LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

Minutes of a meeting of the Senate
held on 23 September 2015

PRESENT: Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair); Professor J. Anwar; Professor P. Ashwin; Professor A. Atkinson; Professor A. M. Atherton; Ms S. Atherton; Professor S. Bainbridge; Dr C. Baker; Ms J. Bennett; Dr P. Bishop; Professor S. Bradley; Mr T. Buckley; Professor K. Cain; Professor A. G. Chetwynd; Dr A. Collins; Professor S. J. Cox; Professor N. Davies; Professor S. P. Decent; Professor I. Eckley; Dr C. Edwards; Professor M. Ehrigott; Dr J. Evans; Professor P. R. Fielden; Mr T. Finnigan; Mrs R. Fligelstone; Mr N. Fragel; Professor C. Gere (for Mr F. Dawes); Professor R. Geyer; Dr A. Gilchrist; Professor A. Gillespie; Dr O. Gomez (for Dr W. Tych); Professor S. Guy; Professor E. Hamilton; Mr B. Harper; Mr W. Hedley; Professor N. Hewitt (for Professor K. C. Jones); Professor M. Hughes; Professor S. R. A. Huttly; Professor L. Introna; Professor N. Johnson; Professor R. Jones; Dr R. Lauder; Professor A. Lazarev; Professor C. Leitch; Professor C. May-Chahal; Dr P. McKean; Professor J. F. O’Hanlon; Professor C. Paoloni; Professor I. Paya; Professor M. Piacentini; Professor R. Pickup; Ms C. Povah; Professor C. Rogers; Professor E. Semino; Professor M. Shackleton; Professor S. Skogly; Professor M. M. Smyth; Dr J. Unger; Dr M. Urbaniak (for Dr R. Rigby); Professor J. R. Urry; Professor T. Vurdubakis; Professor J. Whittle; Professor M. B. Wright; Dr S. Young.

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss F. M. Aiken; Mr P. Boustead; Mr J. S. W. Dickinson; Mr S. Franklin; Ms C. Geddes; Mr P. M. Graves; Mr P. Maggs; Ms N. C. Owen; Mrs S. Randall-Paley; Mrs L. M. Wareing.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Professor A. Binley; Professor S. Bushell; Dr C. Melville; Mr I. McCormick; Mr P. Montague; Dr S. Sweeney; Professor L. Woodhead; Mr S. Wright.
MINUTES

S.2015/49 Minutes

Documents: SEC/2015/2/1002; SEC/2015/2/0726; SEC/2015/2/1001; SEC/2015/2/0857

It was agreed that the minute S.2015/33 of the meeting held 17 June 2015 (Review of Postgraduate Taught provision) be amended to reflect the additional point that support for distance learning would require more infrastructure support than that provided via Digital Lancaster. The following change was agreed (change in italics):

- The recognition that expanding distance-learning provision would require institutional support structures was welcomed. It was noted that new technologies, such as those associated with Digital Lancaster, would be beneficial in this area, but that these would not, of themselves, be sufficient, and additional support across the institution would need to be considered.

Resolution: the Senate approved minutes of the Senate meeting held on 17 June 2015, with the amendment as agreed, and the notes of the joint Council/Senate meeting held on 9 July 2015.

SECTION 1: ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

S.2015/50 Introduction by the Vice-Chancellor

Ref: 1.2

Noting that this would be her last Senate meeting, the Vice-Chancellor recorded his, and Senate’s, formal thanks to Professor Sue Cox for her work as Dean of LUMS.

The Vice-Chancellor reported on items of interest to the Senate.

At the national level there was a clear intention to create machinery that would assure teaching excellence, but details as to how this would be managed were not yet available. A Green Paper on Higher Education was expected in mid-October which was likely to include options for developments through 2016 and 2017.
The Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) would be published as part of the Chancellor’s autumn statement on 25 November 2015. It was noted that BIS was an unprotected department and that, while cuts were inevitable, various funding models were being considered as to how these would be implemented. The Vice-Chancellor commented that changes could be significant, with HEFCE, the QAA and the HEA all under review.

The Vice-Chancellor reported that Lancaster had had a strong summer with a number of outstanding achievements. These included:

- the Centre for Global Eco-Innovation winning a PraxisUnico Impact award;
- the MBA being ranked 9th for programmes outside North America;
- improved NSS results and a return to a top 10 position (8th overall);
- a rise from 12th to 11th in the Sunday Times league table;
- a rise from 160th to 121st in the QS world rankings (the significant move being, in part, the result of a change to the QS methodology with the introduction of field weighting in consideration of research impact).

The Vice-Chancellor recorded his thanks to all involved in all of the above, noting that the results clearly indicated that the University was held in high regard.

**Resolution:** Senate noted the report.

---

**S.2015/51 Strategy Implementation Plan**

*Ref: 1.3; document: PAS/15/059*

**Proposal (Deputy Vice-Chancellor):** the Senate was invited to comment on the strategy implementation paper.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced a revised Strategy Implementation Plan, noting that each strand within the plan referred back to a specific element of the University Strategy. The updates had been developed in consultation, particularly with the responsible officers, and would now feature in the annual planning cycle. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor noted that the document was necessarily complex, given its scope, but there was no expectation that each department would address each aspect within individual planning submissions. Rather, each should identify those elements most germane to their area.

In discussion it was noted that the item of the plan which most reflected the work of the Colleges (T4) did not reflect the high level strategic aims that could be seen in other sections, but was more operational in outlook. It was suggested that a conversation about the role of the Colleges within the broader context of the student experience could be beneficial.
**RESOLUTION**: the Senate agreed to note the plan.

**S.2015/52  Further Reflections on Joint Meeting of Senate and Council**

*Ref: 1.4; documents: SEC/2015/2/1001; SEC/2015/2/0857*

**PROPOSAL (Vice-Chancellor):** the Senate was invited to consider the notes of the joint Council/Senate meeting held 9 July 2015 and to further reflect on the University's strategic developments, particularly in relation to potential new models of partnership.

The Vice-Chancellor noted that the joint meeting of Council and Senate had been considered effective and the outcomes would inform the thinking of both the senior team and the institution. He further noted that additional thought would be needed on how to maintain communication between the governing bodies.

It was noted, in discussion, that the University's modesty, which had been identified as a weakness, needed a more nuanced understanding. The University needed to do more to highlight the excellent activities and outputs of its staff without turning this to a hubristic celebration of itself.

It was noted that the outcomes of the meeting would be subject to further reflection through the next academic year and another strategic conversation with Council would be arranged.

**RESOLUTION**: the Senate agreed to note the report and proposed next steps.

**ACTION**: Vice-Chancellor

**S.2015/53  Research Strategy**

*Ref: 1.5; documents: SEC/2015/2/1026; SEC/2015/2/1017; SEC/2015/2/1025*

**PROPOSAL (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research)):** the Senate was invited to discuss the research strategy papers.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) introduced two documents which provided greater detail on the further development and implementation of the University's research strategy.
The first, a version of which has been considered by the University Council, set out the University’s response to the growing pressure for research concentration. It summarised the challenges and set out a number of ways in which the University was already responding. Given the pressure to increase research funding, both in terms of research grant income and QR funding, Senate was invited to consider how the University should prioritise activity as it developed its research portfolio and how it should structure its research investments.

The second, a version of which has been considered by the University Research Committee, gave further operational detail on arrangements to help understand research activity within the University both on an annual and periodic basis. It had been designed to provide a flexible approach within a common framework so as to assist departments in research planning, and, it was noted, a small working group involving Heads of Department was to be established to agree details of implementation.

In discussion the following points were noted in relation to Research Concentration.

- The TRAC information provided in the Research Concentration paper demonstrated the growing pressure on resources for research activity – this suggested the need for greater diversity in research funding, including the development of commercial partnerships.

- While the University used to lag behind the sector in terms of its TRAC full economic costings (FEC), it was now in line with sector norms.

- The integration of the FEC to ensure that teaching was research-led was a perennial and sector-wide issue.

- Recent reductions in research income could probably be explained as the results of cuts in public funding and it was likely that these would continue following the CSR.

- The University was currently too dependent on traditional funding sources (QR funding, RCUK grants, etc.).

- The University was not performing as it should in terms of research income – being currently ranked 37th in the UK – and was not submitting the same volume of applications as competitors, either in real terms or on a per capita basis. Furthermore, competitor institutions that used to produce the same level of research income as Lancaster University had grown considerably in the last few years as a result of strategic research decisions at institutional-level.
• In communicating the need for diversity of research income there would be a requirement to change the current perspective and an individual’s research must be self-sustaining and not rely on cross-subsidisation.

• The relationship between research and PGR students was complex, and funding arrangements for doctoral work, such as scholarship programmes, would need careful scrutiny.

In discussion the following points were noted in relation to Enabling Research.

• The proposals, as set out, could involve considerable amounts of senior staff time, so any process revisions needed to minimise workload while maximising effectiveness.

• The relationship between the enabling processes and preparations for REF, including the potential of a full mock-REF exercise, should be carefully scrutinised to ensure that work was not duplicated.

• The role of Research Committee in relation to the task of enhancing research performance was supportive and should not be seen as punitive, and it was suggested that the section on the role of the Committee could be reworked to emphasise this point.

• The input of Heads of Department into operating practices was essential to research success.

• Processes were needed to ensure that REF did not overly dominate definitions of research success, not least as units’ standing in REF differed depending on the disciplinary emphasis of the output.

• The use of REF-style judgements on staff outputs was questioned, as this involved judgements by internal colleagues which could give rise to appeals: clear guidance was required to ensure the process achieved its aim in providing early and useful feedback to staff to support their research development.

It was agreed that the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) would reflect on the discussion and take actions forward, including establishing a small group of Heads of Department to consider the implementation of enabling research processes.

RESOLUTION: the Senate agreed to note the papers and the comments against each document.

ACTION: Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research)
PROPOSAL (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International)): the Senate was invited to receive and discuss an update on the University’s international activities.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International) provided Senate with an update on international activities within the University, stressing his intention to ensure that these were better understood across the institution in 2015/16.

The University’s international work needed to have a positive impact on the overall university strategy with activities ranging across both teaching and research and, ideally, bringing these two together within coherent relationships.

On the teaching side, the International Teaching Partnerships (ITPs) had exceeded 5000 students registered. The relationship with COMSATS in Pakistan was challenging, owing to Pakistani regulatory requirements regarding dual degrees. Issues of accreditation for engineering students had arisen and Lancaster was currently in discussions with the Pakistan Higher Education Council and the Pakistani Engineering Council about enabling the Lancaster degree in Pakistan to be accredited by the UK Engineering accrediting bodies. The relationship with COMSATS was currently under review, and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor noted that any proposed changes would come to the Senate for consideration in due course.

It was proposed that the arrangement with GD Goenka World Institute, following a review, would be continued for a further three years. Discussions were ongoing regarding the University’s wider strategy and activities in India, a key education market.

Overseas recruitment was diversifying so as to encourage greater recruitment across both subjects and nationalities, and it was noted that applications from countries with which Lancaster had an ITP relationship were rising.

Finally, work was ongoing in relation to the internationalisation of the student experience. This activity involved colleagues in the Colleges, academic departments and Professional Services and was intended to enhance the international experience for both home and international students.
In discussion it was noted that the development of a language support policy across the university, both in terms of English as a second language as well as second languages for English speakers, would benefit the internationalisation of the campus.

The Vice-Chancellor noted that, when he visited departments later this academic year, internationalisation would be a topic for discussion.

RESOLUTION: the Senate agreed to note the report and endorsed the proposal to extend the arrangement with GD Goenka World Institute.

SECTION 2: ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION REQUIRING DECISION

S.2015/55 Request to Senate for Approval in Principle to Establish a Joint Institute with Beijing Jiaotong University

Ref: 2.7; document: SEC/2015/2/1015 (Commercial in Confidence)

SECTION 5: ITEMS FOR REPORT

S.2015/56 Report of Chair's Action

Ref: 5.8

PROPOSAL (Senior Assistant Secretary): the Senate was invited to note that:

(a) the Pro-Vice- Chancellor (Education), as Chair of the Committee of Senate, agreed that final year students at GDGWI should not have degree classifications reduced as a result of penalties applied to marks because of failure to attend the prescribed classes;
(b) the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, acting on behalf of the Senate, approved members for the Faculty of Health and Medicine Fitness to Practise panel for 2015/16.

RESOLUTION: Senate agreed to note the actions.