



**MEETING OF SENATE
MINUTES
Monday 6 February 2023
14.00, virtual Microsoft Teams meeting**

Present: Professors: Allen, Banissy, Barbour, Bickers, Birdi, Cater, Clark, Clatworthy, Dermott, George, Glynn, Hodos, Linthorst, Manley, Manzini, Marklof, McGirr, Munafò, Mundell, Nabney, Nairn, Neild, Oliphant, O'Toole, T Parkin Powell, Purdy, Raven, Ridley, Robbins, Roberts, Rust, Sandvoss, Schwarzacher, Smart, Spear, Squires, Tahko, Tavaré, Taylor, Tether, Tormey, Warburton, Welch, West, Wilding, RE Wilson.

Ms T Adeniyi, Dr P Allen, Dr M Allinson, Mr J Barrie, Mr S Buffonge, Dr N Carhart, Dr A Clayton, Dr S East, Dr V Erlandsson, Mr E Fay, Mr D Freda, Dr C Fricker, Dr H Gadelha, Ms A Garr, Dr G Hemani, Ms L Macey (Postgraduate Education Officer, Bristol SU), Dr B Main, Dr J McManus, Mr M Munafo, Dr M Gillway, Dr D Pamunuwa, Dr B Pohl, Dr S Proud, Dr J Ross, Mr S Williams (UG Student rep).

In attendance: Ms L Barling (Deputy Head of Governance and Clerk to Senate), Mr James Bigwood (Interim Chief People Officer for Items 7&8), Ms J Bridgwater (Deputy University Secretary for item 4), Ms P Coonerty (Executive Director for Education and Student Experience and Academic Registrar), Professor I Craddock (Academic Trustee), Prof T Elliot (on behalf of Dr M Werner), Mr H Gorst (Student Trustee), Professor C Relton (Academic Trustee), Mr S Swales (Head of Academic Staff Development)

Apologies: Ms Y Ankaine, Professor C Chapman, Mr X Chen, Dr S Das, Professor M Dillingham, Professor N Edwards, Dr T Ellson, Professor C Faul, Dr F Ginn, Dr J Howarth, Professor A Juncos, Professor O Madhloom, Professor R Martin, Professor N Savery, Professor N Timpson, Dr K Trimmis, Dr M Werner.

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING ON 12 DECEMBER 2022.

1.1 **APPROVED** the minutes of the meeting of 12th December 2022 as a true and accurate record.

2. CHAIR'S REPORT

2.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED:** paper ref: (SN/22-23/014) (on file).

2.2 The Vice-Chancellor introduced her report and the following was **NOTED:**

2.2.1 A recent visit and lecture by the UK Government Cabinet Secretary and others had been very successful at raising the University's profile in Whitehall – this represented a real opportunity to support a key government policy change which aimed to digitally upskill civil servants. The lecture would be published in due course and Bristol colleagues would provide a commentary.

2.2.2 The Government's [Higher Education \(Freedom of Speech\) Bill](#) was likely to receive Royal Assent in the spring. The Office for Students were preparing for the new regulatory powers the Bill would give them. The anticipated appointment of an OfS 'Director of Free Speech' should provide some clarification on outstanding questions (this matter was discussed in more detail at *agenda item 4*).

- 2.2.3 The Lifelong learning entitlement was a positive development which would link with the new flexible degree programmes and opportunities at Temple Quarter Enterprise Campus (TQEC) to support re-skilling in a more flexible way.
- 2.2.4 UCU took strike action on 1st February, with a series of other dates scheduled during February and March. There had been a high turnout, but action remained respectful and good-natured. The University would monitor the impact on teaching. UNISON had also announced their intention to take further strike action. The Vice-Chancellor was hopeful that the mediation process would lead to a compromise – the University wanted staff to have pay rises but it had to be affordable for the organisation and the wider sector both now and in the longer term.

3. **ACADEMIC SENIOR LEADERSHIP STRUCTURE: UPDATE FROM SENATE WORKING GROUP**

- 3.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: paper ref: (SN/22-23/015) (on file)).
- 3.2 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost led on this item and Senate **NOTED** that a wide range of feedback had been received from Faculties and Schools as part of the consultation, the outcome of which had now been extended to the meeting of Senate in April. Senators were invited to continue to submit their thoughts and suggestions to the Working Group which was scheduled to meet again on 6th March.
- 3.3 The following was **DISCUSSED**:
 - 3.3.1 At the UEB meeting this morning, UEB agreed that the University would now move to recruit three Executive Deans in order to better strategically focus the University's leadership team in alignment with good practice in executive governance. Senate **NOTED** that this was solely an executive decision and was in accordance with the University constitution and schedule of executive delegation. Concurrently, the University would be reducing the professional services membership of UEB and also reviewing existing systems and processes to align with PS Operating Model changes.
 - 3.3.2 There would be a transition period once the Executive Deans had been appointed to provide time for consultation and thinking about how to achieve the most effective academic structures within the University going forward. Given that there would be a period of transition, the executive had discussed and agreed that it would continue with the current interim Dean arrangements until the outcome of the consultation was known.
 - 3.3.3 The next Working Group meeting would be discussing an iteration of different leadership structures and academic leadership roles and in order to take a research informed approach to its decision-making, the Chair had invited the incoming Dean of the Business School, Professor Veronica Hope-Hailey who would be sharing her findings from a 3-year research project in responsible leadership post-pandemic.
 - 3.3.4 School structures were crucial because they were closest to staff and students, and it was essential to achieve the up and down communication and alignment in order that individuals could get on with their jobs without always having to report up to UEB.
 - 3.3.5 The importance of communications in capturing the ambition that the University wanted to deliver within the new structure.
 - 3.3.6 The operational distinction between an Executive Dean and a Dean would be discussed at the next Working Group meeting, and a job description was currently being developed for a fixed term transition role for a one to two year period. Broadly speaking, the Executive Deans would have a strong emphasis on strategic leadership across the entirety of the University, thinking as UEB members and undertaking horizon scanning, considering longer-term risks and challenges and mitigations, and working closely with the Pro Vice-Chancellors. The Deans' role would focus on operational delivery. This change would have a positive impact on the Faculty Deans' workload which was currently extremely heavy, and would provide the University additional strategic capacity.

3.3.7 Senate would continue to receive further updates from the Working Group and a White Paper would be considered by Senate at its meeting in April.

4. FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM

4.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: paper ref: (SN/22-23/016) (on file).

4.2 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost and the General Counsel and Deputy University Secretary introduced the item, and the following points were **NOTED**:

4.2.1 The HE Freedom of Speech Bill (the “Bill”) would put new obligations on universities and student unions to promote free speech. While it remained contentious and was still making its way through parliament it was likely to receive Royal Assent early in the new year.

4.2.2 The framework for compliance with the requirements of the Bill enhanced the responsibility (via the proposed revisions to the OFS Conditions of registration) on the Board of Trustees to ensure that the institution’s governing documents were compliant with its duties under sections A1 to A3 of the Bill, and to ensure that the institution had in place adequate and effective management and governance arrangements to secure compliance with those duties.

4.2.3 The University had reviewed its complaints procedure for complaints specifically related to free speech to ensure that the right policies were in place, consulted with key stakeholders and could confirm that the University was in a good place in terms of ensuring its complaints processes were fit for purpose to respond to new regulatory expectations.

4.2.4 The University was expected to proactively promote free speech and the University had established new mandatory training for all staff and more specific training for those staff involved in complaint procedures.

4.2.5 The Bill would create a new pressure on the University to work even more closely with the SU given the OfS’ considerations about how best to approach the regulation of freedom of speech in Students Unions.

4.3 The following was **DISCUSSED**:

4.3.1 The importance of ensuring that students had the right information to hand and were well informed about the processes and governance structures, and who to speak with.

4.3.2 How best to safeguard marginalised students who were impacted by certain speakers’ views. There was broad agreement that it was important to balance freedom of speech and public sector equality duties whilst also protecting marginalised students.

4.3.3 As part of the training piece, it might be helpful for colleagues to be presented with some different scenarios so as a community it could have a collective discussion about what were the individual and collective responsibilities in this area.

5. STRATEGIC INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH-LED PARTNERSHIPS

5.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: paper ref: (SN/22-23/017) (on file)).

5.2 The PVC Global Engagement introduced her report. The following was **NOTED**:

5.2.1 REDACTED: Section 2(43) Commercial interests

5.2.2 The next stage of globalisation and internationalisation was about raising the University’s profile as a world-leading research-intensive University, and Strategic International

Research Partnerships were a core mechanism to achieve this. This was the PVC-Global Engagement's top priority.

5.2.3 The vision outlined today was discussed and fully supported by UEB on 16th January.

5.2.4 REDACTED: Section 2(43) Commercial interests

5.3 The following was **DISCUSSED**:

5.3.1 REDACTED: Section 2(43) Commercial interests

5.3.2 Incentives for academic staff to get involved in this, such as workload allocation, the possibility of pump priming resource and perhaps some travel and/or other related engagement funding.

5.3.3 It was anticipated that many of the University's overseas educational partnerships would also turn into research partnerships and it was important to always start collaborative research partnerships at the education and student level. Students should also always have a day in the development of their educational learning opportunities.

5.3.4 From a UG student perspective, a strong UCT link and beyond might also help to generate new Study Abroad spaces which were currently quite limited.

5.3.5 A scoping exercise was currently underway about the University's enterprise and innovation activities internationally and how those could also tie in.

5.3.6 There were a series of KPIs associated with the strategy which were measurable and delivery of those was being monitored by the Strategy Implementation Monitoring Group Global (SMIG-Global) which reported into the Strategy Implementation Board (SIB).

6. **STRUCTURE OF THE ACADEMIC YEAR – POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT PROGRAMMES**

6.1 RECEIVED and **ADVISED** the Vice-Chancellor: paper ref: (SN/22-23/018) (on file)).

6.2 The Pro-Vice Chancellor Education introduced this item and the following was **DISCUSSED**:

6.2.1 From a progression perspective, progression boards fall quite late and students had often already thought about or begun their projects – there was a piece of work underway to take a more expansive view of what the research element of a PGT programme looked like in terms of research preparation through the taught units and pulling together those research elements to enable students to work earlier.

6.2.2 In terms of assessment when ready versus assessment when scheduled, this had been considered in detail but there was a balance to take because the University was of course constrained by the existence of a year and by trying to align our assessment activity in ways that would make it possible for staff to manage. There were broad parameters being discussed by way of the development of the assessment strategy in terms of helping students to prepare appropriately for their assessments going forward.

6.2.3 Whilst it was very positive that the University was experimenting with different types of dissertations, changing the dissertation type to something that required greater liaison with for example an industrial partner could also be quite work intensive for the academic staff member because it would require additional supervision. It would be helpful to ensure detailed scrutiny of the processes in relation to this.

6.2.4 Student members of Senate were very supportive of the ability for students to start their dissertations in a more timely fashion and were pleased to see those challenges being properly acknowledged and addressed.

6.5 Senate **NOTED** that as part of the Curriculum Enhancement Programme, a series of workshops would be running in each School over the next 6 months the objective of

which was to consider how best to design and sequence assessments and thinking through how to deal with some of the challenges that could occur if there were too many assessments all falling at the same time. Senators were invited to join those workshops.

7. ANNUAL STUDENT AND STAFF MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING REPORTS 2021/22

7.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: paper ref: (SN/22-23/019) (on file)).

7.2 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost and Registrar & University Secretary introduced the report which detailed the achievements and challenges during 21/22 and priorities for 22/23 for Staff and Students. The Acting Chief People Officer and the Executive Director for Education and Student Experience was also in attendance for this item.

7.3 The following points were **DISCUSSED**:

Students

7.3.1 The positive development of the recent award of the Student Minds Charter which could help to bridge the clear disconnect between service delivery and student perceptions and the role of Senators in terms of affirmations from that Charter and the action plan of activities that were underway.

7.3.2 The importance of continuing to showcase and celebrate to key stakeholders about what has been achieved more widely across all of the University's communications channels.

7.3.3 The University had not yet found the right balance around the interface between academic studies and wellbeing and that there would be further considerations in this area to ensure that academic support, wellbeing and other support mechanisms e.g. study skills worked together to support student success.

7.3.4 There was a role for face to face drop-in sessions with wellbeing advisors, however there was a balance to be struck and it was important to be clear where that offer might fit in the broader suite of services.

Staff

7.3.5 The positive and successful physical wellbeing week campaign which had resonated very well with staff.

7.3.6 The report showed some positive trends in staff wellbeing compared with last year and an improvement in staff awareness of University services. It was suggested that perhaps in order to encourage more people to use the services, the University could ask staff specifically what they think they need or would like to see.

7.3.7 The increased wait time for first appointments for the staff counselling service which was likely due to a greater awareness of the services which had driven up demand and that staff were finding it difficult to access NHS and external services. The University would continue to monitor demand and lead times.

7.3.8 It was important not to downplay for staff the levels of ongoing stress and the implications of that which was a big issue for the institution, and HR would be continuing to monitor the trends in this area very closely.

7.3.9 It was worth being aware that many staff mental health issues were caused by increasing administrative creep and unmanageable workloads and many staff were assisting each other in ways that were not necessarily visible.

7.4 In summary, there were many successes and activities to celebrate but more work could be done for both student and staff mental health and wellbeing and the University was continuing to take a 'watching brief'.

8. ANNUAL REPORT OF THE UNIVERSITY PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE

8.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: paper ref: (SN/22-23/020) (on file)).

8.2 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost introduced the Annual Report which provided details of successful outcomes of the 2021-2022 annual academic promotion procedure. Senate **NOTED**: a) that the ethnicity pay gap report would be shared with Senate at its meeting in April and; b) that in relation to the Gender Pay Gap Report (Appendix 1, on file), in particular it was noted that the mean gender pay gap had improved but the median gender pay gap had plateaued. Initial analysis showed some adverse impact from recruitment and retention supplements in particular in Engineering and the Business School. However, the University also continued to see an improvement in the female professoriate.

9. EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

9.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: paper ref: (SN/22-23/021) (on file)).

9.2 The Pro-Vice Chancellor Education led on this item, and in particular Senate **NOTED** that the University's TEF statement was submitted on 24th January 2023, alongside an independent student submission. The formal outcome would not be known until the summer. The Vice-Chancellor noted the significant work involved in writing the submission and thanked all those involved.

9.3 **NOTED**: the other items for report from the January meeting of University Education Committee.

10. RESEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT

10.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: paper ref: (SN/22-23/022) (on file)).

11. REPORT FROM THE UNIVERSITY CIVIC ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE

11.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: paper ref: (SN/22-23/023) (on file)).

11.2 **NOTED**: the update report and that the deadline to provide comments on the Civic University Agreement was Friday 17th February 2023 (lead contact: Dr John McWilliams, Director of Civic Engagement).

11.3 **REDACTED**: Section 2(43) Commercial interests

12. UPDATE FROM ACADEMIC STAFF TRUSTEES

12.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: a verbal update from the academic staff members on the Board of Trustees:

12.2 The size and shape review – the Board was supportive of the direction of travel, and in particular the efficiencies being made to the University Executive Board, and the extension of the academic leadership structures consultation.

12.3 Civic engagement - the Board really welcomed the level of engagement of the Vice-Chancellor and the wider executive team with national and civic representatives. Hot topics that were being discussed between the University and civic colleagues in the city were around the housing crisis and also the lifelong learning opportunities that were unfolding through the development of the TQ campus.

12.4 The Board discussed in detail about the Freedom of Speech Bill, and also considered the Staff and Student Mental Health and Wellbeing report, scrutinising the issue of

engagement and the level of feedback that was informing some of the decisions and inferences made from the data in those reports.

MEETING CLOSED: Next meeting 24 April 2023, 2pm, online.

REDACTED: Section 2(40)
Personal Information

SIGNED BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR (CHAIR):

DATE: 24th April 2023