LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

Minutes of a meeting of the Senate
held on 15 June 2016

PRESENT: Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair); Professor A. M. Atherton; Professor P. Atkinson; Professor P. Bates; Ms J. Bennett; Dr P. Bishop; Professor S. Bradley; Mr T. Buckley; Professor K. Cain; Professor A. G. Chetwynd; Mr F. Dawes; Professor S. P. Decent; Professor P. R. Fielden; Mrs R. Fligelstone; Professor A. Gillespie; Professor S. Guy; Mr W. Hedley; Professor M. Hughes; Professor S. R. A. Huttly; Professor N. Johnson; Professor R. Jones; Professor A. W. Laing; Dr R. Lauder; Professor A. Lazarev; Professor C. May-Chahal; Professor J. F. O’Hanlon; Professor C. Paoloni; Professor I. Paya; Professor M. Piacentini; Ms C. Povah; Dr R. Rigby; Professor E. Semino; Professor S. Skogly; Dr B. Smith; Professor M. M. Smyth; Mr J. Thornberry; Mr M. Topps; Dr W. Tych; Dr J. Unger; Professor T. Vurdubakis; Dr S. Walter; Professor J. Whittle; Mr S. Wright; Professor M. B. Wright; Dr S. Young.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P. Boustead; Mr J. S. W. Dickinson; Mr C. Edwards (for item S.2016/46); Mr S. Franklin; Ms C. Geddes; Ms H. Hunter; Ms N. C. Owen; Mrs S. J. Randall-Paley; Mr M. Swindlehurst; Dr J. Taylor (for item S.2016/45).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Professor P. Ashwin; Dr C. Baker; Professor S. Bushell; Professor M. Ehrgott; Mr B. Harper; Mr P. Montague.

QUESTIONS ON NOTICE TO THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

One question had been received on an operational matter and it had been agreed with the questioner to refer it to an officer in the first instance in order to seek to resolve the query without referring it to Senate at this point.

MINUTES

S.2016/40 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 27 April 2016

Senate approved the minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2016 (SEC/2016/2/0528), subject to an amendment under S.2016/35 concerning the Health Innovation Campus update: The three phases of the project were currently scheduled for 2016, 2019 and post-2025 should be replaced with Phase 1 was currently scheduled to be complete by June 2019 and the exact timing for the remaining two phases had yet to be finalised.

SECTION 1: ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

S.2016/41 Report of the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor provided an oral report on national and University activities of interest to Senate, including:
(a) the University had won the recent Roses annual sporting competition between the University and the University of York;
(b) the University had received its HEFCE funding letter, confirming an additional £1M for 2016/17. HEIF funding had been maintained as part of the settlement;
(c) an overview of the implications of sectoral policy changes, including the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), the White Paper and HE Bill. The Government planned significant reform to higher education particularly through the creation of the Office for Students (OfS) and UK Research & Innovation (UKRI), linking tuition fee increases to TEF outcomes, and to move powers previously reserved to the Privy Council to OfS.

S.2016/42 Summary of UMAG Business Relevant to Senate

The report (SEC/2016/2/0715) was noted.

S.2016/43 Forward Schedule of Senate Business

The report (SEC/2016/2/0716) was noted.

SECTION 2: ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION REQUIRING DECISION

S.2016/44 University Priorities for 2016/17

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the report (SEC/2016/2/0712) stating that the item had been brought forward from the original September timing in order to allow more opportunity to inform planning. He outlined progress on the current priorities and rationale for revising the priorities for the forthcoming year in order to better align them with our current and near-future performance, ensuring the University was in the best position for future development and success.

Key points from discussions included:

(a) the institutional priorities did not reflect all of the University’s concerns and areas of focus, including, by way of example, implementation of the review of postgraduate taught (PGT) provision. However, the proposed priorities were considered most critical at the current time as their achievement will position the University particularly strongly for future development and success;
(b) the identification of targets associated with the institutional priorities should not encourage unintended or unproductive behaviours, and care will need to be taken to monitor any risks that this may occur;
(c) that priorities 3 and 4 were related in that increasing tariff and improving applications:enrolments to 7:1 ratio were designed to determine how the University performed against key national competitors and how selective on academic merit we could be;
(d) the need to be clear that high teaching and research quality must underpin the agreed targets.
Senate agreed the University Priorities for 2016/17:

(1) achieve a top 20 score in NSS measures for Teaching Quality and Student Experience, whilst still securing a top 10 overall NSS score;
(2) enter the top 20 for RC grant awards, whilst also continuing to diversify our research income sources;
(3) re-focus our UG application priority to achieving an applications: enrolments ratio of at least 7:1, whilst still sustaining overseas student numbers;
(4) increase overall entry tariff in subject areas where this is achievable.

S.2016/45 Strategic Partnership Development Opportunity
(Restricted and Commercial in Confidence)

S.2016/46 PGT Development Strategy

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) introduced the report (SEC/2016/2/0719) stating that the development of a PGT strategy had been a recommendation from the review of PGT in 2015. Dr Chris Edwards, Associate Dean (PG) from the Faculty of Science & Technology provided further introduction on the objectives of the strategy to strengthen PGT provision, and noted that an implementation plan would be finalised although many activities were already underway.

Key points from discussion:

(a) PGT was a high strategic priority although there were resource implications associated with implementing the plan, including requirements for investing in the distance learning ‘platform’, ensuring sufficient professional support resource and coverage, and noting resource requirements were high in relation to income;
(b) the introduction of deposits and applications fees would need careful consideration, including on a subject basis, so that they did not act as disincentives to potential applicants;
(c) conversion rates, including improved engagement with applicants should be a key focus;
(d) there was support for development of flexible PGT programme exit points;
(e) the need to take account of PGR when decisions to delete modules or courses with 5 or fewer enrolments were taken;
(f) the University was currently very dependent on Lancaster University Management School (LUMS) for recruitment of PGT students.

Senate approved the PGT Development Strategy for implementation subject to addressing the points raised in the discussion.
S.2016/47 Development of an Education Strategy

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) introduced the report (SEC/2016/2/0721) providing background to the development of the draft strategy, including that it was intended to identify priorities to support the delivery of the University Strategy 2020, outlining the development process to date and the process going forward including wider consultation over the coming months before reporting a final draft for approval.

Senate considered the draft and provided initial comments.

S.2016/48 Academic Contact Policy

The Director of Quality Assurance and Enhancement introduced the report (SEC/2016/2/0720).

Senate approved the proposals in relation to academic contact as set out in the report, subject to an amendment under Proposal 1 How will I be taught so that it states seminar discussions will normally have an absolute maximum of fifteen students.

S.2016/49 Undergraduate Assessment Regulations

The Director of Quality Assurance and Enhancement introduced the report (SEC/2016/2/0728) stating that the proposals followed a review of changes to the Undergraduate Assessment Regulations implemented during 2011-12 and noting that some issues required further consideration as outlined in the report.

Noted that Chair’s action had been taken on behalf of Academic Standards and Quality Committee and Education Committee to approve an addendum to Proposal 3.

Senate approved the proposals to change the Undergraduate Assessment Regulations as set out in the report.

S.2016/50 Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Vision to 2020

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) introduced the report (SEC/2016/2/0717).

Senate considered and recommended to Council approval of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Vision to 2020, subject to further consideration about the role of Colleges, issues concerning recruitment of family members and ensuring final presentation is in an accessible format. The recommendation included the proposals for:

(a) EDI documents as Appendices 1, 2 and 3;
(b) EDI website development and positioning at University level;
(c) Name change to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee.
SECTION 3: ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION NOT REQUIRING DECISION

S.2016/51 LU Students’ Union Constitution

The President of the Students’ Union reported on the outcome of the student referendum held in week 8 which supported changes to its constitution. The changes would be implemented in the coming months subject to approval from Council and the Charity Commission.

SECTION 4: ITEMS FOR DECISION UNLIKELY TO REQUIRE DISCUSSION

S.2016/52 Department Name Change

Senate approved the name change from the Department of European Languages and Cultures to the Department of Languages and Cultures as set out in the report (SEC/2016/2/0722).

S.2016/53 Graduate College Constitution

Senate approved the minor changes to the Graduate College Constitution as set out in the report (SEC/2016/2/0723).

SECTION 5: ITEMS FOR REPORT

S.2016/54 Report on Chair’s Action re: In-Year Amendment to the Assessment Regulations for Regional Teaching Partnerships

Senate noted the report (SEC/2016/2/0714).

S.2016/55 Written Reports of Meetings

Senate noted the College Syndicate reports of County College and Graduate College (SEC/2016/2/0724; SEC/2016/2/0725).

S.2016/56 New and Revised Courses

Senate noted the report (SEC/2016/2/0726).