Senate – Minutes
Extraordinary Meeting: 26 March 2020
(via Teams)

PRESENT: Vice-Chancellor (in the Chair); Professor P. Ashwin; Professor P. M. Atkinson; Professor P. Barker; Professor P. Bates; Professor A. Belton; Ms J. Bennett; Professor Dame S. M. Black; Dr C. Boyko; Professor J. Boylan; Professor K. Cain; Dr P. Chakraborty; Professor P. Connolly; Professor N. A. Davies; Professor A. Dawson; Ms T. Douglas; Professor J. Faulconbridge; Professor P. R. Fielden; Professor A. Friday; Professor M. George; Professor A. Gillespie; Dr K. Grant; Professor I. Gregory; Professor S. C. Guy; Professor A. L. Heathwaite; Professor H. Hinds; Dr D. Hird; Dr W. Hollmann; Dr G. Hopkinson; Professor S. R. A. Huttly; Dr A. Jarvis; Professor R. Jones; Professor A. W. Laing; Ms B. T. Morgan; Professor J. Mottram; Ms A. Nugawela; Mr G. S. Nuttall; Professor C. Paoloni; Professor U. Papen; Professor G. Pawlina; Professor M. Piacentini; Ms P. Pickles; Professor R. Pickup; Ms M. Ritchie; Ms G. Shewani; Professor J. Sweeney; Professor J. E. Taylor; Dr W. Tych; Professor I. Tyler; Dr G. Vince; Dr N. Watson; Professor J. Wild; Dr K. Wright; Professor M. Zanardi.

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms M. Ashraf; Mr A. Barker; Mr P. T. Boustead; Mr J. S. W. Dickinson; Mr S. Franklin; Mr S. J. Jennings; Ms A. M. Mullan; Ms N. C. Owen; Mrs S. J. Randall-Paley.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Professor J. Rycroft-Malone.

1. APOLOGIES

1.1 Senate noted the apology.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. REPORT OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

3.1 The Vice-Chancellor provided an oral report on the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.

(i) The University continued to follow national advice and guidance as provided by the government and Public Health England. Currently a resolution was being sought on whether students should be allowed to travel home. The Vice-Chancellor assured Senate that Lancaster was well connected to national groups so as to be aware of decisions as they emerged.

(ii) Internally, the University had adopted a ‘reduce and remote’ model designed to ensure the health and welfare of both students and staff. The vast majority of staff were now working remotely with a defined team from which 20-30 staff were on site each day to deliver essential services.
(iii) The University was fully involved with the local resilience forum (LRF). This forum was tasked with identifying the needs of the local community, and the Vice-Chancellor noted that this required data to be provided. Human Resources, it was noted, would be contacting Heads of Department with requirement details.

(iv) Academic matters were subject to a separate agenda discussion.

(v) Central management was having regular communication with Heads of Department and a similar arrangement was being developed for Professional Services.

(vi) The financial impact of the pandemic was being modelled for both the short and medium term. The impact could be significant and already short term mitigations had been implemented in terms of suspension of capital projects and stricter arrangements for both vacancy control and non-payroll expenses. In principle, promotions were continuing, but this was also subject to further review in light of overall financial impact of the pandemic.

Medium term, the University was forecasting models for student recruitment and taking steps to maximise conversion. Departments were also being encouraged to consider alternate models of delivery and the possible further use of partner campuses was being explored.

(vii) The Vice-Chancellor formally recorded his thanks to all staff for their work in supporting the University in challenging times, paying particular thanks to those staff who continued to travel to campus and provide essential services to students.

(viii) In discussion the following was noted.

- Departments were considering multiple version delivery to maximise flexibility.
- The suspension of the capital projects would not, of themselves, fully offset the financial impact.
- Recruitment, including through ERS, could continue, but would be subject to tighter controls.

3.2 Senate noted the report.
PAPER A

Restricted and Confidential

5.

RECOMMENDATION OF TEMPORARY CHANGES TO THE SENATE AND ITS SUB-COMMITTEES AND JOINT COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL AND SENATE DURING THE COVID-19 RESPONSE (MARCH TO JULY 2020)  

5.1 Senate received a series of recommendations of temporary changes to Senate, its sub-committees and joint committees of Council and Senate to develop in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. The Deputy Chief Executive (Operations) reported that the proposal was designed to ensure that Senate and its sub-committees, as key decision-making bodies of the University, could continue within both the current and anticipated impacts of Covid-19.

5.2 Two key considerations underpinned the recommendations – the need to ensure that quoracy requirements did not prevent Senate and its sub-committees from making decisions and the need to ensure that Senate and its sub-committees remained representative in their membership and composition. To achieve this, a reduced Senate (a ‘skeleton’ Senate) was proposed with a membership of fifteen nominated from across the constituent elements of Senate. It was noted that the nomination arrangements were designed to ensure inclusion both in terms of Senate constituency as well as in relation to diversity.

5.3 It was noted that in order to enact the recommendation there would need to be a change to the University’s Ordinance 5. Should Senate be mindful to agree the recommendation, it would further need to recommend a form of words for the change to the Ordinance.

5.4 Senate recognised the requirement to ensure Senate’s ability to continue to make decisions while the pandemic ensued, but considered that the reduction in quoracy should only apply in those situations where the its removal was critically needed. Where it was possible for Senate and its sub-committees to continue to meet in full, albeit remotely, this should be continued and decision-making arrangements be unaffected.

5.5 Senate welcomed the time-limited nature of the intervention, as well as the specification of the recommendations limitation to time period associate with the Covid-19 pandemic. It was recognised that this period could continue past the June/July 2020 date of review, and that the review process would allow elongation of arrangements as required.

5.6 Senate agreed that as far as possible Senate would continue to operate under current arrangements and that all Senators would be invited to meetings, retaining their authority in doing so. Senate further agreed to recommend to Council that, as necessary, the ‘skeleton’ Senate, as described in the recommendation could operate, but only where the items requiring decision would otherwise leave the University exposed in relation to regulatory or compliance issues or where no decision would risk the academic operation of the University.
5.7 Senate agreed that the wording of the change of Ordinance would be revised and recirculated to members. On that basis, Senate agreed to recommend to Council temporary changes to Senate, its sub-committees and joint committees of Council and Senate to develop in response to the Covid-19 pandemic.

5.8 [Note: the reworded Ordinance was circulated to members 26 March 2020.]

6. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

6.1 The next meeting will be held at 2.00 p.m. on Wednesday 22 April 2020.