



**MEETING OF SENATE
MINUTES
Monday 21 June 2021
14.00, virtual Zoom meeting**

Present: Birdi, Blom, Bond, Carrington, Cater, Cini, Coupland, Day, Faul, Flecker, Gilchrist, Grierson, Hickman, Jessop, Jordan, Kelly, Key, Luckhurst, Macey, Neild, Nobes, Norman, Oliphant, Pancost, Pantazis, Parkin, Payne, Piggins, Powell, Pleydell-Pearce, Purdy, Raven, Relton, Ridley, Robbins, Roberts, Simpson, Smart, B Smith, F Smith, Spear, Squires, Schwarzacher, Szczelkun, Taylor, Timpson, Tonks, Tormey, Wilding, Wilson;

Dr J Agarwal, Prof M Allen, Dr M Allinson, Dr K Austin, Dr M Barbour, Mr E Bempong-Manful, Ms T Brunnock, Dr N Dahnoun, Prof E Dermott, Dr L Dickinson, Mr E Fay, Dr S Fitzjohn, Dr A Flack, Dr S Fox, Mrs M Gillway, Dr S Hannuna, Dr J Howarth, Dr AJ Howkins, Mr D Jones, Dr P Langton, Dr I Lazar, Dr E Love, Mr B Mac Ruairi, Mr John Ms I Marshall, Mr T Metcalfe, Dr D Morgan, Ms A Noble-Denny, Mr L O'Shea, Dr T O'Toole, Dr K Opie, Mrs L Parr, Prof T Peters, Dr D Poole, Ms Rebecca Pullin, Dr S Proud, Mr R Rossi, Mr S Sreekanth, Dr L Walling, Dr K Whittington.

In attendance: Ms C Buchanan, Ms P Coonerty, Ms L Barling (Clerk), Mr K Elliff.

Apologies: Dr Sarah Bain, Professor Robert Bickers, Mr Jack Boyer, Professor Hugh Brady, Mr Stephen Brooke, Mr Steve Chadwick, Dr Marianna Dudley, Mr Dominic Freda, Professor Sarah George, Professor John Iredale, Mr Robert Kerse, Ms Astrid Linthorst, Professor Erik Lithander, Professor Jens Marklof, Ms Leah Martindale, Dr Sheelagh McGuinness, Dr Rose Murray, Professor Naomi Millner, Mr Andrew Pearce, Professor Karla Pollman, Professor Jeremy Tavare

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING ON 19 April 2021.

1.1 **CONFIRMED** and **APPROVED** the minutes of the meeting of 19 April 2021.

2. CHAIR'S REPORT

2.1 RECEIVED: Chair's Report: paper ref: (SN/20-21/034).

2.2 There were no written questions for the meeting.

2.3 **APPROVED** the Senate delegation framework, which set out the powers of Senate, taken from the recently approved (by Senate) Ordinances 6,8 and 9.

2.4 **NOTED** the report of the Vice-Chancellor, including the use of Chair's Powers on behalf of Senate (*on file*).

2.5 **NOTED:** Professors Carline Relton and Ian Craddock had recently been appointed as academic trustees on the Board of Trustees. The DVC & Provost thanked the outgoing academic trustees Professors' Syrett and Ellwood.

- 2.6 **NOTED:** On behalf of Senate, the DVC & Provost thanked the outgoing PVC Global Engagement. Dr Erik Lithander, who was leaving the University in August to take up a post at Auckland University in New Zealand. The DVC & Provost also thanked the Clerk to Senate, Ms Lucy Barling, who was leaving the University in early August to take up a governance position at Bath Spa University.

Blackboard examination issues

- 2.7 Senate received an update on the issues which had occurred recently with the Blackboard software. The following was NOTED:

- 2.7.1 There had been an issue in the coding bug and notifications' functionality which had been causing it to function incorrectly. Blackboard had since put mitigations in place to ensure this would not happen in the future.
- 2.7.2 Working with Schools and Faculties, the University's CIO was looking to restructure the Blackboard technical environment as part of a review/analysis of the 'load' in the examination period.
- 2.7.3 The University Executive team apologised for the issues that occurred, which had been distressing for staff and students alike, and emphasised the importance of the University planning now for improved resilience in exam-time, ensuring clear protocols and procedures for what happens when there was a technical issue. As such, a formal external (independent) review was currently being commissioned, with a view to addressing a) the technical environment and b) the clarity of key processes by which the University runs its assessments. A final report would be written and reported to University Education Committee, UEB and then Senate. The recommendations contained within the report would be turned into an action plan for implementation ready for the January 2022 assessment period.

- 2.8 Senate members made the following comments:

- 2.8.1 There was a clear gap in responsibility for Blackboard issues within Professional Services and this was why the process should be clarified and professionalised.
- 2.8.2 The timeline for the review was quite tight (a report was due to be considered by Senate in October). However, depending on the type of recommendations arising from the review report, if anything required Senate approval between now and October, it might be possible to find an appropriate governance mechanism to facilitate that.
- 2.8.3 Students would be able to contribute to the review in a transparent way, specifically around the questions that should be addressed by the Panel as part of the review.
- 2.8.4 The University was sharing knowledge with other institutions about experiences of online assessments both informally and formally, to identify any strategies emerging elsewhere that would assist the University in thinking through how to make online assessment more resilient.

- 2.9 An update on the Blackboard matter would be included in the Weekly Education Bulletin.

- 2.10 Senate would be kept abreast of progress with the Independent Review.

3. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S Q&A

- 3.1 There were no questions.

4. STRATEGY REVIEW: WHITE PAPER

- 4.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED:** Chair's Report: paper ref: (SN/20-21/035).

- 4.2 Senate COMMENTED on the Strategy White Paper, and the following was highlighted:

- 4.2.1 The consultation was open until the end of July and members were encouraged to provide feedback as part of it.
- 4.2.2 The high-level draft of the strategy would be ready for approval by the Board of Trustees in the Autumn term. There was, however, a longer timeline for developing the sub-strategies, so there would be plenty of opportunity for input between now and then.
- 4.2.3 It was noted that communications between the University Research Committee and Schools had not been as comprehensive as they should have been, and therefore the PVC Research & Enterprise had agreed to share all the relevant documentation directly with the Heads of School Forum. Additional Heads of School Forums could be convened if necessary.
- 4.2.4 The Strategy had been multi-authored and some individuals had requested to remain anonymous until the draft had been finalised.
- 4.2.5 Senate members were invited to attend the Sustainability live-stream at 16:00 on Tuesday 29 June, and the Internationalisation & Global Relations live-stream at 14:00 on Thursday 01 July.
- 4.2.6 In order to address some concerns at School level about the link between the strategy and resource provision, the DVC & Provost explained that whilst the Strategy was an internal mechanism to guide the University's future action (which would lead to implementation plans). It was also a document that helped to articulate to the external world and key partners, what the University's ambitions were, and how it wanted to engage with those partners in delivering the ambitions. It was essential that the strategy resonated with external partners so that the University could be more successful in its research - with a higher research profile, and the ability to bring in new money. The Strategy refresh represented an opportunity for a clearer articulation of what the University was really good at, and good for, which in turn would allow it to find new funding sources, and new partners. Senate noted that this was the primary reason for clearly articulating the University's research strengths in the strategy text.
- 4.2.7 Members commented that it might be helpful to frame the language of 'inform decisions' as 'inform where the University aimed it's effort to grab extra external resource' and not 'inform how the University allocated its own limited resources'.
- 4.2.8 Some members suggested that "protecting the core disciplines" would be more reassuring to nervous colleagues - without the core disciplines, we the University would not get into the top 50.

5. CAMPUS SAFETY: LATEST GUIDANCE AND PLANNING UPDATE, INCLUDING BLENDED WORKING

- 5.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: presentation [*on file*].
- 5.2 The Registrar and University Secretary introduced the paper. The following was **NOTED**:
 - 5.2.1 International students who had received no or one vaccine upon arrival in September would immediately become eligible to be vaccinated for free as soon as they registered with a GP. More information: <https://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/publication/covid-19-vaccination-faqs-students-in-higher-education-institutions/>
 - 5.2.2 Whilst case numbers were increasing quite significantly in Bristol, this was due to the young demographic in the City. Hospitalisation figures remained extremely low. There was also a high proportion of asymptomatic and mild disease symptoms.
 - 5.2.3 With reference to blended working, it would be important for the University to ensure that it gave staff who worked from home as much attention as it gave those who had been offered an alternative to their working pattern – both in the material aspects but also in communication and the provision of support.
 - 5.2.4 In relation to mixing and matching COVID vaccines, SAG had investigated this and there was not currently any formal clinical trial evidence that compared the efficacy of mixed

vaccine programmes. However, Professor Adam Finn would be taking this point to the UK Government's JCVI to prompt them to consider and reflect on it.

6. A. EDUCATION PLANNING 2021/22

B. WELCOME & TRANSITION PLANNING 2021/22

6.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: paper ref: (SN/20-21/036) and a presentation [*on file*].

6.2 Senate **COMMENTED** on plans for welcome and transition for new and returning students in 2021/22 and the following was highlighted:

6.2.1 UEB had recently approved additional resource to support some of the initiatives contained within this paper. One was some additional resource for Teaching Assistant level staff who would be available should students be struggling. These staff would provide 1-1 support and Personal Tutors would be able to refer to them so that students receive extra 1-1 coaching in becoming more confident.

6.2.2 Welcome week guidance to Schools had been published on 16th June.

6.2.3 The University's Academic Transition Group was being chaired by Professor Alvin Birdi – it was bringing together staff from across the University to agree an approach to the 'digitally ready' work and the study skills and library offers.

6.2.4 Additional guidance was being provided to Personal Tutors to allow them to feel better equipped to work with the students coming this year. The guidance would highlight where students could be signposted to get further support, rather than increasing the expectation on the time that Personal Tutors would have to provide.

7. CLIMATE EMERGENCY DAY OF ACTION

7.1 RECEIVED and **AGREED**: paper ref: (SN/20-21/037).

7.2 The PVC Global Engagement introduced the paper and highlighted to Senate that some of the dates in the paper were incorrect. A decision regarding actual dates had not yet been made by UEB, hence this consultation with Senate at today's meeting.

7.3 Senate members **NOTED**:

7.3.1 This would be the first commitment of its kind from a UK University.

7.3.2 UEB had given its approval for the day to go ahead as it was keen to have whole institution engagement, and it was agreed to be a feasible exercise within the constraints outlined in the paper, so long as the University gave the Timetabling team advance notice for TB2 purposes.

7.3.2 The TB2 timetable was not confirmed yet and would not be confirmed at the same time as TB1, thereby providing extra time for a decision to be made.

7.3.3 The Timetabling team would work very hard to mitigate the impact on teaching activities, however there could not be a cast iron guarantee. Teaching could be timetabled outside of core hours as an alternative, but this would be subject to local agreement.

7.3.4 There would be a tangible outcome from the day, for example a petition or a statement as a 'show of force'. This would be discussed further by those individuals leading on the matter.

7.4 Senate **PROVIDED IN PRINCIPLE SUPPORT** for the Climate Emergency Day for 2022, committing to making this a regular part of the University calendar, on the understanding that the timetabling team would undertake best endeavours to reschedule teaching. Senate was aware that the timetabling team could not commit to being able to do that in all cases, given the constraints on the current timetable.

8. MAJOR PROGRAMMES & PROJECTS SUMMARY UPDATE

A. DENTAL SCHOOL ACADEMIC CASE

- B. BUSINESS SCHOOL ACADEMIC CASE**
- 8.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED**: paper refs: (SN/20-21/038a) and (SN/20-21/038b).
- 8.2 Senate was **SUPPORTIVE** of the direction of travel for the proposed new model for the University of Bristol Dental School.
- 8.3 Senate **ENDORSED** the decision to create a new University of Bristol Business School.
- 8.4 Regular updates would be provided to Senate as these programmes progressed further.
- 9. EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT**
- 9.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: paper ref: (SN/20-21/039).
- 9.2 Senate **ENDORSED** and **RECOMMENDED TO THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES** the Degree Outcomes Statement.
- 10. RESEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT**
- 10.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: paper ref: (SN/20-21/040).
- 10.2 **NOTED** the report following the URC meetings of 21st January, 18th March and 13th May 2021.
- 11. ANNUAL REPORT: PHILANTHROPIC SCHOLARSHIPS**
- 11.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: paper ref: (SN/20-21/041).
- 11.2 Senate in particular **NOTED** the range and types of philanthropic scholarships available for students starting in September 2021 and provide any comments outside of the meeting to Andrew Monk. Senate members were asked to contact Andrew Monk should they have any further comments relating to whether there were any additional criteria or targeting for any of the main programmes that it would be useful to consider when considering the allocations of scholarships for September 2022.
- 12. ANNUAL REPORT: STUDENT DISCIPLINARY PROCEEDINGS**
- 12.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: paper ref: (SN/20-21/042).
- 13. ANNUAL REPORT: EMERITUS, HONORARY AND VISITING STATUS**
- 13.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: paper ref: (SN/20-21/043).