

THE SENATE

Minutes

This paper details the unconfirmed Minutes of the last meeting of Senate held on Wednesday 22 June 2022 at 2.00pm in The Hub Theatre, Walton Hall.

Senate approved these Minutes as a correct record at its meeting held on 12 October 2022.

Dave Hall
University Secretary

Becky Sexton
Working Secretary to the Committee
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Attachments

S-2022-03-M Minutes of the last meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 22 June 2022

THE SENATE

Minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 22 June 2022 in The Hub Theatre, Walton Hall.

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
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
Professor David Johnson	Professor John Wolffe

Faculty of Business & Law (FBL)

Carol Howells	Eleanor Howie
Dr Caroline Clarke	

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

Dr Fiona Moorman	Dr Leonor Barroca
Dr Janet Haresnape	Dr Hayley Ryder
Dr Magnus Ramage	Dr Mark Slaymaker
Professor David Rothery	Dr James Hague
Dr Kaustubh Adhikari	Dr Jon Golding
Dr Claire Kotecki	Donald Edwards
Dr Andy Hollyhead	Dr Helen Fraser
Dr James Bruce	

Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS)

Dr Anna Comas-Quinn	Andy Rixon
Dr Severine Hubscher-Davidson	Jeremy Wilcock
Dr Carol Azumah Dennis	Dr Elodie Vialleton
Professor Joan Simons	Dr Jackie Watts

Institute of Education Technology (WELS)

Professor Eileen Scanlon	Professor Rebecca Ferguson
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Associate Lecturers

Mary Shek	Rob Parker
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Dr Sue McKeogh
Mike Hay

Dr Sylvie Serpell

Students Appointed by Open University Students Association

Danielle Smith
Claire Wallace
Nigel Patterson
Cinnomen McGuigan

Sarah Jones
Dr Barbara Tarling
Tracey Inverary (alternate)

Academic-related Staff

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

Toby Scott-Hughes
Elaine Walker
Kate Signorini
Jonathan Nimmo
Dr Franziska Florack

Co-opted members

Susan Stewart
Louise Casella

John D'Arcy OBE
Professor Marcia Wilson

In attendance

Hâf Merrifield, Director of Strategy
Dr Camilla Briault, Assistant Director,
Governance
Paul Traynor, Chief Financial Officer
Jake Yeo, Director Research and Enterprise

Anna Barber, Director, Academic
Jhumar Johnson, Director of Vice-Chancellor's
Office

Ema Pretkiewicz, Senior System, Data &
Insight Manager

Becky Sexton, Senior Manager, Governance
Victoria Nicholas, Associate Dean, Student
Experience, STEM
Diane Butler, Associate Dean (Academic
Excellence), 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:

Dr Fiona Moorman
Jane Ball
Dr John Baxter
Chris Edwards
Mike Phillips
Dr TC O'Neil
Dr Robert Brignall

Dr Christopher Turner OBE
Dr Kristina Hultgren
Professor Nicola Watson
Susan Kotschi
Dr Catherine Halliwell
Professor Jonathan Rix
Dave Hall, University Secretary

Professor Rosina Marquez-Reiter
Dr Karen Hagan
Caitlin Harvey
Dr Janine Liladhar
Dr Lucia Rapanotti
Dr Kristen Reid

1 MINUTES

S-2022-02-M

Senate **approved** the minutes of the meeting of the Senate meeting held on 30 March 2022.

2 MATTERS ARISING

S-2022-03-01

Senate **noted** the responses to the matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 30 March 2022.

3 REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

3.1 The Vice-Chancellor welcomed members to the meeting. He thanked members that would be leaving Senate in July, including student members and the outgoing OUSA President. He updated Senate on several areas of business including:

- a) the implementation of Associate Lecturers' new terms and conditions as salaried employees fully based in the faculties.
- b) the launch of The Future is Open marketing campaign, expected to reach over 99% of UK adults and be seen 946 million times and which would support the first strategic goal in the University's new strategy, to extend reach.
- c) the selection of the OU by the Office for Students to run a £10m programme of work with FE colleges in England's most disadvantaged areas, building on the experience of working with colleges developed in BDU, Academic Services, the Faculties and Nations.
- d) work being led by the WELS Exec Dean to look at the options around a physical presence in London, in the context of the need to decarbonise and to save costs.
- e) news on success with grants, such as large awards from Horizon Europe, the UK Space Agency, the EU Humanities and Social Sciences collaboration and the ESRC.

3.2 The Vice-Chancellor noted that careful stewardship of the University's finances would be needed in the next few years and highlighted the options under consideration to reduce the OU's deficit, to return to surplus from 2024.

4 INSTITUTIONAL PERFORMANCE REPORT TO SENATE

S-2022-03-02

4.1 Senate considered the Institutional Performance Report, noting in particular the data regarding the proportion of students succeeding in Undergraduate study and the proportion of students continuing with studies or qualifying. Senate discussed the work taking place by a cross-institutional oversight group, to further develop the institutional approach to improving retention (continuation and completion), with updates reporting to VCE, VCE-A, Senate and Council.

4.2 Senate noted that data regarding the number of postponements translating into submissions was not available through the current data analysis tools, but further work would be undertaken on those students. Senate also discussed the fact that the analysis of Microcredential Learners was not as detailed in the report, as the current regulatory environment and reporting methods meant that less data was available on those learners, but there would be increased prominence in future reporting.

5 TEACHING AND LEARNING PLAN

S-2022-03-03

5.1 Senate considered the proposed Teaching and Learning Plan, which, following extensive consultation with stakeholders from across the University, had been recommended by the Student Experience Committee and Qualifications and Assessment Committee.

5.2 Senate welcomed the plan as a frame of reference and discussed areas that would need to be addressed during the implementation of the plan, including:

- a) consideration of the time needed to develop new curriculum, including anti-racist, anti-discriminatory and inclusive curriculum, and what activities would need to be prioritised or discontinued to allow for that.

- b) the additional detail and prioritisation needed in relation to the changing demographics of OU students.
- c) the need for caution when adopting technological innovation such as artificial intelligence, to avoid issues of discrimination.
- d) ensuring implementation of accessibility principles are applied during module creation, not at a later stage and that a range of interactions are available, as one approach would not suit all students.

- 5.3 It was noted that the plan did not reference staff categories, as implementation was the responsibility of the whole University, but that there were specific actions around recognising the value and expertise of Associate Lecturers. The plan was also deliberately high level, to try to achieve the balance of being clear, whilst still allowing for the flexibility needed by different units.
- 5.4 Senate discussed the benefits of more live monitoring of teaching materials and mid module evaluations in understanding issues and providing more timely and effective responses. Members noted that these evaluations should be taken in context and work should be done to look at the support is already in place and encouraging students to engage with it.
- 5.5 Senate **approved** the Teaching and Learning Plan and **noted** the planned approach to its delivery.

6 RESEARCH PLAN S-2022-03-04

- 6.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Enterprise and Scholarship) gave a brief update on the Research Excellence Framework results, including the fact that 82% of OU research was rated world leading or internationally excellent for impact, highlighting the great impact that OU research has on society. He noted that the OU's results were a good foundation for the new Research Plan.
- 6.2 The consultation period for the Research Plan had been extremely useful, had involved a good response from students, which had helped to build a plan with a lot of ownership. The comments received from Senate members had been answered in the forum and incorporated into the plan.
- 6.3 Senate discussed the fact that although some major funding awards had been achieved, there would be challenges around funding for international research following Brexit. Senate noted the importance of building on existing strengths, including the University's interdisciplinary and collaborative approach, which would be key for the implementation of the plan.
- 6.4 Senate **approved** the Open University Research Plan 2022-27.

7 ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE REVIEW S-2022-03-05

- 7.1 Senate considered the final proposals to come out of the Academic Governance Review (AGR) recommendations. Senate discussed the interface between the two Academic Committees in each Faculty (Learning, Teaching & Assessment and Research), noting that there would be points of contact and a small core of common membership between the committees. However, a member was concerned that the overlap might not be sufficient to give effective shared oversight of Faculty academic activity in its entirety.
- 7.2 Senate discussed whether the membership of the Academic Committees (Research) should be increased to include a library representative. It was explained that the aim was

to keep the membership as small as possible, but that the membership and attendance would be monitored over the first year of the committees' implementation. It was added that the Library was already represented on Research Committee, due to the involvement in the REF exercises and Open Research.

7.3 The Chair of the AGR Oversight Group thanked Senate members for their engagement in the Senate owned AGR implementation. Senate **approved**:

i. the dissolution of the Faculty Teaching Committees

ii. the establishment of two Academic Committees (Learning, Teaching & Assessment/ Research) in each Faculty

iii. the Terms of Reference and proposed membership of the two committees.

7.4 Senate **noted** the implementation plan and the update on operational improvement actions.

8 SENATE ANNUAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW REPORT S-2022-03-06

The Senate Annual Effectiveness Review was **noted**. Senate discussed the benefits of in-person Senate meetings and it was agreed that the format of meetings would be kept under review.

9 EQUALITY SCHEME S-2022-03-07

9.1 The Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion explained that linked to the University Strategy goal of 'Equity', the Equality Scheme was the public statement and commitment to equity, greater diversity and representation, including the institutional objectives. The EDI Plan would then outline the strategic direction of how those improvements would be made and inequities addressed.

9.2 Senate noted that the targets and categories in the Scheme reflected legal and regulatory requirements, particularly around mental health and disability, but there may be more detailed or alternative monitoring in other areas of work (Access and Participation Plan etc).

9.3 Senate **recommended to the Council** the Equality Scheme 2022-2026.

10 EDI PLAN S-2022-03-08

10.1 Senate discussed the progress on the institutional EDI Plan, noting that there had been extensive cross-organisational consultation, with close to 800 pieces of feedback so far, through face-to-face sessions with a range of stakeholders, including students and an online mailbox. The consultation would conclude in mid-July, with the plan coming back to Senate in October and Council in November 2022.

10.2 The importance of the diversity of student facing staff was discussed, but it was noted that a diverse staff body was needed across all levels of the institution, as emphasised in the plan. Senate also discussed the value of the OU Staff Networks, who varied in their purpose and vision. It was explained that some of the groups contributed significantly, and it was important to recognise their work and for the groups to remain independent.

10.3 Questions were asked around how staff could adhere to the plan, to overcome unconscious biases preventing change and what support was available for staff. The Dean of Equality, Diversity and Inclusion explained that it was new to a lot of people, but

that staff would need to engage with the training and reading that was available if they felt there was something they didn't know. The Vice-Chancellor added that it was not just about extra funding or resources, it was about changing the everyday activities that are performed already.

11 GENDER AND ETHNICITY PAY GAPS S-2022-03-09

Senate **noted** information on the University's Gender and Ethnicity pay reporting obligations, along with the outcome of the University's analysis and details of the information which were published on the 30 March 2022.

12 REVIEW OF THE INTERNATIONAL HOLOCAUST REMEMBRANCE ALLIANCE (IHRA) WORKING DEFINITION OF ANTISEMITISM AND JERUSALEM DECLARATION ON ANTISEMITISM S-2022-03-10

Senate **noted** a review of the effects over the last year of the University adopting the International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA) Working Definition of Antisemitism and the definition of antisemitism and accompanying guidelines in the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism (JDA). The report noted that there had been no increase in anti-Semitic incidents, official complaints, criticisms or references on social media and there was no evidence that academic freedom had been constrained or otherwise affected by the adoptions. Senate noted that the approach taken by the University following the discussion at Senate, had been followed by other Universities.

13 FINANCE UPDATE S-2022-03-11

13.1 Senate noted the paper presented to Council (May 2022), providing the latest formal forecast of the University's financial performance for 2021/22. The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) explained that for the 2021/22 latest forecast, the variance to plan for the operating position was £10.1m adverse, due to lower student numbers than expected and the expenditure forecast was to be £6.3m below budget, due to lower retention of staff. By the end of the year the operating surplus was expected to rise. Delays to the new finance system had meant lack of visibility of staff costs at unit level and difficulty with forecasting. Further work was also needed on implementing the payroll system.

13.2 It was noted that the University was in a strong financial position, but the next two financial years would be challenging, due to issues including; the current operating environment, the first full year of ALC integration, the recurrent impact of investment in technology and pay inflation exceeding fee income inflation by circa £7m. The CFO explained that the budget proposal for 2022/23 was for an Operating deficit of -£10.4m (-1.8%), with the plan to return to surplus within two years.

13.3 The CFO updated Senate on the USS latest financial position, noting that USS had published its analysis of the funding position as at March 2022. He explained that the deficit had reduced considerably since the last valuation in 2020, but the cost of future benefits had stayed broadly the same, as the deficit had benefitted from the recovery in asset values, but the future service cost was based on projected future investment returns. It was highlighted that both figures were based on the full package of covenant support being available and that the future cost included the changes to benefits made from April 2022. Therefore, it could not be claimed from the USS funding information that benefit changes were not necessary, but it might be argued that lesser changes could have been made with the benefit of hindsight. He also noted that the USS trustee had agreed to undertake a fuller assessment as at March 2022 and that UUK had issued a statement that with only a few months of improvements, something more sustained was needed. The next valuation was due in March 2023 and early work would be beneficial.

The CFO explained that there were three workstreams being progressed across the sector, one looking at lower cost saving option (joint UUK / UCU / USS activity), one on alternative scheme designs and one reviewing the governance of the scheme. The importance of continuing to engage with UCU and staff was noted.

- 13.4 The CFO informed Senate that following a presentation in April-May from the CEO of FutureLearn on the strategy, objectives, priorities for the company and the business plan to end 2025/26, Council had carefully considered and approved a recommendation from the Finance Committee in relation to a short-term investment in FutureLearn.
- 13.5 Senate discussed the forecasting process for student numbers and the need for realistic forecasting. It was explained that in 2021 resources were front loaded, planning for the top end of the margin, so as not to put additional strain on staff, but that the actual numbers had been at the bottom of the margin. Senate also discussed the increase in cost of the AL Contract Programme, which in part was due to the increase in student numbers and areas that had been negotiated since 2018.
- 13.6 It was agreed that the presentation would be made available to Senate members only following the meeting.

14 STUDENT CHARTER REVIEW S-2022-03-12

- 14.1 Senate welcomed the changes to the Student Charter and in particular the addition of the commitment to being 'an anti-racist, anti-discriminatory, accessible and inclusive university'. It was recognised that there was further work to be done to raise awareness of the Student Charter.
- 14.2 Senate **approved**:
- a) the changes to the content of the Student Charter in line with the new OU strategy outlined the paper.
 - b) the evaluation approach outlined, including aspirations and measures.
 - c) the development of a new implementation and communications plan based on the approach outlined in the paper.

15 HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE REPORT S-2022-03-13

Senate:

- a) **noted** the schedule for conferment of Honorary Degrees at ceremonies during 2022.
- b) **approved** en bloc the list of nominations recommended by the Honorary Degrees Committee, for the awarding of Honorary Degrees.

16 ESTABLISHMENT OF CHAIRS COMMITTEE S-2022-03-14

Senate **approved**:

- a) the dissolution of the Chairs Subcommittee.
- b) the constitution of the Chairs Committee.

17 ACADEMIC REGULATIONS FOR SUBSIDIARY INSTITUTIONS OF THE OPEN UNIVERSITY S-2022-03-15

Senate **approved**:

- i) Academic Regulations for Subsidiary Institutions of The Open University.
- ii) the Transition Policy for OCA students wishing to transfer to The Open University following acquisition.

18 EMERITUS PROFESSORS S-2022-03-16

Senate **approved** the recommendation from Chairs Subcommittee that the title of Emeritus Professor was awarded to Professor David Male, Faculty of Science, Mathematics, Technology and Engineering.

19 ACADEMIC QUALITY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE REPORT S-2022-03-17

Senate **noted** a report from the meeting of Academic Quality and Governance Committee held on 3 May 2022.

20 EDI COMMITTEE S-2022-03-18

Senate **noted** a report from the meeting of EDI Committee held on 23 May 2022.

21 THE COUNCIL S-2022-03-19

Senate **noted** a report from the meeting of Council held 10 May 2022.

22 SENATE FORWARD PLANNER S-2022-03-20

Senate **noted** a report on future business being presented to the Senate

23 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

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

Dave Hall
University Secretary

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