

## THE SENATE

### Minutes

This paper details the unconfirmed Minutes of the last meeting of Senate held on Wednesday 30 March 2022 at 2.00pm, via Teams.

Senate **approved** these Minutes as a correct record at its meeting held on 22 June 2022.

Dave Hall  
University Secretary

Becky Sexton  
Working Secretary to the Committee  
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Attachments

S-2022-02-M Minutes of the last meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 30 March 2022

## THE SENATE

Minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 30 March 2022 via Teams.

### PRESENT:

Professor Tim Blackman	Vice-Chancellor
Dr Liz Marr	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students)
Professor Kevin Shakesheff	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and Scholarship)
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
Professor Denise Whitelock	Director, Institute of Educational Technology
Gary Elliot-Cirigottis	Director of Library Services
Nicholas Barratt	Director, Learner and Discovery Services

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

Dr William Brown	Professor Elaine Moohan
Dr Alison Penn	Dr Deborah Drake
Dr Andrew Griffiths	Dr Donna Loftus
Dr Emma Barker	Dr Richard Heffernan
Dr Janine Liladhar	Dr Karen Hagan
Professor David Johnson	Professor John Wolffe

### Faculty of Business & Law (FBL)

Carol Howells	Dr Kristen Reid
Dr Caroline Clarke	Eleanor Howie
Mike Phillips	

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

Dr Fiona Moorman	Dr Lucia Rapanotti
Dr Janet Haresnape	Dr Leonor Barroca
Dr Magnus Ramage	Dr Hayley Ryder
Professor David Rothery	Dr Mark Slaymaker
Dr Robert Brignall	
Dr TC O'Neil	Dr Jon Golding
Dr Andy Hollyhead	Dr Kaustubh Adhikari
Dr James Bruce	Dr Claire Kotecki
Donald Edwards	

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

Dr Anna Comas-Quinn	Andy Rixon
Susan Kotschi	Dr Elodie Vialleton
Professor Joan Simons	Dr Jackie Watts
Dr Kristina Hultgren	Dr Carol Azumah Dennis
Professor Jonathan Rix	Jeremy Wilcock

### Institute of Education Technology (WELS)

Chris Edwards	Professor Rebecca Ferguson
Professor Eileen Scanlon	

### Associate Lecturers

Mary Shek	Dr Sue McKeogh
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Dr Catherine Halliwell  
Mike Hay

Rob Parker

**Students Appointed by Open University Students Association**

Danielle Smith  
Claire Wallace  
Nigel Patterson

Sarah Jones  
Dr Barbara Tarling  
Tracey Inverary (alternate)

**Academic-related Staff**

Derek Sheills  
Billy Khokhar  
Julie Gowen  
Dr Hossam Kassem  
Dr Caitlin Adams

Toby Scott-Hughes  
Caitlin Harvey  
Jane Ball  
Kate Signorini  
Dr Franziska Florack

**Co-opted members**

Louise Casella  
Professor Marcia Wilson

John D'Arcy OBE  
Dr Christopher Turner OBE

**In attendance**

Dave Hall, University Secretary  
Hâf Merrifield, Director of Strategy  
Dr Camilla Briault, Assistant Director,  
Governance  
Ceri Ros, Director of Marketing and  
Communications  
Jake Yeo, Director of Research & Enterprise  
  
Diane Butler, Associate Dean (Academic  
Excellence) STEM  
Joanna Lowery, Head of Strategy & Insight –  
Marketing & Communications

Anna Barber, Director, Academic  
Becky Sexton, Senior Manager, Governance  
Jhumar Johnson, Director of Vice-Chancellor's  
Office  
Paul Traynor, Chief Financial Officer

Helen Kaye, Associate Dean (Teaching and  
Students) FASS  
Victoria Nicholas, Associate Dean (Student  
Experience) STEM

**Observing**

Maria Kantirou (Head of Academic Strategy  
and Planning)  
Frauke Constable (Senior Manager,  
Governance)

Sarah Drea (Senior Manager, Head of Academic  
Strategy and Planning)  
Hélène Murphy (Senior Manager, Research  
Communications)

**APOLOGIES:**

Cinnomen McGuigan  
Dr Helen Fraser  
Professor Josie Fraser  
Rukhsana Malik  
Susan Stewart  
Dr Severine Hubscher-Davidson  
Dr James Hague  
Professor Nicola Watson

Dr John Baxter  
Professor Ian Fribbance  
Dr Anita Pilgrim  
Elaine Walker  
Professor Rosina Marquez-Reiter  
Jonathan Nimmo  
Dr Sylvie Serpell

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**1 MINUTES**

**S-2022-01-M**

Senate **approved** the minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on 26 January 2022.

**2 MATTERS ARISING**

**S-2022-02-01**

2.1 Further clarification was needed on the procedures for motions, in relation to the proposer of the motion having the right to reply.

**Action:** University Secretary

2.2 Senate **noted** the responses to the matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2022.

### **3 REPORT FROM THE CHAIR**

3.1 The Vice-Chancellor welcomed members to the meeting. He updated Senate on several issues including:

- a) actions needed for Cyber Essentials accreditation
- b) work to review the University's accommodation needs
- c) update on IT infrastructure changes
- d) changes to the USS Pension Scheme
- e) the report to be received by Senate in June for discussion on the gender and Ethnicity pay gaps
- f) an update on alternative formats
- g) current policy, funding and regulatory reform
- h) recent awards to the University.

3.2 On the actions taking place for cyber security, further consideration on the technical and budgetary considerations for Student representatives was requested.

3.3 A request was received for Senate to discuss the recent Council decision on the USS pension scheme. The Vice-Chancellor explained that pensions were a Council matter, advised by the Finance Committee, but that there would be consideration around how Senate might discuss pensions at the next meeting.

3.4 Senate noted that the AL Contract Programme update report (S-2022-02-13) was for information only, but that there were many layers of reporting to feed in views and experience to the Programme Team.

### **4 INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORT TO SENATE S-2022-02-02**

Senate noted the scores for the useful Career Goals and Personal Goals data. It was clarified that Associate Lecturer data would be included in the staff metrics for the new performance measures and that the indicators to monitor success would be wider than gender alone.

### **5 FINANCE UPDATE S-2022-02-03**

5.1 The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) presented an update on the University's finances and drew attention to the £8.3m decrease in the forecast operating surplus and the variance to plan of £10.4m in the accounting position. The variance was due to lower student numbers than expected and a reduction on expenditure and the Significant variance to plan for the accounting position including USS provision (>£230m), as the USS 2020 valuation process had resulted in a much higher pension scheme deficit.

5.2 He noted that for the remainder of 2021/22, the income forecast was reliable, but pay expenditure had been challenging to report and forecast in the new SAP system. The value of the OU's long term equity investments had been negatively impacted this year, so reporting an annual loss was likely but that should be seen in the context of significant

gains over recent years. The University remains in a strong financial position, but the next two financial years would be challenging, with the first full year of ALC integration, the recurrent impact of investment in technology, lower student numbers and inflation. It was noted that there would be little financial capacity to respond to emerging requests for additional funding without a strong business case that demonstrates value for money and measurable benefits.

5.3 The following issues were highlighted:

- a) The difficulties with the new financial systems and the ongoing work to resolve the issues.
- b) On the USS pension scheme, it was commented that updated figures on the 2020 valuation showed that the deficit was now almost negligible, so another valuation was needed, to reduce the deficit recovery contributions. The CFO explained that valuations wouldn't be conducted more frequently than the current three year cycle. He noted that there were three important pieces of work taking place, the exploration of a lower cost, more flexible pension saving option, a review of governance of the USS scheme and a review of the terms and conditions of the scheme. The Scheme reform was not therefore fully complete, but the valuation would not be revisited at this stage, noting the next formal valuation process will commence in 2023. It was noted that the CFO would look into the deficit recovery contributions with UUK however. **Action:** Chief Financial Officer
- c) On the cost-benefit of FutureLearn, it was noted that there would be a finalised business case in April, which would be discussed by Council in May.

**6. BRAND RELAUNCH** **S-2022-02-04**

6.1 The Director of Marketing and Communications updated the Senate on the direction of travel for the relaunch of the OU's brand in June 2022, including a presentation on the new brand platform, creative route and the work in progress on the refresh of the OU's visual identity. Senate noted that the brand programme had been highly evidence based, including extensive testing, feedback and research.

6.2 It was noted that the brand relaunch would start in June 2022, with a programme of implementation across all audiences continuing beyond that. Senate members were asked to provide any suggestions, guidance or concerns to the Marketing and Communications Team regarding how the brand could be successfully rolled out across all parts of the OU.

**7. UPDATE ON THE DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW RESEARCH PLAN** **S-2022-02-05**

7.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and Scholarship) (PVC RES) introduced an update on the development of the University's new Research Plan and highlighted that:

- a) the plan had set out the implementation of the research aspects of "Learn and Live" and it would be joined by updated plans for Knowledge Exchange & Innovation, and for Scholarship over the next 12 months;
- b) the development of the plan had been highly consultative;
- c) there proposed five activities within the plan: Societal Challenges, The Next Generation, Open Research, Building on Our Strengths and Improving Our Processes;

- 7.2 Senate noted that the purpose of Societal Challenges (Activity 1) was to tap into the spirit and mission of the University, to help everyone within the OU family feel ownership of research, as they do the opportunities given to Students. It outlined plans to create a new way for collaborative teams to form across the OU and used Theory of Change to focus on a common goal. It was built on over 1800 responses to a survey on societal challenges and seven workshops. The ideas and concepts were scored against three aspects, Sustainability, Living well and Equality and then mapped diagrammatically. The 'Collaboration Engine' would include a space to create and mature collaboration, community building workshops and external engagement and prioritisation of ideas for Theory of Change.
- 7.3 The following issues were discussed:
- a) For Activity 2, The Next Generation, Senate welcomed the ambitions around a more diverse staff and research student population and highlighted considerations regarding barriers for different types of protected characteristics (including disability and age), the possibilities for using community networks to support staff and students to overcome barriers to engaging in research and accepting part-time PhD students living outside the UK.
  - b) Senate also welcomed Activity 5, Improving Our Processes. Questions were raised around how the investment in staff would be measured and monitored. It was suggested that PHD supervision should be categorised as Teaching rather than as Research within Academic Workload Management (AWM). The PVC RES explained that that equity was an important part of Academic Workload Management and the team would be working with VCE and VCE-Academic on the issues around available time for research. Longer-term solutions would also be put in place for delays within the research degrees office regarding PGR students.
  - c) In terms of the emphasis in the plan put on the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the PVC RES explained that while important for the University, there needed to be a passion for research and the performance in REF should be the consequence of the research, not the purpose.
- 7.4 Senate noted that the plan would be presented to Research Committee for approval in May 2022 prior to Senate's final approval in June 2022.

**8 DEVELOPMENT OF A NEW TEACHING AND LEARNING PLAN S-2022-02-06**

- 8.1 The Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion introduced an update on the development of the new Teaching and Learning Plan, which had been led by Associate Deans from across each Faculty. She explained that the aim of the plan was to provide a coherent framework of principles which would inform and frame the activities across the University, build on good practice and develop a vision for the future development of teaching and learning at the OU. The plan had been through extensive consultation, including a student consultation panel forum, discussion with ALE (Associate Lecturers Executive), the T&L Plan Advisory Group, followed by further stakeholder engagement with a wide range of teams, committees and colleagues across the OU.
- 8.2 To address the comments received on the Senate forum in advance of the meeting, the following areas were highlighted:
- a) The premise of Principle 1 was to recognise good practice and build on that, to provide good experience by design and equity across students.

- b) The importance of sharing and developing good practice around combining study, not being prescriptive about module size and supporting students so that intensity can be varied or can be changed, whatever is most appropriate for the individual.
- c) The importance of the collective inputs of staff across the University, including two ALE colleagues being key members of the Advisory group. It was noted that the high-level plan was not too specific regarding staff roles, as it relied on the collective endeavour of many groups of staff, who should feel like they have a voice within the plan. Local faculty plans may call out individual groups in more detail.
- d) The need for a principle focussed solely on the Student Voice, for the Teaching and Learning plan to address the needs of the students. It was noted that the importance of front-line teaching staff was touched upon within the other principles
- e) For implementation, the plan included current excellent practice across the OU, as well as new practices/activities or imperatives, but the key is consistency across the organisation and there would be a degree of prioritisation needed. The importance of connections to other plans across the organisation (such as the University's student retention and progression plan) was also highlighted.

8.3 The following issues were discussed:

- a) The need to understand what success would look like and what would be different in 2-5 years.
- b) The remit for the high-level plan was predominantly around the OU's approach to teaching and learning for the core undergraduate and taught postgraduate students, but includes applying and adapting the approach in response to the development of non-core activities as well.
- c) The appreciation of the involvement of students in the plan, particularly for Principle 4.
- c) It was recognised that staff development to introduce new ways of teaching would take time. It was noted that the implementation of the plan would be measured, gradual and incremental and staff development would be planned and resourced around any proposed changes.
- d) For Module production, it was explained that the plan had linked with other change projects that look at how student voice would be incorporated at the appropriate time to fit in with production schedules. All units would be engaged with regarding improvements to module production.

8.4 Senate **noted** that a final version of the plan would be brought to Senate for consideration and approval in June 2022, following further consideration by Student Experience Committee and Qualifications and Assessment Committee in May 2022.

## **9 ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE REVIEW**

**S-2022-02-07**

9.1 Senate noted the actions taken as a result of the removal of Education Committee and an update on the improvement actions for implementation.

9.2 Senate welcomed the recommendation for each Faculty to have two Academic Committees of equal standing, one focusing on taught curriculum, the other on research, enterprise and knowledge exchange. It was clarified that the committees would not be working entirely in parallel, as there would be Faculty Executives at both meetings and some business would be considered by both committees, in a connected way. Final

recommendations on the model of Faculty governance would be presented to Senate for approval in June 2022.

**8 EMERITUS PROFESSORS S-2022-02-08**

Senate **approved** the recommendation from the Chairs Subcommittee that the title of Emeritus Professor is awarded to:

- a. Professor David Humphreys, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS)
- b. Professor June Barrow-Green, Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

**9 HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE REPORT S-2022-02-09**

Senate **noted** the update on the review of criteria, procedures and their application and **approved** the nomination recommended by the Honorary Degrees Committee for the award of an Honorary Degree in 2022.

**10 ACADEMIC PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE: ANNUAL REPORT S-2022-02-10**

- 10.1 Senate **noted** the annual report on promotions. It was **agreed** that detailed questions on some of the categories within the report would answered within the June Senate 'Matters Arising' paper.
- 10.2 Senate **approved** a recommendation from the Academic Staff Promotions Committee that the Academic Staff Promotions Committee be dissolved and its responsibilities for monitoring promotions and the criteria be transferred to the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.
- 10.3 Senate **noted** that further work is underway on establishing the Chairs Subcommittee as a Committee of the Senate and a recommendation will come forward to the next meeting of the Senate.

**11 ACADEMIC QUALITY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE S-2022-02-11**

- 11.1 Assurance was requested around the processes in place to oversee the academic quality of FutureLearn. It was clarified that the correct oversight of OU modules was in place and the discussion reported in the minutes of Academic Quality and Governance Committee had been in relation to what would be seen in the future to ensure that processes were joined up.
- 11.2 Senate **noted** a report of the last meeting of Academic Quality and Governance Committee held on Tuesday 8 February 2022.

**12 RESEARCH COMMITTEE S-2022-02-12**

Senate **noted** the unconfirmed Minutes of the meeting of Research Committee held on 2 March 2022.

**13 AL CONTRACT PROGRAMME S-2022-02-13**

Senate **noted**:



- a) progress on the Programme since the last update to Senate in January 2021;
- b) the update report and the Exec Summary of the 'Return to Green Plan'.

**14 CHAIRS ACTIONS S-2022-02-14**

Senate **noted** the actions taken by the Chair since the last meeting of the Senate.

**15 THE COUNCIL S-2022-02-15**

15.1 Senate **noted** a report of the last meeting of Council held on 1 March. In response to a question on FutureLearn's Strategic Plan, it was clarified that Senate did not have a role in the academic strategy of FutureLearn, but that any plans or actions for FutureLearn that would have an impact on the plans of the University, would be brought to Senate.

15.2 The CFO explained that the business plan was due to go to the FutureLearn Board, then to the OU Finance Committee, which supports Council with financial scrutiny and recommendations, then on to the OU Council in mid-May.

**16 SENATE BUSINESS PLANNING S-2022-02-16**

Senate noted the forward agenda for the current year.

**17 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Meetings will be held on the following dates:

Wednesday 22 June 2022  
Wednesday 12 October 2022  
Wednesday 1 Feb 2023  
Wednesday 29 March  
Wednesday 21 June 2023

Dave Hall  
University Secretary

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