

**Prevent
ASTON UNIVERSITY**

THE SENATE

Minutes of the 334th meeting of the Senate, held on Wednesday, 4th November 2015

PRESENT: Professor Helen Higson (Chair)
Professor Asif Ahmed Dr Ataur Belal
Professor Paul Bartholomew Professor Björn Birgisson
Dr Raymond Carson Alan Charters
Dr Robin Clark Professor Urszula Clark
Dr Leon Davies Dr John Elgy
Professor George Feiger Professor Simon Green
Professor Helen Griffiths Professor Chris Hewitt
Jordan Kirkwood Dr Emmanuelle Labeau
Professor Chris Langley Professor Paul Maropoulos
Professor Helen Pattison Dr Corinne Spickett
Marcus Standish Professor Ian Stanford
Dr Kate Sugden Dr Sylvia Wong

APOLOGIES: Professor Sahar Al-Malaika Dr Jane Andrews
Dr Julia Brown Dr Michael Butler
Professor Richard Crisp Dr Andrew Devitt
Dr Frank Eperjesi Professor Martin Griffin
Professor Anthony Hilton Professor Dame Julia King
Dr Ryan Murphy Professor Jill Poole
Professor John Rudd Neil Scott
Professor Jim Shields Professor Edward Sweeney
Professor Sergei Turitsyn Professor Joel Talcott
Dr Paul Topham Dr Uwe Wunderlich

IN ATTENDANCE: Dr Elaine Clarke David Farrow
Alison Levey John Walter

CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS

Senate Membership 2015/16

15/131 RECEIVED:

Paper REG/15/365(1), being the Senate membership list for 2015/16, noting that elections were being arranged to fill the current vacancies for representatives of the undergraduate students and of the postgraduate students.

ACTION: SU President to organise elections

New Senate Members

15/132 RESOLVED:

To welcome the following staff members to the Senate: Dr Shakil Ahmad and Dr Raymond Carson (AMS non-professorial staff representatives), and Dr Sylvia Wong (Academic Assembly representative); and the following student members: Marcus Standish (President of the Students' Union) and Jordan Kirkwood (Vice-President - Education and Welfare).

MINUTES

15/133 RESOLVED:

To approve the minutes of the 332nd and 333rd meetings of the Senate held on 3rd and 25th June 2015.

MATTERS ARISING

15/134 RECEIVED:

Paper REG/15/615, a summary of matters arising from the previous meeting.

Role of University Presenter (15/59)

15/135 RESOLVED:

To approve a proposal that, in future, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor should have delegated authority from Senate to appoint the University Presenter to present the University's case before the Disciplinary Board, except in cases of academic offences, where the University Presenter should normally be the Academic Offences Officer who had dealt with the case in the School. The appointed University Presenter should be a senior member of staff, normally the Head of the Department responsible for the area in which the disciplinary offence occurred.

Cotutelle Agreements (M15/65)

15/136 RECEIVED:

A report that the Learning and Teaching Committee had resolved that the revised checklist and due diligence checklist for staff preparing and considering collaborative proposals for cotutelle arrangements be incorporated within the revised Guidelines for Collaborative Activity (REG/15/541). These Guidelines would be publicised as soon as additional amendments had been made to bring them into line with a new QAA Characteristics Statement concerning dual awards.

Review of University Charter, Statutes and Ordinances (M15/67)

15/137 RECEIVED:

A report that the Council (16.6.15) had passed a special resolution for a second time approving changes to the University Charter, Statutes and Ordinances (as required by the Charter). The Privy Council subsequently approved the changes with effect from 1st August 2015. The revised governance documents were now displayed on the University website. This completed Phase 1 of the review of the Charter, Statutes and Ordinances.

Phase 2 entailed a review of the 'Model' Statute and associated Ordinance concerning the Academic Staff with the aim of developing governance provision that would ensure the equitable treatment of staff within transparent and streamlined procedures which met current legislative requirements, whilst maintaining appropriate protection in relation to academic freedom. An HR-led Sub-group was continuing work in consultation with the UCU and would bring proposals for consideration by Senate's Academic Governance Group later this academic year.

Open Access to Research (M15/68)

15/138 RECEIVED:

A report that the Executive Operations Group had agreed that the new Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Enterprise, Professor Paul Maropoulos, should lead the review of the draft University Code of Practice on the selection of research papers for the "Gold Open Access" route (whereby a paper becomes open access immediately from the publisher website subject to payment of an Article Processing Charge). A report would be made to a future Senate meeting.

ACTION: PVC Research and Enterprise

Employability Strategy (M15/92)

15/139 NOTED:

That information on "placement plus" arrangements had been circulated to members of Senate as requested at the last meeting.

Results of the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2014 and International Student Barometer (M15/94)

15/140 NOTED:

That all the Schools were continuing with the implementation of action plans to improve the student experience and to address issues highlighted in the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) and of the International Student Barometer (ISB). It would not be feasible within current resources to undertake a longitudinal analysis involving comparison of the satisfaction levels of Aston undergraduates to their satisfaction levels when they proceed to postgraduate studies within the University, particularly as the surveys were currently anonymous.

Template for University Strategies (M15/99ii)

15/141 NOTED:

That guidance on the presentation of University documents was provided in the internal brand guide at:

<http://www.aston.ac.uk/EasySiteWeb/GatewayLink.aspx?allId=259619>.

This was being developed further to include advice on University strategy, policy and procedural documentation.

Enhancement Framework (M15/99iii)

15/142 NOTED:

That the Learning and Teaching Committee Enhancement Sub-group had been reconvened to oversee the effective implementation and development of the Enhancement Framework.

Policy on Waiver of Tuition Fees for Research Students (M15/107ii)

15/143 NOTED:

That the Executive had reviewed the University's fee waiver policy for Marie Curie Research Fellows and had confirmed that fees for such students should be paid via the Marie Curie grants.

ACTION: Deputy Vice-Chancellor

Timing of Degree Ceremonies (M15/109)

15/144 RECEIVED:

A report that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor had undertaken a review of the timing of degree ceremonies in the light of feedback from international students who had found it difficult to attend the Spring Term ceremonies owing to visa difficulties. A January ceremony, which would have the advantage of enabling international students to attend within the 31st January expiry date for their Tier 4 visas, would not be feasible given the unavailability of the Town Hall and the use of the Great Hall for teaching and examinations. Consideration was being given to the feasibility of an alternative event to celebrate the achievement of international graduates during January.

ACTION: Deputy Vice-Chancellor

Plagiarism (M15/113)

15/145 RECEIVED:

A report that the Director of Registry and Student Services had convened a meeting of the Plagiarism Sub-Group on the 7th October 2015. The Sub-Group agreed some clarifications to the Regulations and these had been submitted for approval to the next meeting of the Regulation Sub-Committee.

Academic English Writing Support (M15/115)

15/146 RECEIVED:

A report that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor had held meetings with the Director of the Graduate School and Associate Deans (Research) to agree the ongoing English Language support requirements across the University. £50,000 was continuing to be earmarked for English Language provision, the support available had been advertised to PhD students and supervisors, and CELCA had sourced a diagnostic test to be used at interview stage to assess the particular support needs of individual students.

Operation of SITS (M15/116)

15/147 RECEIVED:

A report from the Director of Registry and Student Services confirming that a member of the Registry Team had spent some time with colleagues in SEAS and the SITS issue (relating to the processing of assessment marks) reported at the last meeting was resolved. The outputs from SITS were carefully checked to ensure that the decisions of Boards of Examiners were based on accurate and full information, and that no students were disadvantaged

Appointment of Vice-Chancellor (M15/129)

15/148 RECEIVED:

A report that a Search Committee (comprising the Pro-Chancellor as Chair, Messrs Lance Doughty and Surinder Sharma and Ms Alison Trauttmansdorff-Weinsberg from the Council, and Professors George Feiger, Helen Griffiths and Edward Sweeney from the Senate) had been established to identify and recommend candidates for appointment. Odgers Berndtson had been appointed to lead the search. Over the summer period, an extensive consultation was undertaken with staff and stakeholders, both by Odgers Berndtson and internally by the University marketing team. The vacancy had been advertised in the Times Higher with a closing date of 30 October and applications had been received. Longlisting of candidates and preliminary interviews with Odgers Berndtson would be undertaken later in November 2015. Shortlisting and final panel interviews would take place in January with a view to a proposal being put to a joint meeting of the Senate and Council for approval to enable a formal offer of appointment to be made in February/March 2016.

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

15/149 RECEIVED:

Paper REG/15/616, being the Vice-Chancellor's report to Council (13th October 2015).

STRATEGIC ISSUES

University Objectives for 2015/16

15/150 RECEIVED:

Paper REG/15/617, the draft University Objectives for 2015/16, which had been developed in the light of discussions at the Senior Management Advance 2015 and endorsed by the Executive Team.

15/151 RESOLVED:

To approve the University Objectives for 2015/16 and that they should be communicated widely across the University.

National Student Survey 2015 Results

15/152 RECEIVED:

Paper REG/15/618, and an oral report from the Executive Director of Marketing Strategy and Communications on the NSS results for 2015 and their impact on Aston's standing in national league tables, noting that:

- Aston had risen from 24th to joint 15th in the NSS Ranking, maintaining a score of 90% for overall satisfaction; its best ever result.
- 17 programmes had scored 90%, with two scoring 100%. Most programmes were above the sector average for their subject area.
- The excellent NSS performance had already impacted on Aston's league table ranking, with a rise from 34 to 30 in the Sunday Times league table.

- The University was committed to maintaining the drive to improve the student experience to achieve higher NSS ratings, and to focus on subjects and factors which were below average for the sector. Ambitious NSS 2016 targets had been agreed, together with arrangements for a Taskforce to achieve overall and specific programme improvements.
- The forthcoming Government green paper would include provision for a Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which would create incentives for universities to devote as much attention to the quality of teaching “as fee-paying students and prospective employers have a right to expect”. TEF would focus on questions 1-12 of the NSS. Although Aston performed relatively well in most of these areas, it would need to improve across ‘Teaching on my Course’, ‘Assessment and Feedback’, and ‘Academic Support’.
- Aston was ranked 346th in the latest QS World Ranking, a rise of 44 places compared to last year. For the first time Aston was ranked in the Financial Times global top 50 institutions for Masters in Finance.

15/153 RECEIVED:

Oral reports from representatives of each of the Schools on their detailed action plans to improve the student experience, particularly in areas relating to questions 1-12 of the NSS, and thereby the University’s performance in future NSS and league tables. Initiatives included sharing best practice; improving timeliness and quality of assessment feedback; reducing the assessment burden; celebrating success; improving personal tutoring systems; enhancing careers and placement advice; involving final year students in extracurricular events; and providing additional opportunities for communication/engagement between staff and students.

15/154 NOTED:

- The Students’ Union had developed its NSS action plan, which would be presented to the next Senate.
- ***ACTION: Students’ Union to present its NSS action plan to next Senate***
- The Executive had approved the launch of a “Take Your Tutor to Tea” scheme, whereby final year students would be given vouchers to take their tutor for tea/coffee at one of the campus catering outlets.
- A review of the examination timetabling process would be undertaken to ascertain if it would be possible to publish individual student examination timetables earlier in the academic year without negatively impacting on the current flexibility to change optional modules choices.

ACTION: Head of Registry and Student Services to conduct review of processes for optional module selection and examination timetabling

15/155 RESOLVED:

To congratulate colleagues across the University on their success in enhancing the student experience which had contributed to the improvement in the NSS ratings and associated rise in the national league tables. They were encouraged to sustain their efforts in the year ahead, particularly in view of the likely implementation of the TEF.

Student Progression and Retention

15/156 RECEIVED:

Paper REG/15/619, presented by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, on student applications and recruitment for 2015/16, noting that:

- The University had achieved the target of 300 additional Home/EU undergraduates compared to 2014/15 entry and had exceeded this by almost a further 300.
- This growth had been achieved without a significant decrease in the average A-Level tariff score.
- There were likely to be fewer than target Home/EU postgraduate students reflecting a national decline linked to the growing number of undergraduate students graduating with large student loans.
- International student recruitment, whether at undergraduate or postgraduate level, was very challenging in the face of visa restrictions and growing global competition. The Portfolio Review Group would be helping the Schools to undertake a major review of postgraduate offerings before the next intake. Strenuous efforts were being made to enhance international marketing and recruitment activity.

15/157 RECEIVED:

Reports from representatives of each of the Schools on their action plans to improve student retention and progression. These included early identification of students experiencing academic difficulties and provision of targeted support for them; use of data analytics to identify “at risk” students; ensuring that personal tutors were effectively monitoring the progress and engagement of their tutees and taking remedial action where necessary; reviewing assessment methodologies with the support of CLIPP; focusing on supporting the staff in subject areas/modules where progressions/retention was an issue; use of technology to provide diagnostic tests; reviewing the use of condonement; provision of appropriate support and mentoring for staff whose first language was not English.

Languages and Social Sciences School Strategy 2015-20

15/158 RECEIVED:

Paper REG/15/620, presented by Professor Simon Green, the Executive Dean of the School of Languages and Social Sciences (LSS), outlining the School’s Strategy 2015-20: “Excellent, Distinctive and Different”. LSS had ambitious plans for growth in terms of academic staff and student numbers and associated revenue. This would be achieved by a ‘virtuous circle of growth’ involving recruitment of research-active staff undertaking high quality research leading to more research-led teaching and higher student satisfaction levels, which in turn would facilitate higher student recruitment. The School currently had excellent NSS scores, with 95% satisfaction in 2015.

Implementing the New Prevent Statutory Duty

15/159 RECEIVED:

Paper REG/15/621, presented by Professor Simon Green, which indicated that the Counter-terrorism and Security Act 2015 required universities to work actively against radicalisation on campus. This included four principal areas: use of university IT facilities; events and visiting speakers, both on and off campus; student welfare, pastoral care and chaplaincy support; and staff training. The University would need to undertake risk assessments and develop action plans for each of these areas, and to monitor them. HEFCE had been appointed as the body to ensure compliance. The University was also committed to maintaining academic freedom and the nature of the campus as open and welcoming.

15/160 NOTED:

- Professor Green had been appointed as the University's Executive Lead, Alison Levey as the Regulatory Lead and Mark Sutton as the external Single Point of Contact.
- A risk assessment was in process.
- A Prevent Working Group, with representatives from all Schools and relevant departments, had been established to review plans and policies.
- School Prevent briefings had been held/were planned.
- The West Midlands Prevent Lead was providing 'train the trainer' session at Aston on 30 November
- Senate members felt that it was important for Aston to share best regional and national best practice in relation to Prevent.
- Members also agreed that the University should not focus on Prevent as a goal in itself, but rather integrate its purpose into existing notions of duty of care and health and safety.
- Members agreed that consideration should be given to the introduction of tighter access controls to University buildings and to whether access should be blocked to certain websites.
- The Students' Union and Conference Aston would also need to take action to comply with the guidance.

Competition and Markets Authority Guidance to HEIs on Consumer Protection Law

15/161 RECEIVED:

Paper REG/15/622, presented by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, which indicated that the UK Competition and Markets Authority (CMA) had laid down new expectations on universities on how they must ensure current and prospective students were consulted about, and informed of, changes to the programmes they were enrolled on or held offers for. The paper contained an email sent to all staff explaining how the CMA expectations had necessitated significant changes to the process by which Programme Specifications were updated and maintained, particularly in relation to student consultation. The appendices to the email set out the new process for approval of revisions to Programme Specifications. The email also provided the dates for workshops to take staff through this process and to provide an opportunity for colleagues to raise questions.

15/162 NOTED:

- That the process for student consultation would be undertaken using Blackboard, the University's virtual learning environment.
- That a standard opening statement had been prepared for Open Days concerning the University's terms and conditions and the status of information provided during the Open Day.
- That changes to programme specifications required by accrediting professional and statutory bodies would also be subject to the student consultation process, and it was anticipated that students would agree to such changes recognising the importance of retaining their programme accreditation.

COMMITTEES AND MATTERS ARISING

Council

15/163 RECEIVED:

The minutes of the Council meetings of 16th June and 13th October 2015.

Learning and Teaching Committee

15/164 RECEIVED:

The minutes of the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) meeting of 20th October 2015, together with a summary of items referred by LTC and its sub-committees to the Senate in paper REG/15/623.

LTC Terms of Reference (M15/81)

15/165 RESOLVED:

To approve the proposed Terms of Reference of the University Learning and Teaching Committee and the Executive of Learning and Teaching Committee, in paper REG/15/437.

QAA Higher Education Review (HER) (M15/85)

15/166 RECEIVED:

- i) A report that the University's response to the QAA HER report was available at <http://www.qaa.ac.uk/en/ReviewsAndReports/Documents/Aston%20University/Aston-University-HER-15.pdf>
- ii) The University's published HER action plan, in paper REG/15/591.

Tuition Fees Policy for 2015-16 (M15/105)

15/167 RESOLVED:

To approve the proposed Tuition Fees Policy for 2015-16, in paper REG/15/604.

Statement on Marking and Assessment of Student Work

15/168 RESOLVED:

To approve the proposed Statement on Marking and Assessment of Student Work in paper REG/15/567(1).

Policy on the Recording of Lectures

15/169 RESOLVED:

- i) To approve the proposed statement on Policy on the Recording of Lectures, in paper REG/15/570, and that the Policy be reviewed after one year's operation.
- ii) That the Guidance on Recording for Students with Disabilities should be reviewed and reissued.

ACTION: Head of Registry and Student Services to instigate review

New Programmes

15/170 RESOLVED:

To approve the following new programmes as recommended by the Programme Approval Sub-Committee or following Senate Chair's action:

- BSc Digital and Technology Solutions (with BIS and CSD pathways)
- MA Emerging Europe in a Global Perspective
- Human Resource Management in Practice
- MSc Advanced Clinical Practice
- MSc Neurophysiology.

Programme Modifications

15/171 RESOLVED:

To approve modifications to the following programmes on recommendation from the Programme Approval Sub-Committee:

- MSc Clinical Health Management
- BSc Optometry and Clinical Practice.

Withdrawal of Programme

15/172 RESOLVED:

To approve the withdrawal of the following programmes as recommended by the Programme Approval Sub-Committee:

- MSc Organisational Psychology and Business
- MSc Business and Marketing Analytics
- MSc Operational Research and Performance Management
- MSc Human Resource Management and Business (PT on-campus delivery)
- FdSc Electrical Power Engineering (National Grid)
- MSc Teaching English for Specific Purposes
- MSc Teaching English to Young Learners.

Research Committee

15/173 RECEIVED:

The minutes of the Research Committee (RC) meeting of 20th October 2015.

School Reports on Annual Programme Review for 2013/14 (M15/74)

15/174 NOTED:

That the Research Committee had approved the final School Reports on Annual Programme Review for 2013/4 for ABS paper (REG/15/226(1)); EAS (paper REG/15/228(1)); LHS (paper REG/15/232(1)) and LSS (paper REG/15/230). Copies of these reports were available on request from the Secretary to the Research Committee.

Summary of University Level Actions Arising from the Annual Postgraduate Research Degree Programme Review of 2013/4 (M15/75)

15/175 RESOLVED:

To endorse the summary of actions arising from Annual Postgraduate Research Degree Programme Review of 2013/4 and requiring University-level consideration (in Paper (REG/15/349(1))); noting that the Research Committee would continue to monitor and report on the implementation of the actions.

Students' Union Senate

15/176 RECEIVED:

A report from the Students' Union in paper REG/15/624, together with an oral report from the Vice-President Education and Welfare on the proceedings of the very well-attended Students Union Senate which had taken place earlier that day.

15/177 NOTED:

That the Students' Union planned to conduct a referendum of students concerning whether formal contact hours should be restricted to the 9:00 am-6:00 pm working day.

Report from the Director of IT and Library Services

15/178 RECEIVED:

A report from the Director of IT and Library Services (paper REG/15/625).

International Strategy Committee

15/179 RECEIVED:

The minutes of the International Strategy Committee meeting of 20th October 2015.

WHAT'S NOT WORKING

Aston University Student Representation Framework

15/180 NOTED:

- That a member of the Senate had expressed a number of reservations about the operational effectiveness and practicality of the new Aston University Student Representation Framework.
- That the new Framework had been introduced in response to a finding of the QAA HER report that the University needed to do more to engage students in the decision-making process, particularly in relation to the review and development of their programmes. Since the Framework had been introduced the level of student engagement had increased considerably, with over 180 students participating in the training for student representatives. It was intended to review the effectiveness of the Framework after one year's operation.

ACTION: Head of Registry and Student Services to review the guidelines for the Student Representation Framework to ensure that arrangements for staff involvement and for cognate programmes sharing modules were clear.

University Module Directory (UMD)

15/181 NOTED:

- i) That members of the Senate felt that there was a lack of appropriate embedded business process within the UMD system.
- ii) That the Deputy Vice-Chancellor had instigated a review of the UMD system and associated business processes to ensure that they draw upon current best practice nationally and the expertise of colleagues in EAS.

Academic Staff Load Model

15/182 NOTED:

That a member of Senate had highlighted the lack of a useful academic staff load model which impacted negatively on the process for allocating work fairly between colleagues.

ACTION: Deputy Vice-Chancellor to oversee completion and evaluation of two ongoing pilots (in EAS and LSS) with a view to the learning from this to inform the development of an effective University load model.

Promotion Path for Teaching Fellows

15/183 NOTED:

- That a member of Senate had highlighted the current lack of a clear promotion path for Teaching Fellows.
- That the Executive Team had approved a new promotion path for Teaching Fellows to the level of Senior Teaching Fellow. Consideration was being given to proposals for Professorial Teaching Fellows for introduction in next year's promotions round.

Aston Replay (Panopto)

15/184 NOTED:

- That a member of Senate had highlighted problems with the operation of Aston Replay (Panopto) during the current academic year.
- That action was being taken to resolve the problems with Panopto, including changing the server.

REPORTS AND SCHEDULES FOR APPROVAL

Schedule of Research Grants and Contracts

15/185 RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL

That paper REG/15/626, being the Schedule of Research Grants and Contracts, be approved and that the following members of staff be congratulated on attracting substantial awards:

Dr C Spickett, Prof A Pitt, Prof H Griffiths, Dr J Brown	European Commission	686,640
Prof B Birgisson	EPSRC Government	622,842
Dr T Grant, Dr K Kredens	Communications Headquarters - GCHQ	506,489
Prof B Tighe	Johnson & Johnson Vision Care Inc.	256,733

Prof J Wolffsohn, Dr H Bartlett, Dr F Eperjesi, Dr A Sheppard Dr M Stich	Johnson & Johnson Vision Care Inc. European Commission	240,800 203,640
Prof A Bridgwater Dr M Little	EPSRC Parkinson's Disease Society of the United Kingdom	193,706 182,264
Dr P Davies, Dr S Generalis	Innovate UK - Technology Strategy Board	170,925
Dr P Lewis, Dr S Wong, Dr A Beaumont Prof R Bill, Prof K Wilson	KTP / CPBigwood Management Ltd BBSRC CASE / Chemoxy International Ltd	156,407 105,842
Prof H Griffiths, Prof Y Perrie	BBSRC CASE / Mologic Ltd	100,642

Schedule of Appointment of Academic and Academic-Related Staff

15/186 RECEIVED

Paper REG/15/627, being a Schedule of Appointment of Academic and Academic-Related Staff.

Action Taken on Behalf of Senate by the Vice-Chair

15/187 RESOLVED:

To ratify the action taken on behalf of Senate by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor as specified in paper REG/15/628.

Aston Medical School

15/188 RECEIVED:

An update on the implementation of the Aston Medical School in paper REG/15/638.

DATES OF SENATE MEETINGS IN 2015/16

15/189 NOTED:

That normal Senate meetings would be held at 2:00 pm on Wednesdays: 24th February and 1st June 2015; the Joint Council-Senate Strategy Away Day on Wednesday, 27th April 2016 (from 12:30 to 6:00 pm, followed by dinner); and the Senate Strategy Away Half-Day on Wednesday, 18th May 2016 (from 12:30 to 5:00 pm)

JGW/9.11.15