

SENATE

Minutes of the 358th meeting of Senate held on 26 May 2022 (by Teams)

Present:

Professor Simon Green (Chair)

Dr Leonidas Anastasakis

Dr Luciano Batista

Helen Curtis

Paige Dawson

Professor Andrew Devitt

Dr Panos Doss

Professor Claire Farrow

Professor George Feiger

Professor Stephen Garrett

Dr Joanne Gough

Saskia Hansen

Professor Anthony Hilton

Saira Hussain

Alison Levey

Dr Robbie Love

Professor Phil Mizen

Dr Goudarz Poursharif

Dr Lucy Rackliff

Gurpal Singh Rai

Dr Sylvia Wong

Dr Stephen Worrall

Professor Yuchun Xu

Apologies:

Professor Ruth Ayres

Dr Raj Singh Badhan

Professor Pawan Budhwar

Dr Daniel Cash

Professor Lauren Devine

Dr Raquel Gil-Cazorla

Hamzah Iqbal (student rep)

Dr Peter Lewis

Professor Francisco Leyva-Leon

Dr Jörg Mathias

Professor Gill Nicholls

Balraj Purewal

Professor Edik Rafailov

Neil Scott

Yesmeen Singh

Professor Nicholas Theodorakopoulos

Dr Eirini Theodosiou

Professor Paul Topham

Professor Ivan Wall

Dr Jens-Uwe Wunderlich

In attendance:

Hannah Bartlett M21/68-69

Richard Billingham

Gary Hughes

Rachel McIntosh M21/70-71

Liam Nevin

Professor Mark O'Hara

Julie Ottley (secretary)

Mark Smith

Matters for Notification

21/59 NOTED:

- Council minutes: (i) 9 February 2022
(ii) 9 March 2022
- Learning and Teaching Committee minutes of 5 May 2022
- Research Committee minutes of 13 May 2022
- Reports from: (i) Interim Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive (AU-SEN-21-4678-A)
(ii) Students' Union (AU-SEN-21-4679-A)
- Student Disciplinary and Fitness to Practice Report (AU-SEN-21-4680-A)
- Schedule of Research Grants and Contracts (AU-SEN-21-4681-A)
- Disciplinary Board Membership 2022/23 (AU-SEN-21-4683-A)

21/60 RECEIVED:

Paper AU-SEN-21-4683-A being the process and timetable for elections to Senate and Council 2022-24.

21/61 NOTED:

That two scrutineers were to be appointed for the elections and volunteers willing to act in this capacity should contact the Returning Officer (Secretary to Council).

Matters for Ratification

21/62 CONFIRMED:

The minutes of the 357th meeting of Senate held on 9 March 2022.

Matters arising from the 357th meeting of Senate held on 9 March 2022

M21/43 Mid-module questionnaires were being issued instead (of end-module) and these had produced a greater response rate and engagement

21/63 NOTED:

- It was asked what improvement in engagement had been seen from replacing the end-module with mid-module MEQ.
- It was reported that the process and outcomes from the surveys would be reviewed at the next meeting of Learning and Teaching Committee on 5 July, alongside a proposal for practice in the next academic year.

21/64 RECEIVED:

Paper AU-SEN-21-4684-A being the upward report from Learning and Teaching Committee of 5 May 2022.

21/65 NOTED:

- The internal TEF dataset was progressing and would be ready for testing July/August to enable preparatory work to be undertaken prior to the release of the OfS workbook in September. Some manual manipulation of data would still be required. Weekly meetings were taking place to ensure delivery deadlines were met.
- A Personal Tutoring task and finish group had made recommendations to enable a more consistent personal tutoring practice for students. Policy and guidance documentation would be updated for consideration alongside a proposed implementation plan at the next ULTC.
- Blackboard (BB) Original was being phased out and thus content would be moving to BB Ultra which offered enhanced student experience and improved functionality. Pilot programmes, selected by Colleges, would move to BB Ultra for 2022-23, with all modules moving for 2023-24. It would not be possible for TEL to 'lift and shift' content from Original to Ultra because of differences in structure. TEL would prepare guidance materials and work with College staff involved in the pilots so that they could offer local expertise. Local 'surgeries' would be offered to ensure staff had opportunities to acclimatise to BB Ultra before they had to engage with it.
- Governance had been put in place for the Ofsted New Provider Monitoring Visit (NMPV) which would take place over two days before April 2023. Safeguarding training was currently recommended for all staff involved in the delivery of degree apprenticeships. It was suggested that the Safeguarding training should be made mandatory for all student facing staff as there were students under the age of 18 on other programmes also. Director of Business Engagement agreed to raise this matter with Executive. **Action DBE**

21/66 RECEIVED:

Paper AU-SEN-21-4688-A being the upward report from Research Committee of 13 May 2022.

21/67 NOTED:

- An audit of the -80c freezer facility had revealed evidence of inappropriate sample storage of both human and non-human material. Three adverse events were identified in relation to Human Tissue Authority standards. These had been identified and dealt with quickly and a plan was in place to prevent future incidents.
- New research integrity and ethics websites were live and new research ethics procedures were operational.
- Due to deteriorating environmental conditions in the storage facility, the stock of existing PhD theses would be digitised to ensure preservation.

Matters for Discussion

EDI Annual Reports (AU-SEN-21-4685-A)

21/68 RECEIVED:
A presentation from the Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion on the Staff and Student Equality Reports 2022.

21/69 NOTED:

- EPS had recently been awarded Athena Swan gold award, and ABS and Law the bronze award.
- Student information was from audited HESA data 2018/19 which was the latest data that was available. It was highlighted that this was different to the data used for the Access and Participation Plan.
- There was an issue nationally with religion data as it was significantly out of line with previous years and this was being investigated.
- Students declaring a disability was below benchmark and this was being explored to try to understand why this was the case.
- Ethnicity attainment gap had reduced significantly and it was important this be maintained.
- Staff data also demonstrated lower disability disclosure rates. Work had started to better understand why this was the case and to make improvements so that staff would be more comfortable to disclose their disability.
- Staff constitution was gradually changing and improvements to the recruitment and promotion processes were having an impact and this needed to continue.
- The University's application for Race Equality Charter would be submitted shortly.
- It was recognised that actions to make change could be challenging but all contribution to this work was valuable and it was really important to share best practice. APVCDI could help and support colleagues in this work.

Employability Strategy (AU-SEN-21-4686-A)

21/70 RECEIVED:
A presentation from the Director of Employability on the development of the Employability Strategy.

21/71 NOTED:

- Employability was central to Aston's mission, intrinsic to its success and one of the key reasons why students choose Aston.
- The new strategy builds on current strengths, incorporating best practice and lessons learnt from the pandemic, so as to be responsive and agile for the future and in a position to deal with increased student numbers and labour market changes.
- Graduate Outcomes would become more important as in the future the Graduate Outcome Survey would survey graduates at all levels rather than just undergraduate as currently.
- The new approach to Employability would be phased in over the next four years.

Research data deep-dive (AU-SEN-21-4689-A)

21/72 RECEIVED:
A presentation from Dean of the Graduate School.

21/73 NOTED:

- Research sustainability was fundamentally linked to resource.
- Pre-Covid there had been significant growth in external funding, however, Covid had had an impact on this which was likely to be long lasting, taking five to six years to recover to the pre-Covid levels.

- There had been success in diversifying funder mix.
- Growth of KTP portfolio was a great success.
- REF results had demonstrated an improvement in quality of outputs at 3* and 4* level, however, there was some disappointment in performance relative to competitors.
- Plans were already afoot for better engagement with the impact agenda for the future, to identify and manage the pipeline and be more active in collecting data and there would be additional resource to support this activity.
- HLS had a 100% thesis submission rate and this would be investigated further at GSMC for any practices that could help other areas improve.
- The experience of REF panel members would be drawn upon for learning to help develop a proactive approach going forward.
- Mentorship for 4* publications was welcomed as an area to develop.

College of Business and Social Sciences strategy and performance update

21/74 RECEIVED:

A strategy and performance update from the Executive Dean of College of Business and Social Sciences.

21/75 NOTED:

- Economies of scale enabled the avoidance of duplication and this had resulted in a raised effectiveness demonstrated by successful cross-School and cross-College initiatives, eg Cybersecurity.
- The bulk of activity takes place within the three individual Schools: ABS, ALS, SSH
- ABS had been more successful than anticipated in student recruitment across all programmes. Some programmes (UG and PG) had been closed to applications. DBA was now the largest in the UK. This success was driven by reinventing programmes of significance to the marketplace.
- Research had good aspects, with some globally renowned, however, there were areas to be improved.
- REF output results were below the aspired level.
- The ABS SSR rate of 25 (16 for the University) demonstrated the enormous pressure on staff and the recruitment of 50 new staff was underway, with new procedures in place to enhance the diversity of staff.
- ALS was a relatively new entrant but had aspirations to be distinctive and innovative amongst the longer established traditional players.
- ALS had a low ratio of research but had chosen to focus on technology media issues which was starting to show success.
- Following the closure of Modern Languages, SSH had reviewed its strategy and sharpened its focus to develop teaching and research that linked with other Schools, Colleges and the wider University.
- The REF results had affirmed the quality and relevance of SSH research and SSH was working to further enhance its research performance.

Other business

21/76 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research, in his final meeting as Interim Chair, expressed thanks to:

- Outgoing Sabbatical Officers and student representatives for their participation in the work of Senate and contribution to the Students' Union and University partnership and wished them the best for the future.
- Representatives of Colleges, Academic Assembly and Professional Services staff whose term of office was ending, recognising their commitment and input to the academic governance of the University.

Dates of meetings 2022/23

21/77 NOTED:
Wednesday 9 November 2022, 14:00-16:30
Wednesday 8 March 2023, 14:00-16:30
Wednesday 24 May 2023, 14:00-16:30