

SENATE

Minutes of the 359th meeting of Senate held on 9 November 2022 (by Teams)

Present:

Professor Simon Green (Chair)

Dr Maana Aujla

Professor Ruth Ayres

Sana Azhar (SUVPW)

Helen Curtis

Thomas Davenport

Professor Andrew Devitt

Professor George Feiger

Professor Stephen Garrett

Dr Raquel Gil Cazorla

Saskia Hansen

Dr Daniel Hill

Professor Anthony Hilton

Paul Jones

Alison Levey

Dr Jörg Mathias

Professor Igor Meglinsky

Dr Valia Rodriguez-Rodriguez

Dr Claire Stocker

Professor Aleks Subic

Professor Joel Talcott

Dr Tahmineh Tayebi

Professor Nicholas Theodorakopoulos

Dr Jason Thomas

Professor Paul Topham

Dr Eliseo Vilalta-Perdomo

Kwan Yuet Adora Wong (SUVPE)

Dr Stephen Worrall

Dr Jens-Uwe Wunderlich

Apologies:

Professor Phil Mizen

Neil Scott

Absent:

Dr Panos Doss

Atul Rana (SUP)

In attendance:

Richard Billingham

Gary Hughes

Liam Nevin

Julie Ottley (secretary)

Mark Smith

Welcome and Introduction

22/01 NOTED:

The Chair welcomed the new and returning members of Senate and gave a brief overview of the function of Senate and its role within the governance of the University.

Matters for Notification

22/02 NOTED:

Paper AU-SEN-22-4986-A being action taken by the Chair to approve on behalf of Senate the updated summary of Access and Participation Plan 2020-21 to 2024-25 and the variations document for onward consideration by Council before the deadline of 31 July 2022.

22/03 RECEIVED:

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

- PVCR was chairing this final meeting of the calendar year to give the Vice-Chancellor the opportunity to observe how Senate operated
- Drawing from experience and best practice across the sector there would be initiatives to ensure more rigour in Senate's reporting to Council on academic quality and integrity. This would improve academic business and make the University academically stronger
- The Vice-Chancellor was continuing to meet with stakeholders internally and externally, both locally and nationally
- The four Birmingham universities were working together to develop common approaches to support students during the cost of living crisis
- Development of the 2030 strategy was underway and would continue for 7-8 months for completion by end June 2023
- Town Hall meetings would be held in December, February and April to share detail and engage with staff. The strategy was to be co-created so that staff would collectively understand where the University wanted to position itself by 2030 and the measures of success
- Next year would see the introduction of awards for research and for learning and teaching to recognise excellence in performance and innovation.

- 22/04 NOTED:
- A suggestion that there be professional services awards for innovation to encourage new ideas for efficiency, change and working smarter
 - The Vice-Chancellor was supportive and would take this forward with colleagues to encourage and reward innovation.

- 22/05 NOTED:
- Reports from: (i) Students' Union (AU-SEN-22-4987-A)
(ii) Academic Assembly (AU-SEN-22-5000-A)
 - Student Disciplinary and Fitness to Practice Report (AU-SEN-22-4989-A)
 - Schedule of Research Grants and Contracts (AU-SEN-22-4988-A)
 - Senate Standing Orders (AU-SEN-22-4990-A)
 - Senate Scheme of Delegations (AU-SEN-22-4991-A)

Matters for Ratification

- 22/06 CONFIRMED:
The minutes of the 358th meeting of Senate held on 26 May 2022.

Matters arising from the 358th meeting of Senate held on 26 May 2022

M21/59 Disciplinary Board membership 2022/23

- 22/07 NOTED:
- It was becoming increasingly difficult to schedule Disciplinary Boards due to the relatively small number of representatives available.
 - Additional representatives were sought and particularly from BSS and EPS.
 - Members were asked to share this with colleagues and anyone interested should contact the Senate secretary in the first instance.

21/65 Safeguarding training should be mandatory for all student facing staff (not just those involved in delivery of degree apprenticeships) as there were students under the age of 18 on other programmes also.

- 22/08 NOTED:
Executive discussed this matter at its meeting on 16 June 2022 and agreed that safeguarding training would be made mandatory with particular focus on ensuring that all student-facing staff prioritised completion of this.

21/63 Mid-module questionnaires

- 22/09 NOTED:
- There was an overall response rate for MEQ but not a response rate for individual modules
 - Individual response rates were not provided because it required manual data input for over 400 modules and this was not feasible
 - ULTC meeting of 15 July had reviewed and agreed the process for 2022/23.

- 22/10 RECEIVED:
Paper AU-SEN-22-4993-A being the Senate membership 2022/23.

- 22/11 RECEIVED:
Paper AU-SEN-22-4994-A being the Senate schedule of business 2022/23.

- 22/12 NOTED:
A special meeting of Senate would be held in January 2023 to consider the TEF submission.
- 22/13 DEFERRED:
Paper AU-SEN-22-4995-A being nominations for award of Honorary Degree 2023.
- 22/14 RECEIVED:
Paper AU-SEN-22-4996-A being an update on the outcome of Languages closure in BSS.
- 22/15 RECEIVED:
Paper AU-SEN-22-4997-A being the upward reports from Learning and Teaching Committee of 5 July 2022, 15 July 2022 and 14 October 2022.
- 22/16 APPROVED:
Paper AU-LTC-22-4859-B being the Student Charter 2022/23.
- 22/17 RECOMMENDED FOR APPROVAL BY COUNCIL:
Paper AU-LTC-22-4934-A being the Annual Report on Student Complaints 2021/22.
- 22/18 RECEIVED:
Paper AU-SEN-22-4998-A being the Ofsted new provider monitoring visit (NPMV) outcomes report.
- 22/19 NOTED:
- The outcomes report focussed on three areas: leadership and management; quality of provision and outcomes; and safeguarding arrangements. The report concluded reasonable progress in all three elements
 - An action plan was being developed to address points raised in the outcomes report and would be monitored by ULTC
 - A project to develop a dashboard to support the move from annual to continual monitoring was underway
 - NSS action plans had been reviewed and standardised using a RAG rated template to show timelines and monitoring
 - The move from Blackboard original to Blackboard ultra had begun with foundation degree programmes
 - Regulation Sub-Committee had approved significant updates to academic regulations to make them appropriate for online assessment and work-based learning provision
 - The programme approval process was under review and a new chair for the sub-committee was being sought. In the meantime the current panel and process would continue until the new chair was appointed
 - There had been an increase in student complaints and there was a variety of reasons for this. Anecdotally there appeared to be a general trend upwards across the sector
 - Value for money was one of the reasons thus it was important to ensure that what was being offered was delivered for the student. A key strand of the 2030 strategy would be 'our promise for our students'.
- 22/20 RECEIVED:
Paper AU-SEN-22-5001-A being the upward report from Research Committee of 19 October 2022.
- 22/21 RECEIVED:
Paper AU-SEN-22-4977-A being the Research Committee input to Senate annual report to Council.

22/22 NOTED:
2019/20 was a record year for bids and awards. There had been a decline since then but it was now levelling off. The key issue was to reverse the trend so as to get the University where it wanted to be for research quality and quantity.

Research Integrity Training

22/23 NOTED:
Two core foundation research integrity online training modules would be mandatory for anyone engaged in research. This was essential for compliance with the Concordat to support research integrity.

PhD stipends taxation

20/24 NOTED:
BUFDG were consulting with HMRC for a sector-wide approach for the taxation of PhD stipends and Aston would follow this approach when confirmed.

Matters for Discussion

Workforce data analysis (AU-SEN-22-5002-A)

22/25 RECEIVED:
A presentation from the Executive Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development.

22/26 NOTED:

- The workforce analysis covered the past four academic years, providing headcount analysis, turnover analysis and grade analysis
- Teaching staff numbers had grown 20.8% during this period with most of the growth in teaching only, offsetting a reduction in teaching and research numbers. This would be a consideration ahead of the next REF cycle
- Professional/support staff numbers had grown 8.6% during this period
- Recruitment to professional service areas was difficult because of a buoyant labour market and this was also where there was more turnover because of opportunities elsewhere
- The professoriate was 10.2% compared to the UK average of 10.4%
- A career path to develop professional services staff may help with retention
- Academic promotions was a University process which was moderated by PVCE and PVCR to ensure consistency and equity
- HR could share data on the reasons for staff leaving if colleagues would find it helpful.

College of Health and Life Sciences strategy and performance analysis (AU-SEN-22-4999-A)

22/27 RECEIVED:
A presentation from the Executive Dean of College of Health and Life Sciences.

22/28 NOTED:

- The strategy was in its second year having been launched in 2020
- The two key elements were to be focussed and relevant to align with what beneficiaries need
- Highlights of achievement in past two years include:
 - To not over rely on existing strengths in UG education portfolio and to maintain and in some areas reduce student numbers to improve student quality
 - Improve outcomes, teaching quality, NSS
 - Development and accreditation of BSc Nursing with the first intake in 2023

- A comprehensive health portfolio with strong links with local NHS
- PVCRC would attend College SMT for a discussion about considering additional REF submissions for HLS
- AMS was a success story with 100 funded places and the opportunity to grow. A GMC visit was scheduled which would see AMS fully accredited as a medical school and established provider. More focus was needed on research activity in this area.

Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) preparation

22/29 RECEIVED:

A presentation from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education outlining the process for TEF.

22/30 NOTED:

- This was a mandatory process, currently every four years, covering all UG provision
- The OfS workbook data indicated Aston was, in general, satisfactory
- A provider submission (25pg) and student submission (10pg) were required
- There were three categories: overall rating; student experience; student outcomes, with four ratings within each category
- A special Senate would be held in January to consider the TEF submission documents before they were considered by Council.

Other business

22/31 The chair of Academic Assembly thanked colleagues who had participated in the election process which had resulted in a number of new members on the Standing Committee.

Dates of meetings 2022/23

22/32 NOTED:

Wednesday 8 March 2023, 14:00-16:30

Wednesday 24 May 2023, 14:00-16:30

Background papers for information

22/33 RECEIVED:

Council minutes of 25 May 2022

Learning and Teaching Committee minutes of 5 July 2022, 15 July 2022, 14 October 2022

Research Committee minutes of 30 June 2022, 19 October 2022