

## THE SENATE

### Minutes

This paper presents the confirmed Minutes of the last meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 23 June 2021 via Teams.

The Senate **approved** these Minutes as a correct record at its meeting held on 13 October 2021.

Dave Hall  
University Secretary

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**THE SENATE**

Minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 23 June 2021 via Teams.

**PRESENT:**

Professor Tim Blackman	Vice-Chancellor
Professor Josie Fraser	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Dr Liz Marr	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students)
Professor Kevin Shakesheff	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and Scholarship)
Professor Ian Fribbance	Executive Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Professor Devendra Kodwani	Executive Dean, Faculty of Business and Law
Professor Nicholas Braithwaite	Executive Dean, Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
Professor Fary Cachelin	Executive Dean, Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies
Mr Gary Elliot-Cirigottis	Director of Library Services
Mr Nicholas Barratt	Director, Learner and Discovery Services

**Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS)**

Dr William Brown	Dr Elaine Moohan
Professor David Johnson	Dr Deborah Drake
Dr Alison Penn	Dr Donna Loftus
Dr Andrew Griffiths	Dr Richard Heffernan
Dr Emma Barker	
Dr Janine Liladhar	
Professor Nicola Watson	

**Faculty of Business & Law (FBL)**

Miss Carol Howells	Dr Kristen Reid
Dr Caroline Clarke	Ms Eleanor Howie

**Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)**

Dr Helen Fraser	Dr James Hague
Dr Janet Haresnape	Professor Simon Green
Dr Magnus Ramage	Dr John Baxter
Professor David Rothery	Dr Leonor Barroca
Dr Robert Brignall	Dr Hayley Ryder
Dr Toby O'Neil	Dr Mark Slaymaker
Dr Andy Hollyhead	Dr Claire Kotecki
Dr James Bruce	Dr Fiona Moorman
Mr Donald Edwards	Dr Jon Golding
Dr Kaustubh Adhikari	

**Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS)**

Dr Anna Comas-Quinn	Mr Andy Rixon
Dr Severine Hubscher-Davidson	Mr Jeremy Wilcock
Ms Susan Kotschi	Dr Elodie Vialleton
Professor Kristina Hultgren	Dr Jackie Watts
Professor Joan Simons	Professor Rosina Marquez-Reiter

**Institute of Education Technology (WELS)**

Mr Chris Edwards  
Professor Eileen Scanlon

Professor Rebecca Ferguson

**Associate Lecturers**

Mr Jim Gillen  
Dr Catherine Halliwell  
Mr James Hutchinson  
Dr Sylvie Serpell

Dr Linda Walker  
Mr Rob Parker  
Dr Walter Pisarski

**Students Appointed by Open University Students Association**

Ms Claire Wallace  
Ms Cinnomen McGuigan  
Dr Sandra Summers

Mrs Sarah Jones  
Dr Barbara Tarling  
Danielle Smith

**Academic-related Staff**

Mr Derek Sheills  
Mrs Rukhsana Malik  
Mr Billy Khokhar  
Miss Julie Gowen  
Dr Hossam Kassem  
Dr Caitlin Adams  
Mr Jonathan Nimmo

Mr Toby Scott-Hughes  
Ms Elaine Walker  
Mrs Caitlin Harvey  
Ms Jane Ball  
Mrs Kate Signorini  
Dr Frances Morton

**Co-opted members**

Ms Susan Stewart  
Mrs Louise Casella  
Professor Marcia Wilson

Mr John D'Arcy  
Dr Christopher Turner OBE

**In attendance**

Mr Dave Hall, University Secretary  
Dr Laura Lauer, Head of Governance  
Mrs Hâf Merrifield, Director of Strategy

Ms Anna Barber, Director, Academic  
Ms Becky Sexton, Senior Manager, Governance  
Mrs Jhumar Johnson, Director of Vice-Chancellor's Office

Rachel Garnham, Senior Manager, Office of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Students

**Observing**

Jo Trueman, Director of Strategic Planning

**APOLOGIES:**

Dr Karen Hagan  
Professor John Wolffe  
Dr Carol Azumah Dennis  
Dr Franziska Florak  
Professor Denise Whitelock  
Mr Mike Phillips

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**1 MINUTES**

**S-2021-02-M**

- 1.1 The Senate **approved** the minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on 21 April 2021, subject to the following amendment:

Minute 8.6: correction of the first sentence in as shown in *italics* and ~~striketrough~~ text:  
Members raised concerns around why the risks ~~had not been flagged at an earlier point and how trust could be restored~~ *which had been flagged previously had not been more effectively addressed*, citing a UCU survey of ALs.

- 1.2 The following comment on the minutes from the 21 April 2021 meeting were received:

In response to minute 14, the Council minutes, it was noted that the Postgraduate Certificate in Online and Distance Education (C23) is offered through FutureLearn and has proved to be very successful.

**2 MATTERS ARISING**

**S-2021-03-01**

The Senate **noted** the responses to the matters arising from the minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on 21 April 2021 (S-2021-02-M).

**3 REPORT FROM THE CHAIR**

- 3.1 The Vice-Chancellor welcomed members to the meeting and thanked those members for whom it was their last meeting.
- 3.2 He acknowledged the pressure that staff across the university were under and thanked members for their efforts. A number of initiatives had been put in place to relieve workloads, including; substantial sums to expand capacity, prioritisation exercises, wellbeing support, recognition payments and contingency leave and improved communications. He noted that there had been challenges presented through the work to replace the University's core IT systems and explained that the redeployment of staff to deal with the issues, plus give priority to the AL contract, meant that work on new student systems had been rescheduled for at least 12 months.
- 3.3 Policy developments to note included; the recent publication of the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill; expected announcements from the UK Government on funding reforms in higher education; tertiary education policy reviews underway in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland and the UK Government reaffirming its commitment to increasing public expenditure on Research and Development to £22bn with the focus on innovation, net zero, space and levelling up. In terms of funding, growth in Wales has been fully funded by the Welsh Funding Council, resulting in an allocation increase of 26% and in Scotland, grant allocation has risen by 8.2%. There had also been notable successes in Scotland, Northern Ireland and Wales with attracting grants for specific initiatives like microcredentials.
- 3.4 The Vice-Chancellor updated the Senate on several initiatives across the University, including;
- the review of the University's commercial portfolio, following which the Business Development Unit, OU Validation Partnerships and the Micro-credentials Unit would report to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and Scholarship);
  - the progress made with the academic governance review, now due to be presented at the October Senate meeting, to allow time to coordinate inputs from the Council governance review and ensure that recommendations can be actioned in terms of resources and workloads;

- continued progress on the development of the new University Strategy, a draft of which would come to the Senate before being recommended to Council in November for approval. A workshop for Senate member would be held on 15 September 2021. The Strategy focuses on the OU's core education and research activities, while giving more focus to EDI and sustainability. New ideas will continue to be tested, such as the benefits of a local presence in some geographies and the feasibility of the OU supporting a research and policy development capability in comparative public policy across the four UK Nations;
- the Athena Swan submission, which saw the OU re-awarded institutional Bronze, alongside Bronze departmental awards for the School of Environment, Earth and Ecosystems and School of Life, Health and Chemical Sciences and Silver for the School of Engineering and Innovation.

- 3.5 It was noted that the Council had approved Senate's recommendation that the University adopts the IHRA Working Definition of Antisemitism in full and alongside that the definition of antisemitism and accompanying guidelines in the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism.
- 3.6 The Vice-Chancellor acknowledged the concerns from different standpoints generated by the recent launch of the Gender Critical Research Network. He reminded members of the University's Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom, the Transgender guidance for staff and students, the social media guidelines, the University's responsibilities under the Equality Act and the Student Charter. He noted that the University was striving to be a diverse and inclusive community within which everyone could feel safe and valued. There would not always be agreement, and it would sometimes be a considerable challenge to find an acceptable balance between the tolerable and intolerable, but that was what we must all try to achieve.
- 3.7 Members echoed the need to robustly defend academic freedom for both Gender Critical perspectives and Transgender perspectives, as well as issuing clear guidance on acceptable ways for debate and contestation to take place. It was noted that the University's Statement of Principles on Academic Freedom recognised that some academic arguments may cause offence but requires these to be presented in ways that were not hostile or degrading. It was suggested that the public version of the [Reindorf report](#) be shared with all members of Senate.
- 3.8 Concerns were raised around the use of the OU logo, and the risk of associating the OU brand with specific issues or linking the University with external resources, materials or channels which may not be in line with the OU's values. The issue of the timing of the launch of the Network was also raised. The Vice-Chancellor explained that in light of recent developments, VCE would be reviewing the University's policies, including those on brand, media and the use of the OU logo for staff and student networks, to ensure they were fit for purpose. There would be an opportunity at the next Senate meeting to review any actions taken.
- 3.9 The Vice-Chancellor explained that the AL contract programme was on track for the October implementation of FTE salaries. A number of matters including reducing excessive workloads were under negotiation with UCU. New appointments were underway to support the programme, including work on the new ways of working and changes in the Faculties. Questions were raised around when detailed plans of the implementation would be shared and whether the Senate could receive regular updates on the programme. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor explained that a draft plan was available on the AL contract programme website, but noted that the plan was iterative, with some areas more advanced than others. The Vice-Chancellor responded that updates to the Senate would be considered, but there was a need to be mindful of the reporting burden on the programme.

- 3.10 In response to a question on how Staff Tutors would manage tutors and FTE under the terms of the new contract, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor explained that the plans covered both shorter-term, medium-term and longer-term objectives and activities, with the focus on the key changes needed to systems and teams in readiness for October 2021. She also explained plans were in place to support Staff Tutors including the establishment of a Faculty co-ordination group and substantial additional funding for Faculties to recruit more Staff Tutors and Student Experience Managers.

**4 INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORT TO SENATE S-2021-03-03**

The Director of Strategy introduced the Institutional Performance Report. The following comments were discussed:

- a) A correction had been made to the data in relation to the proportion of female staff who were promoted, which then illustrated a decrease. People Services and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team would be investigating the reasons behind the data.
- b) Members welcomed the increase in Student numbers and the additional funding to support those students. It was questioned whether the risks around the ability to recruit the required tutors, support staff and specialist staff had been assessed. The Vice-Chancellor explained that this was an issue actively under review and that a group had been convened to look at the lessons learned from the previous year.
- c) It was suggested that 'Technology That Enables Success' should also include measures that contribute to student success and that the ambitions and progress in that area should be captured in the future. The Director of Strategy explained that the current Institutional Performance Report had been developed over time and had been designed to report to multiple management/governance bodies. With the new Strategy being finalised, it was a good opportunity to invest time, working with colleagues across the University, to establish what the success measures should be.

**5 QAA QUALITY ENHANCEMENT REVIEW: OUTCOME AND FOLLOW UP S-2021-03-04**

- 5.1 The Vice-Chancellor introduced the report on the outcomes of the University's recent Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Quality Enhancement Review (QER) and thanked colleagues that had been involved in the work. A Student member of Senate also noted that the process had been a model of joint working between the OU and the Open University Students Association (OUSA).
- 5.2 The University had received a positive judgement, with the QER panel identifying four commendations, two affirmations (courses of action already identified by the University) and four recommendations. A published action plan was now required, which would be shared with the Senate for information.
- 5.3 A concern was raised regarding reference in the report to 'a strategic decision to move to online only teaching'. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students) explained that the misperception in the report had been previously identified, but it had been difficult to establish which of the 897 pieces of evidence submitted may have led to the use of that phrase. The reviewers had highlighted the need for the OU's to make its position clear to students and it was suggested that the action plan be used to address the understanding of the University's continuing commitment to a blended model.
- 5.4 It was commented that the report highlighted concerns and resistance from students regarding the increase in online resources and not just from an accessibility perspective. It was also requested that there should be clarity for module Chairs on the levels of

print/digital in developing materials, as there was a lack of consistency on the levels allowed.

**Action:** Deputy Vice-Chancellor to report back to next meeting.

**6 SENATE ANNUAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW REPORT S-2021-03-05**

Members considered the Annual Effectiveness Review (AER) and noted:

- a) The recommendations and planned actions, including those to improve strategic consideration by the Senate, which would be outlined in the Academic Governance Review recommendations in October.
- b) The need for clarity around online or face-to-face meetings. It was agreed that the University Secretary would address concerns raised by student members regarding the accessibility of online meetings and the loss of networking and engagement opportunities.

**Action:** University Secretary

- c) That the Broadcast Strategy should be on the Senate agenda, as it was part of the University's academic profile.

**Action:** Governance Team

**7 STUDENT CHARTER REVIEW S-2021-03-06**

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students) explained that light-touch review of the Student Charter had been undertaken, following the substantial review carried out in 2019/20. No changes were proposed to the content, but further work was needed to embed the Student Charter into the everyday life of the OU community, including a new website, videos, and engagement sessions across some units. The Vice-Chancellor noted that it should be on hand for day-to-day work and that everyone had a responsibility to be aware of it and to refer to it.

**8 INSTITUTIONAL ANTI-RACISM AND ANTI-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENTS S-2021-03-07**

The Senate **recommended to the Council** the use of the Anti-Racism and Anti-Discrimination statements internally and externally, subject to the following clarifications:

Anti-Racism Statement:

The second paragraph could be taken to imply that the OU did not recognise that racial inequality must be addressed before 2020.

Anti-Discrimination Statement:

- a) A definition should be added for the term 'protected characteristics'.
- b) The reference to 'maternity', should be 'maternity leave'.
- b) 'We stand united against discrimination in any form' appears to include a much wider set of discriminations than the list of protected characteristics. It was suggested that the language should be strengthened to align with other statements available within the University that cover a wider range of groups (caring responsibilities, National origin etc) and where the mention of gender identity is more explicit.
- c) It was suggested that there should also be reference to the OU rejecting xenophobia (EU citizens etc).

**9 REGULATIONS FOR VALIDATED AWARDS S-2021-03-08**

9.1 Senate noted that approval of the amendment to include the addition of a Masters in Osteopathy (MOst), was not required, as the OU were no longer planning on validating that qualification.

9.2 The Senate:

- a) **approved** the amendment of the Calculation of Masters Degrees to include a separate calculation for all Integrated Masters degrees offered through validated provision;
- b) **noted** the minor proposed revisions to the Regulations for Validated Awards, which are applicable to partner institutions that offer validated provision.

**10 HONORARY DEGREE NOMINATIONS S-2021-03-09**

10.1 The Vice-Chancellor noted that in accordance with the procedure, members of Senate had been asked to review the list of nominations over a four-week period and to write to the Secretary of the Honorary Degrees Committee with any comments or concerns. There would be no further discussion at the meeting and the list of nominations had to be considered en bloc.

10.2 He explained that feedback had been received regarding the lack of diversity of the nominations and that work would be undertaken with the Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion to review the nominations process. An issue had also been raised regarding a board role of one of the nominees. In line with the procedure, the concerns had been referred back to the Honorary Degrees Committee for consideration, where, following consultation with the University's policies, no reason was found for the individual not to be nominated.

10.3 Concerns were raised around the approval procedure for the Honorary Degrees nominations and whether institutional values were being applied within the due diligence process. The Vice-Chancellor explained that four-week review period was reasonable and that the concerns raised had been considered in line with the procedure. The current criteria and their application would be reviewed to make sure they remained fit-for-purpose.

**Action:** Honorary Degrees Committee

10.4 Members noted the concerns raised on individuals within the list being presented for approval and requested that the motion be put to a vote. The Chair opened the vote on the motion in the paper:

The Senate is asked to approve en bloc the list of nominations contained in the appendix to paper S-2021-03-09, as recommended by the Honorary Degrees Committee for the award of Honorary Degrees in 2022 and at future degree ceremonies.

The motion was **not carried**.

10.5 In accordance with the procedure, the list would be referred back to the Honorary Degrees Committee.

**11 ACADEMIC QUALITY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE S-2021-03-10**

The Senate **noted** the unconfirmed Minutes of the last meeting of the Academic Quality and Governance Committee held on 4 May 2021.



**12 EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

**S-2021-03-11**

The Senate **noted** the unconfirmed Minutes of the last meeting of the Education Committee held by correspondence between 18 May 2021 and 3 June 2021.

**13 RESEARCH COMMITTEE**

**S-2021-03-12**

The Senate **noted** the unconfirmed Minutes of the meeting of the Research Committee held by correspondence from Thursday 29 April to Friday 07 May 2021.

**14 THE COUNCIL**

**S-2021-03-13**

The Senate **noted** the unconfirmed Minutes of the last meeting of the Council held on 11 May 2021.

**15 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Wednesday 13 October 2021  
Wednesday 26 January 2022  
Wednesday 30 March 2022  
Wednesday 22 June 2022

Dave Hall  
University Secretary

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