

**Confirmed**

**SENATE**

**MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 JUNE 2020**

**Members in Attendance**

John Vinney, Tim McIntyre-Bhatty, Jim Andrews, Einar Thorsen, Stephen Tee, Lois Farquharson, Jacky Mack, Mandi Barron, Julie Northam, Lenrick Greaves, Samantha Leahy-Harland, Jane Murphy, Sam Porter, Luciana Esteves, Shanti Shanker, Dermot McCarthy, Tim Lloyd, Catherine Angell, Carol Clark, Karl Rawstrone, Fiona Cosson, Helen Best, Laura Roper, Dinusha Mendis, Heather Hartwell, Tim Rees, Katherine Appleton

**In Attendance**

Jules Forrest (Agenda Items 6.2 and 6.3), Gelareh Roushan (Agenda Item 5.3), Liam Sheridan (Agenda Item 5.2)

**Apologies**

Ade Balogun, Keith Phalp, David Reeve and Michael Silk

1. **APOLOGIES**

Members were welcomed to the meeting and apologies were noted as above. The Chair welcomed three new members: Dr Fiona Cosson (Faculty Academic Staff Representative, FMC), Professor Heather Hartwell (Professorial Representative, FM) and David Reeve (Interim Director of Finance & Performance).

The Chair gave thanks to Dr Dermot McCarthy (Faculty Academic Staff Representative, FM), Professor Dinusha Mendis (Professorial Member, FMC), Professor Katherine Appleton (Professorial Member, FST), Professor Tim Rees (Professorial Member, FHSS) and Lenrick Greaves (SUBU Vice-President – Education) who were ending their term as Senate members.

1. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

1. **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF 26 FEBRUARY 2020**

**Approved:**The minutes of the previous meeting were approved as an accurate record.

3.1 **Accuracy/Approval of Minutes**

**Approved**:  The minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting.

3.1.1. **Matters Arising**

Annual ARPP Republication Cycle

The ARPP republication cycle process had been reviewed to ensure that all ARPPs received the appropriate level of approval in line with the Scheme of Delegation. The review of the process had led to enhanced training, support and guidance for document owners to clarify roles and responsibilities. The new process would raise awareness of the Scheme of Delegation and how it impacted on approval requirements of any ARPP amendments, and to explain how changes in one area may impact changes to other ARPPs.

The new process would encourage fewer minor changes on an annual basis and more holistic reviews taking place every 3-5 years, although there was recognition there may be external, statutory or legal reasons for more frequent review beyond the control of the document owner.

Moving forward, the timescale for the ARPP republication cycle would start significantly earlier in the academic year in order that document owners were given more time to identify any changes and seek the requisite level of approval.  ARPPs that did not require any changes could be granted early approval. A longer-term approach to managing the ARPP republication work would continue to clearly separate policy from procedure and guidance and reduce the overall volume of ARPPs that require approval as outlined in the Scheme of Delegation.

Update for 2020/21 ARPP republication cycle:

Document owners attended a meeting on 26 February 2020 to hear of the revised process and the approach moving forward.  Due to the impact of COVID-19, a high number of ARPPs would not be updated for the start of the 2020/21 academic year.  Where major changes were already underway and approval was in the process of being sought, those ARPPs would continue with the approval process. The Academic Quality team would arrange a meeting with document owners early in the new academic year to set expectations and remind stakeholders of the changes to process for the next cycle of republication.

**3.2. Report of Electronic Senate meeting of 13 to 20 May 2020**

**Noted:**  The report of the Electronic Senate meeting of 13 to 20 May 2020 was noted.

**VICE-CHANCELLOR'S COMMUNICATIONS**

1. **HE Sector and BU2025 Update**

HE Sector Update

Following the extended moratorium on unconditional offers the Office for Students (OfS) ran a consultation on a proposed new ongoing condition of registration. This ‘time limited’ condition was expected to come into force in June and would last for one year, although it would apply retrospectively to conduct by universities since 11 March 2020 and would require ‘a provider not to engage in any form of conduct which could reasonable have a material negative effect on the stability and/or integrity of the English Higher Education sector’.

On 9 June 2020, the OfS published guidance on compliance with consumer protection requirements when informing students and applicants about Universities’ plans for the new academic year. Universities UK (UUK) had been holding regular meetings for members, and it had been interesting to hear from other institutions about their preparations, as well as the work that UUK had been doing with the Department for Education (DfE), the OfS and the Universities and Colleges Admissions Service (UCAS), to highlight sector concerns and seek solutions. UUK were continuing to engage with the DfE and UCAS on expectations for clearing in August.

The Major Incident Group (MIG) recently agreed a set of principles and planning assumptions underpinning the University's plan to exit from lockdown.  These principles would help with planning for the inevitable uncertainty as the current situation and government guidance changes over the coming months. Should there be a return to tighter restrictions, the University would provide access to specialist resources and general resources such as the library, whilst also preparing for more restricted access. Learning and teaching in the first semester would be mixed mode, and student accommodation would be open in September whilst complying with government and public health advice.

Following the announcement of student number caps last week, a scheme was introduced for Universities to apply for additional student numbers for some courses.  The University was currently considering whether to apply for additional places on some programmes such as healthcare.

BU and BU2025 Update

The University would continue to work on the outcomes and short term operational challenges with the long term goals that had been set. BU2025 provided clarity and a clear direction of travel on how to make the best use of the University's resources, time and energy.  One of the biggest challenges would be recruitment in September and speculation around student behaviour and international recruitment.  However, the University would continue to retain its clear focus on BU2025. The Minister of State for Universities, Michelle Donelan, UUK and the OfS were working together to secure stability in the sector.

Admissions data continued to be positive for both undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, although this data would not necessarily provide a reliable indication of what could be expected in the Autumn.  The final UCAS deadline for applicants to accept offers had been extended from 1 May 2020 to 18 June 2020 which may then be difficult to compare year on year progress.  Some students may choose to defer if they were concerned about the level of online teaching or the impact on the social aspects of university life from ongoing social distancing. This would become clearer in the coming months as government guidance changes.

All events at the University were currently under review. The graduation ceremonies would be postponed until March 2021, and the International Commencement Ceremony would not be held.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked all staff for their hard work carried out during lockdown and continuing with work in all areas, academic and professionally, and for responding as a team and including externally supporting the national effort around COVID-19. Regular communications to staff and students would continue throughout July and August.

Professor McIntyre-Bhatty believed the student number controls put in place would provide the University with some flexibility, especially around health programmes and the best case scenario would hopefully put the University in a similar position to last year. To date, there had only been a small number of withdrawals from applicants, and currently the data was fairly stable. The next important date was 18 June 2020 when the UCAS cycle ends.  It would be at this point that comparisons could be made.

Professor Tee advised that over recent months, healthcare students had continued to go into practice and receive payment for their placements under contract with various NHS Trusts in response to COVID-19.  This had distorted the learning in practice somewhat as a lot of healthcare services had ceased which did not allow for placements for some students. The NHS had started to reopen services which would allow placements to expand. The Innovation Fund which NHS Trusts can bid for in order to expand on placements and recruitment numbers would be linked closely to placements. The Faculty of Health & Social Sciences (FHSS) would be delighted to increase recruitment targets through normal channels during this dynamic situation and the Faculty would continue with its negotiations with NHS Trusts and local authorities. Overall, FHSS was seeing a lot of interest from prospective students in health programmes, however it was important that the University would be able to provide the training in practice.

Dr Clark reminded members there was a need to be creative about placements moving forward and within FHSS there were two programmes where virtual placements were being created with the knowledge of Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) who were supportive of the Faculty and the NHS, with non-NHS placements appearing to be a pinch-point moving forward.

Ms Northam provided an update regarding research sustainability within the sector. COVID-19 had impacted on the continuation of research for some projects that could not continue as planned. The costs for research were increasing with the delays. The government had created a Task Force with membership from predominantly research intensive institutions, however the University had been working with Research England and was one of three institutions invited to feed in our experiences. The Research Performance and Management Committee (RPMC) had been carrying out a lot of work on setting principles and criteria which was a priority at present.

 **FOR DISCUSSION**

**5.1. Annual Review of Key Performance Indicators**

Professor McIntyre-Bhatty highlighted areas where the University had continued to make positive progress towards achieving its aspirations and areas where improvements remained to be a challenged. The Key Performance Indicators (KPI) report had been prepared in March 2020 before the COVID-19 lockdown, therefore the data provided was a snapshot. An updated KPI Report would be submitted to the next University Board meeting was due to take place on 17 July 2020.  Overall the data provided was positive and the University continued to outperform other institutions in the sector with regard to placements.  Positive steps had also been made in terms of improving access offer rate gaps, and following the change of policies, the University would ensure it was more inclusive in its offer making strategy.

There had been some positive indications regarding research income and research activity under BU2025 with the University receiving larger grants and some successful bids. The budget awarded for the following two years had shown an improvement, reporting 44% and 20% respectively compared to the previous report showing 35% and 15% respectively. These figures were now more comparable with the data one year ago and were moving in a positive direction for the third year in a row, although this could change over the next three years.

There had been marginal increases in the recruitment of students from the local area, increasing by 2% to 70% in 2018/19, with c.23% of home domiciled new entrants coming from the South West region and c.47% coming from the South East region. The Student Staff Ratio had improved marginally from 18.4 to 18.3 and it was hoped this would not decrease any further.  Over the coming months, within the University’s BU2025 strategy, it was hoped there would be further improvement.

The end of year report was not expected to be substantially different to the report submitted to the Committee.  The report did show good progress over the last two years and Professor McIntyre-Bhatty thanked everyone for their hard work.

**Considered and Noted:**  The Committee considered and noted report for onward submission to the University Board.

**5.2. Update on Degree Outcomes Statement**

The OfS report published in July 2019 included some analysis of trends in honours degree classifications and the headline position was that there had been an increase in the proportion of First and Upper Second degrees. The draft Degree Outcomes Statement provided an overview of University developments over the period which had a positive impact on student outcomes, e.g. enhancements to teaching and assessment practice.

The timescale for finalising the Degree Outcomes Statement was now the end of the calendar year. The latest version of the Degree Outcomes Statement had been discussed at an earlier Academic Standards & Education Committee (ASEC) meeting and subsequently updated to make it more succinct where possible.

Dr Sheridan explained that the majority of the University’s increase was due to a historic rise before the start of the data.  If there had been any improvement in student outcomes, it was linked to academic practice.  Any slight decrease in average entry tariff was related to the relaxation of the Student Number Controls (SNC), this was not seen to be a big issue, but had been influenced by the removal of the cap on recruitment.

With regards to feedback received from External Examiners, Senators agreed that across the University, External Examiners consistently provided positive feedback around the thoroughness and rigour of assessment practices, as well as commenting on the variety of assessment used within the University.  The level of critical comments received from External Examiners was generally very low.

A final draft of the Degree Outcomes Statement would be reviewed at ASEC and then Senate before being submitted to the University Board.

**Endorsed:**The Committee endorsed the current draft of the Degree Outcomes Statement*.*

 **5.3. Quality of the Online Learning Experience**

Dr Roushan introduced the paper which provided an overview of the recent shift in teaching and learning practices, the measures taken place to support the transformation and the plans to support students and staff in preparing for more online and blended pedagogies in order to support a high quality student learning experience.

The Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) and digital learning tools were now being increasingly relied on. The emphasis on how the Centre for Fusion Learning Innovation & Excellence (FLIE) and staff worked together had moved from an emergency period in the last few weeks to a more sustainable approach. There were a number of dimensions to the way the work was being carried out to ensure the University supported staff, and that the software available to them was suitable for their requirements.  A set of principles were submitted to the Education MIG on 9 June 2020 which provided details of the new approach in blended and online pedagogies that would require increasingly innovative pedagogies to deliver high standards of education, along with the development of new capabilities and creative practices. The set of principles were approved by the Education MIG with minor amendments which would be circulated to Faculties in due course. The paper also introduced the background and landscape being created within the sector and some of the areas being taken forward within the framework to usefully work with staff at programme and unit level.

Dr Roushan explained the detail of the Digital Pedagogies Framework and the baseline of support with regards to the support for teaching and learning. All Faculties had confirmed the baseline was achievable.  The Framework not only concentrated on delivery but also the assessment of students, linked to existing policy with regards to formative assessment.  The University did not wish to have multiple assessments for students, particularly with students who were expected to work remotely for longer so it was imperative that these students had more understanding of assessment and receiving formative feedback. Students would also be provided with links, signposting and regular communications to access recordings and resources in order to reduce stress and anxiety as they learn.

Dr Cosson queried the implementation of the Framework and the personalisation of feedback and how it would fit with anonymous marking. Dr Roushan understood there may be issues with anonymous marking and it had been agreed via the Education MIG that anonymous marking was paused for the remainder of the academic year. The IT Department would be purchasing a licence for Mentimeter which should be received imminently. Five licences for Zoom were also in the process of being purchased.

Dr Cosson questioned whether any guidance was available regarding student engagement as she was concerned that engagement from Level 4 students in September may be difficult and these students may choose to work on their assessments only, without attendance at seminars and lectures.  Information around student engagement was available in *ARPP 3K – Engagement, Monitoring and Withdrawal: Procedure* and should be used for monitoring attendance and engagement in their programmes. Most importantly, the University wanted to ensure that all students had an on-campus experience and experienced being part of a university.

Mr Greaves reminded the Committee that inclusivity should remain in mind within the University, and one particular area was for students to have access to lecture material 48 hours in advance of a lecture.  It was noted that this request was at the discretion of each lecturer and would ‘ideally’ be provided rather than ‘will be’ provided. Dr Roushan advised that providing lecture material early to students was discipline specific and tutor discretion was required.

Senators agreed the Digital Pedagogies Framework was excellent and would be very useful. Mr Rawstrone advised there would also be a related piece of work to be carried out which would involve academic staff ensuring all students were learning as well as doing their own social learning. Mr Rawstrone and Professor Tee agreed they would welcome being included in that future work.

**Noted:**The Committee discussed and noted the Digital Pedagogies Framework.

**6. FOR APPROVAL**

**6.1. Research Professional and Practice Committee Terms of Reference**

The annual review of the Research and Professional Practice Committee Terms of Reference and the Scheme of Delegation had been aligned at the request of Senate at the meeting held on 26 February 2020.  Both documents were presented to Senate with minor amendments.

**Approved:**Senate approved the amendments to the Terms of Reference

**Noted:**Senate noted the updates to the Scheme of Delegation

 **6.2. Policy updates to 2B - Programme Structure and Curriculum Design Characteristics: Policy**

Ms Forrest explained that operational detail had been removed from ARPP *2B – Programme Structure and Curriculum Design Characteristics: Policy*to make it more focused on policy principles and to outline key features, requirements and considerations in the design and re-design of academic programmes.  The updated policy now aligned to BU2025 and Fusion principles of learning, included additional external points of reference and also revisions around award titles.  Programme teams should ensure that the design of the curriculum and the associated teaching, learning and assessment activities enabled a holistic and inclusive learning experience for all students, taking into account the diverse nature of the student body.

Mr Greaves agreed that Section 5.1 of the policy framed the curriculum as being essentially diverse, however he suggested the 'diversity of the student body' was referenced whilst considering how inclusivity is reflected in the curriculum.

Mr Rawstrone advised that a number of programmes within the Faculty of Media & Communication were due to be reviewed within the next few months, and he queried whether the newly updated document would apply immediately.  It was confirmed that the new policy would come into effect from the start of the new academic year, and any programme reviews taking place before the end of August 2020 should use the current published version, although it was noted that programme teams in the process of preparing documentation reviews were already aware of the revisions to the policy.

**Approved:**  The Committee approved the updated *ARPP 2B – Programme Structure and Curriculum Design Characteristics: Policy*.

**6.3. Policy updates to 5B - Student Engagement and Feedback: Policy and Procedure**

Following on from the work of the Student Voice Task and Finish Group (SVTFG) with SUBU, the main objective was to update the University’s policy for student engagement and feedback in order to increase the level of student interaction with the University. The SVTFG and SUBU had reviewed and revised the methods for gathering student feedback at programme level, and clarified how student feedback was responded to and dealt with within the academic governance system at the University.

The most significant change was the introduction of the Student:Staff Forum (SSF) which would be the basis for engaging with students in an informal and collaborative way. The forums would support, facilitate and encourage student engagement and further improve the student learning experience by allowing Student Reps to meet and discuss their experiences, programmes and units and in turn would feed into the University’s formal structure and Faculty Academic and Education Committees (FASEC).

Dr Cosson was concerned that students attended various meetings across the University, however they had a limited understanding and engagement in the topics being discussed and therefore suggested that agendas be adjusted to include agenda items where student input/feedback was required and then allowed students a suitable point to leave the meeting and staff members could then continue with agenda items which were not relevant to students. Ms Forrest confirmed this request had already been communicated to Academic Quality and had been agreed. A draft agenda would be published to encourage effective engagement from students at meetings.

**Approved:**  The Committee approved the revised ARPP 5B Student Engagement: Policy and Procedure for 2020/21.

**7. REPORTING COMMITTEES**

**7.1. Faculty Academic Board Minutes**

7.1.1. FHSS FAB minutes of 12 May 2020 (unconfirmed)

**Noted:**The Committee noted the FHSS FAB minutes of 12 May 2020.

7.1.2. FM FAB minutes of 19 May 2020 (unconfirmed)

**Noted:**The Committee noted the FM FAB minutes of 19 May 2020.

7.1.3. FMC FAB minutes of 29 April 2020 (unconfirmed)

**Noted:**The Committee noted the FMC FAB minutes of 29 April 2020.

7.1.4. FST FAB minutes of 14 May 2020 (unconfirmed)

**Noted:**The Committee noted the FST FAB minutes of 14 May 2020.

**8. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

The Vice-Chancellor thanked those members who were ending their term on Senate for their valued contributions to Senate. An election would take place in the new academic year to appoint a new Academic Staff Representative from FM, and new Professorial nominations would be sought from Executive Deans.

There was currently a vacancy for a Senate member to join the University Board. The deadline for applications was Monday 15 June 2020 at 4.00pm.

There was also a vacancy for a Senate member to join the membership of the Academic Standards & Education Committee (ASEC) and the vacancy would be advertised shortly. Those who were interested in joining ASEC should contact Jacky Mack for further information.

**NEXT MEETING:**

Electronic Senate – TBC

Senate Meeting – 2.15pm on Wednesday 28 October 2020