

SENATE

Minutes of the 354th meeting of Senate held on 2 June 2021 (by Teams)

Present:

Professor Alec Cameron (Chair)
Jawad Ahmad
Safa-Atiya Ahmed
Dr Leonidas Anastasakis
Professor Ruth Ayres
Eleanor Barton
Dr Luciano Batista
Professor Pawan Budhwar
Helen Curtis
Professor George Feiger
Dr Raquel Gil-Cazorla

Dr Joanne Gough
Professor Simon Green
Saskia Hansen
Professor Anthony Hilton
Saira Hussain
Alison Levey
Dr Robbie Love
Dr Jörg Mathias
Dr Lucy Rackliff
Professor Edik Rafailov

Professor Gertrud Reershemius
Dr Johan Rewilak
Harry Sheppard
Professor Nicholas Theodorakopoulos
Dr Eirini Theodosiou
Professor Paul Topham
Dr Sylvia Wong
Dr Stephen Worrall
Dr Uwe Wunderlich
Professor Yuchun Xu

Apologies:

Dr Raj Singh Badhan
Dr Daniel Cash
Professor Lauren Devine
Professor Andrew Devitt
Dr Panos Doss
Dr Ruth Edwards

Professor Claire Farrow
Professor Sarah Hainsworth
Dr Peter Lewis
Professor Francisco Leyva-Leon
Professor Gill Nicholls
Dr Goudarz Poursharif

Gurpal Singh Rai
Neil Scott
Professor Edward Sweeney
Professor Ivan Wall
Helen Yoshioka

In attendance:

Richard Billingham
Professor Helen Higson
Gary Hughes

Clare Noakes
Nicholas O'Regan
Julie Ottley (secretary)

Mark Smith
Patricia Thornley
John Walter

Governance matters

Minutes

20/91 RESOLVED:

To approve the minutes of the 352nd and 353rd meetings of Senate held on 10 March 2021 and 5 May 2021.

Matters arising

20/92 RECEIVED:

A summary of actions taken in response to matters arising from the previous meetings.

Proposed change to membership of the University Council including associated changes to a Statute and Ordinance

20/93 RECEIVED:

Paper SEN-20-3979-A being a proposal to move most of the content of University Statute 4, concerning membership of Council, to a new Ordinance 1.10 with amendment to some of the wording.

20/94 NOTED:

That comments received from Senate members in response to circulation of the proposal prior to the meeting had been addressed in the paper.

20/95 RESOLVED:

To endorse the proposed changes to the Statute and Ordinance and recommend to Council that they be approved for submission to the Privy Council for approval.

Disciplinary Board Membership 2021/22

20/96 CONSIDERED:

Paper SEN-20-3980-A being the Disciplinary Board Membership 2021/22.

20/97 RESOLVED:

That the Disciplinary Board Membership 2021/22 be approved.

University strategy

Senate Effectiveness Review

20/98 RECEIVED:

Paper SEN-20-3987-A being an update on implementation of the recommendations of the Senate Effectiveness Review, noting:

- The action plan showed the tracking of actions and progress to date
- The review process was multi layered involving Senate, Learning and Teaching Committee, Research Committee and their sub-groups
- All committees and groups were being reviewed to make sure they operate appropriately to provide the necessary assurance for Senate and Council

Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive's Report

20/99 RECEIVED:

An oral report from the Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive, noting:

- The University continued to follow the government's road map for the lifting of restrictions on 21 June. There was notably increased activity on campus of both students and staff
- UK recruitment was tracking well with acceptances 17% ahead compared to this time last year and ahead of comparators and the market at this stage. It was anticipated that numbers required through clearing this year would be lower than in the past. Thanks were expressed to recruitment teams across the University for their efforts in achieving this position. The situation for international students would remain uncertain for the foreseeable future.

The Executive Dean of the College of Business and Social Sciences provided an update on the proposal to discontinue History, Modern Languages and Translation programmes, noting:

- Consultation had taken place with directly affected staff with a request for ideas and input to the proposal and all responses and ideas had been reviewed
- Suggestions to align the disciplines of History and Translation Studies with the strategic direction of the University had been accepted and some changes made to the proposal as a result. Colleagues in these areas would be allowed to implement their suggestions and the position would be reviewed in January 2023
- Suggestions received for languages were not sufficiently plausible to alter the proposal and therefore all language programme would close after 2021/22 intake
- The consultation process was now concluded
- Languages for All was not part of the proposal but was under review with alternative delivery options being explored.

Report from Students' Union

20/100 RECEIVED:

Paper SEN-20-3981-A being the Students' Union report to Senate, noting:

The University and Students' Union had collaborated very well during the past difficult year and by working in partnership had addressed challenges together. It was hoped that the relationship would continue to strengthen with the new Sabbatical Officers when they take office.

Items raised by Academic Assembly

20/101 RECEIVED:

An oral report from the Chair of Academic Assembly, noting:

- Thanks to PVCE for addressing Academic Assembly and taking on board their comments about the Education Strategy
- There was a request for broader discussion about the university of technology idea and the Vice-Chancellor reported that he would be happy to attend a meeting to talk about this and any other topics that Academic Assembly would like to discuss.

In-depth discussion – Aston Strategy Review and Refresh

20/102 RECEIVED:

- (i) Paper SEN-20-3406-A being a strategy review and refresh conducted by Nous
- (ii) An overview presentation from the Vice-Chancellor, noting:

The report proposed 12 recommendations for implementation in the next two years, grouped together within three themes:

- Sharpen and focus activities and resources
- Adopt a principles-led approach
- Improve how the Aston team works together

Education Strategy

20/103 RECEIVED:

- (i) Paper SEN-20-3983-A being an overview of the Education Strategy 2021-2025

(ii) A presentation from Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education explaining the context for the new Education Strategy and outlining key points arising from sector research and feedback received from Aston staff and students on their recent online learning experiences. The proposed ten strategic principles were discussed, and details provided of the consultation process that had taken place, noting:

- The strategy addressed the need to develop students' knowledge, skills and digital capabilities such that they are able to excel in the future world of work resulting from the fourth industrial revolution
- The proposed strategic principles to be delivered through an implementation plan involving various workstreams
- KPIs, targets and milestones would be monitored and overseen by the University's Learning and Teaching Committee.

20/104 NOTED:

- Hybrid delivery would be advantageous so as to be able to offer flexibility for students who were not able to be on campus
- Some colleagues were inexperienced in hybrid teaching and therefore training and support would be needed
- Work was underway by TEL, Digital Services and Estates to develop capacity and capability for delivering effective hybrid teaching on campus
- Education Team could provide support and colleagues should contact them for assistance.

Report from Learning and Teaching Committee

20/105 RECEIVED:

Paper SEN-20-3984-A being a report of key matters from the University Learning and Teaching Committee meeting held on 19 May 2021.

20/106 NOTED:

Work had started to review and enhance the University's approach to academic integrity and if colleagues had experience of good practice or challenges in this area they were asked to make contact with Chris Wilson to contribute to the work of the group.

College Research Strategies

20/107 RECEIVED:

(i) Paper SEN-20-3985-A being College Research Strategies
(ii) A presentation from the Associate Dean Research BSS, Associate Dean Research EPS and Executive Dean HLS, providing an update on the College Research Strategies, noting:

- College Research Strategies were developed to align to the University Research Strategy
- The strengthening of research areas and capacity across Schools and Colleges
- There were great opportunities to make a difference locally, nationally and internationally
- The Strategies implementation plans would build a sustainable research environment
- It was important to develop strategic partnerships for a continuous relationship long term and this linked with the Knowledge Exchange Strategy

Report from Research Committee

20/108 RECEIVED:
Paper SEN-20-3988-A being a report of key matters from the Research Committee meeting held on 27 May 2021.

Other urgent business

Thanks to outgoing student representatives

20/109 RESOLVED:

To thank the outgoing student representatives: Helen Yoshioka as the postgraduate student representative and Eleanor Barton as the undergraduate student representative; with appreciation to Eleanor for being an active and participative member of Senate and other University fora.

Thanks to outgoing Sabbatical Officers

20/110 RESOLVED:

To thank the outgoing Sabbatical Officers: Harry Sheppard as President; Jawad Ahmad as VP Education and Safa-Atiya Ahmed as VP Welfare and to acknowledge their brilliant contribution to the Students' Union and University partnership during this challenging year and to wish them the very best for the future.

Award of the Senate Gold Medal

20/111 CONFIRMED:

The award of the distinguished Senate Gold Medal for meritorious service to Aston University to John Walter by the Vice-Chancellor. The award was in recognition of John's expertise in HE compliance and regulatory matters and his diligence, integrity and discretion at all times in this work.

Reported and noted

20/112 RECEIVED:

Council minutes of 27 January 2021
Learning and Teaching Committee minutes of 19 May 2021
Paper SEN-20-3986-A being the schedule of Research Grants and Contracts

Date of next meeting

20/113 NOTED: Dates of Senate meetings 2021/22:

Wednesday 10 November 2021 at 14:00
Wednesday 9 March 2022 at 14:00
Wednesday 1 June 2022 at 14:00