students was **noted** and examples of feedback mechanisms were shared, including a dedicated and monitored student email which had been developed in partnership with the Students' Union.

The importance of effective communication with students was reinforced, as well as continued student support. It was noted that support packages for students self-isolating would be continuing and would be incorporated into Christmas break planning for those students remaining in Leicester.

Senate **noted** the work underway in delivering enhanced wellbeing activities, including an enhanced digital programme of activity, the Life in Lockdown Programme. Ideas, including the delivery of cooking lessons from across all backgrounds, and engaging collaboratively with student societies, were raised. Members were encouraged to raise further ideas via email to askaboutignite@le.ac.uk. It was noted that consideration should be made to create a forum where all ideas could be brought together. [ACTION: PVC Education]

ii) **Research**

Senate **noted** an update from the Pro-Vice Chancellor Research and Enterprise, Professor Iain Gillespie, on the Research response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

It was **noted** that the COVID-19 Research Continuity Group had been established, chaired by Professor Mark Purnell. It would focus in particular on issues relating to research activity on campus in line with the DfE tiers.

The sector-leading support provided by the University to PGR students was highlighted and a planned town hall session for them on 4 November 2020 was referenced.

It was reported that research infrastructure was moving forward towards a much stronger position. The University had shown agility in approach in creating a defined and delegated system for prioritisation of research with cross-college consensus on the highest priority areas of research infrastructure and support. A needs and risk-based approach had been defined and delegated to schools to provide a system for prioritisation of research activities on campus.

Senate **noted** that the University had been very successful in research awards to date, including ranking 8th nationally for total new research funding for COVID-19 projects by UKRI. The PVC Research and Enterprise thanked colleagues for the collegiate approach that had been taken.

It was reported that, according to the Scopus publication database, the University of Leicester had published 126 papers on COVID-19 which have had 748 citations.

The deadline for REF 2021 submissions of 31 March 2021 was **noted** and the final timeline was outlined.

The Pro-Vice Chancellor outlined the challenges facing research for the University, including limited seed-funding, sustaining infrastructure, restrictions on travel and maintaining the appetite for research.

It was **noted** that PGR Directors would be provided with weekly communications to PGR students for them to cascade as appropriate. [ACTION: Dean of the Doctoral College]

The President and Vice-Chancellor thanked the PVC Research and Enterprise and the Deans of Research for the achievements made during the period of the COVID-19 pandemic.

(d) Shaping for Excellence

Senate **noted** that the report outlined the possible governance routes that may be required in terms of noting, recommending and approving any subsequent changes that were then planned following pre-engagement with staff, as well as clarifying the role of Senate.

It was highlighted that the programme remained in its pre-change engagement stage, with no decisions yet made, and that further updates would be given to Senate in due course.

Senate **noted** the report.

20/M35 BUSINESS TO NOTE

(a) Reports from Committees

i) Learning and Teaching Committee

Senate **noted** reports from the meetings of the Learning and Teaching Committee held on 8 July 2020 and 9 September 2020, and that elements requiring Senate's approval had already been considered under item 20/M33.

Senate noted the other business set out and **approved** the reports.

ii) Research and Enterprise Committee

Senate **noted** reports from the meetings of the Research and Enterprise Committee held on 30 June 2020 and 29 October 2020, and that elements requiring Senate's approval had already been considered under item 20/M33.

Senate noted the other business set out and **approved** the reports.

iii) Reputation, Recruitment and Performance Board

Senate noted the reports of the meetings of the Reputation, Recruitment and Performance Board held on 19 August 2020 and 6 October 2020.

(b) University Officer appointments

Senate **received** for information a list of all the University Officer appointments made since 24 June 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.

20/M36 DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

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

Tuesday 2 March 2021, 2pm

Wednesday 23 June 2021, 2pm

CHAIR

Duration of meeting: 67 minutes