

ASTON UNIVERSITY

THE SENATE

Minutes of the 337th meeting of the Senate, held on Wednesday, 9th November 2016

PRESENT:	Professor Alec Cameron (Chair)	
	Dr Shakil Ahmad	Professor Sahar Al-Malaika
	Dr Jane Andrews	Dr Michael Butler
	Karen Caine	Professor Robin Clark
	Dr Leon Davies	Dr Philip Davies
	Dr Frank Eperjesi	Professor Simon Green
	Professor Christos Ioannidis	Ahmed Hassan
	Professor Helen Higson	Mohamed Ibrahim
	Dr Anne Jenichen	Dr Sarah Junaid
	Professor Julia Kotlarsky	Dr Fiona Lacey
	Professor Chris Langley	Alison Levey
	Dr Carol Marley	Professor Paul Maropoulos
	Professor Ian Nabney	Safaa Nait-Charif
	Professor Helen Pattison	Professor Gertrud Reershemius
	Neil Scott	Professor Corinne Spickett
	Professor Ute Stephan	Professor Edward Sweeney
	Dr Eirini Theodosiou	Dr Paul Topham
	Professor Jonathan Tritter	Dr Keqing Wang
	Dr Sylvia Wong	Dr Uwe Wunderlich
APOLOGIES:	Professor Asif Ahmed	Professor Frank Austermuehl
	Alan Charters	Professor George Feiger
	Professor Helen Griffiths	Professor Chris Hewitt
	Roger Howell	Dr Ryan Murphy
	Dr Qasim Rafiq	Professor James Wolffsohn
IN ATTENDANCE:	Sarah Davies (for M16/161)	David Farrow
	Sarah Hayes (for M16/160)	John Richards (for M16/162)
	John Walter	Chris Wanley

FOR REPORT AND APPROVAL

Welcome

16/124 RESOLVED:

- i) To welcome the following new staff members to the Senate: Professor Frank Austermuehl, Karen Caine, Dr Philip Davies, Dr Doina Gherghel, Professor Christos Ioannidis, Dr Anne Jenichen, Dr Sarah Junaid, Professor Julia Kotlarsky, Dr Fiona Lacey, Dr Carol Marley, Professor Ian Nabney, Dr Qasim Rafiq, Professor Ute Stephan, Dr Eirini Theodosiou, Professor Jonathan Tritter, Dr Keqing Wang and Professor James Wolffsohn
- ii) To welcome the following new student members: Ahmed Hassan (President of the Students' Union), Mohamed Ibrahim (Vice-President - Education), Safaa Nait-Charif (Vice-President - Welfare) and Roger Howell (postgraduate student representative).

Constitutional Matters

16/125 RECEIVED:

SEN/16/38, being a report on constitutional matters.

Senate Membership 2016/17

16/126 RECEIVED:

The Senate membership list for 2016/17 in SEN/16/38.1, noting that the proportion of members who were female and from black and minority ethnic groups had increased following efforts to broaden participation. The Executive had recently agreed that all Committees should regularly review the diversity of their composition.

Disciplinary Board Membership 2016/17

16/127 RESOLVED:

To approve the proposed membership of the Disciplinary Board in SEN/16/38.2.

Senate's Operational Mode

16/128 RECEIVED:

A report from the Provost that proposals for a new operating mode for the Senate (as recommended by the Senate Sub-Group in SEN/16/38.3) had been circulated to Senate members for comment. All the responses from Senate members had been broadly in favour of the adoption of the new approach.

16/129 RESOLVED:

To approve the adoption of the proposed new operating mode for the Senate.

Proposed Changes to Ordinance 2.6.1: Constitution of the Senate

16/130 RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

That the following changes to Ordinance 2.6.1:

Delete:

"Class 9 Four students to include: the President and a Vice-President responsible for Education and Welfare of the Students' Union, and one postgraduate student and one undergraduate student elected by the students of the University"

Replace with:

"Class 9 Five students to include: the President, the Vice-President Education and the Vice-President Welfare of the Students' Union, and one postgraduate student and one undergraduate student elected by the students of the University"

Add:

"Class 10 One representative of the professional support staff elected by the professional support staff"

16/131 RESOLVED:

That the Provost should meet with the Students' Union representatives to consider a proposal from a staff member of Senate that the current one postgraduate student representative be replaced by one representative of taught postgraduate students and one of research degree students. The Provost was authorised to take action on behalf of the Senate in this matter with regard to any need to recommend further changes to Ordinance 2.6.1 to Council.

ACTION: Provost

Minutes

16/132 RESOLVED:

To approve the minutes of the 336th meeting of the Senate held on 1st June 2016.

Matters Arising

16/133 RECEIVED:

SEN/16/39, a summary of actions taken in response to matters arising from the previous meeting and oral reports from the Provost on the following items:

Examination Timetabling (M16/67)

16/134 RECEIVED:

A report that a review of space for examinations had been undertaken which had concluded that there was sufficient space for all of the anticipated examinations in 2016/17. In addition, there were a number of ongoing initiatives which aimed to ensure that the level and methods of assessment were appropriate for all modules and programmes, and that would thereby help to reduce the overall level of formal examinations.

ACTION: LTC to keep the adequacy of space for examinations and the level of formal examinations under review

Academic Staff Activity/Load Models (M16/68)

16/135 RECEIVED:

A report from the Provost that pilot staff activity/load models were to be continued for a second year for all staff in LSS and for a sample of staff in EAS for the current year, with a view to extending this to all EAS staff in 2017/18. The University Dashboard was currently also available as an activity database, although it was recognised that this did not have the functionality of a load model.

16/136 NOTED:

That Members of Senate stressed the need for a load model to be developed as a matter of priority.

ACTION: Provost to discuss the development of a staff activity/load model with the Executive Deans

Council

16/137 RECEIVED:

The minutes of the Council meetings of 14th June and 12th October 2016.

International Strategy Committee

16/138 RECEIVED:

The minutes of the International Strategy Committee meeting of 2nd November 2016.

Learning and Teaching Committee

16/139 RECEIVED:

The minutes of the Learning and Teaching Committee meetings of 28th June and 25th October 2016.

Research Committee

16/140 RECEIVED:

The minutes of the Research Committee meeting of 24th May 2016.

University Open Access Policy and Code of Practice

16/141 RESOLVED:

To approve the proposed University Open Access Policy and Code of Practice, and School-specific Annexes in SEN/16/41.1, noting that they would be kept under review by the Research Committee in the light of operational experience.

Schedule of Research Grants and Contracts

16/142 RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

That paper SEN/16/41, being the Schedule of Research Grants and Contracts, be approved and that the following members of staff be congratulated on attracting substantial awards:

Applicant(s)	Sponsor(s)	Amount
Dr A Wood	European Commission	1,874,399.00
Dr A Schroeder	European Commission	376,543.00
Dr R Parri	European Commission	188,272.00
Prof A Bridgwater	European Commission	188,217.00
Dr G Vogiatzis, P Lewis	KTP / Zenzero	187,273.00
Prof T Grant	Government Communications Headquarters - GCHQ	149,756.00
Dr C Holland	The Extra Care Charitable Trust	144,757.00.

LHS School Strategy

16/143 RECEIVED

Copies of the slides for a presentation of the LHS School Strategy to the Council by the Executive Dean for the School in SEN/16/42, noting that members of Senate were invited to submit any comments on, or questions arising from, the Strategy to the Executive Dean.

Schedule of Appointment of Academic and Academic-Related Staff

16/144 RECEIVED

The Schedule of Appointment of Academic and Academic-Related Staff in SEN/16/43.

Report from Report of the Director of Library and IT Services

16/145 The Senate received a report from the Director of Library and IT Services in SEN/16/44.

Report on Action taken on behalf of Senate by the Chair and Vice-Chair

16/146 RESOLVED:

- i) To ratify the action taken on behalf of Senate by the Provost as set out in SEN/16/45.
- ii) To approve a proposal that, in future, the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) should have delegated authority to approve on behalf of Senate:
 - the introduction of new taught programmes of study and programme modification and withdrawal;
 - the University admissions policy for taught programmes;
 - the policies for Monitoring and Review of taught programmes;
 - the policies for Periodic Review of taught programmes;
 - the academic regulatory framework for taught students;
 - the policy for collaborative activity.

LTC would make an annual report to Senate on these approvals and Senate would periodically review the effectiveness of the processes involved.

Honorary Degree Nominations

16/147 RESOLVED:

To approve the nominations for the award of honorary degrees at this year's degree ceremonies as recommended by the Awards and Honours Advisory Committee as set out in SEN/16/46.

16/148 NOTED:

That members of Senate were invited by the Vice-Chancellor to submit nominations for future awards of honorary degrees, having regard to the need to ensure that the list of candidates should reflect the diversity of the University's constituency and society more generally, for consideration by the Awards and Honours Advisory Committee.

ACTION: Secretary to circulate the criteria for the award of honorary degrees to members of Senate

UNIVERSITY STRATEGY

Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive's Report

16/149 RECEIVED:

Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive's Report in SEN/16/47, which summarised progress being made with high-level institutional strategic objectives, as well as current University news for the information of members of Senate and Council. The Vice-Chancellor had set out some short term priorities, as well as some initial observations on Aston's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats.

16/150 NOTED:

That Senate members were invited to submit comments or queries to the Vice-Chancellor on any matters arising from his report.

University Objectives for 2016/17

16/151 RECEIVED:

SEN/16/47 and an oral report from the Vice-Chancellor on the University's draft objectives and priorities for 2016/17 which had been endorsed by the Executive at the Senior Management Strategic Retreat 2016 and discussed by the Council.

16/152 NOTED:

- That the "PhD students" target should actually read "Doctoral students" and that the target for commercial income streams should be broadened from "spin outs" (eg to include "start-ups" and "spin ins").
- That consideration was being given as to whether the University had appropriate skills, infrastructure and resources to meet the challenging employability targets.

ACTION: Provost to revise the University Objectives prior to presentation to Council and to the next Senate meeting

Keypath Education Collaboration

16/153 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/16/41 and oral reports from the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive and the Provost, setting out the background and rationale for an initiative, now approved by the Executive and Council, that would enable the University to work in partnership with Keypath Education UK Limited in order to raise significantly the number of overseas students studying on distance learning postgraduate programmes.

Keypath would undertake market analysis and marketing, recruitment and admission of students; develop all the online learning materials from content provided by the University; and provide online support after recruitment. In return Keypath would take a percentage of fee income, which had been negotiated in respect of each programme delivered through the partnership arrangements and set out in a separate agreement that would be signed in respect of each programme.

The reasons for wishing to enter this partnership were summarised as follows:

- to develop a significant portfolio of online postgraduate courses to extend access to the growing market of students who were seeking online degrees;
- to provide opportunities to grow materially and to diversify Aston's student activity and revenue;
- to collaborate with a partner who had expertise in online marketing and recruitment, and online programme delivery and support; and
- to enhance operational efficiency in all areas of activity.

The duration of the proposed partnership had recently been agreed to be for five years in the first instance.

16/154 NOTED:

- That members of Senate emphasised the importance of ensuring that Masters' programmes retain their accreditation by professional, statutory and regulatory bodies (PRSB) and were reassured that this would not be put at risk through the partnership with Keypath.
- That the Keypath partnership would seek to provide an on-line presence that reflected Aston's distinctive offering and approach.

- That consideration should be given to appropriate staff development to support on-line delivery through training for existing staff and where necessary recruitment of new staff.

ACTION: LTC to consider staff development needs to support on-line delivery of programmes

Issues raised by Student Representatives and the Students' Union Senate

16/155 RECEIVED:

A report from the Students' Union in paper SEN/16/50, together with an oral report from the Vice-President Education, highlighting progress in improving the systems and processes for course representation and engagement of students, including a new training plan agreed by the Student Representation Group and the Students' Union.

Library and Study Space

16/156 RECEIVED:

A report from the President of the Students' Union that students had expressed concern at the pressure on study space, particularly in the Library where on several occasions recently there had been insufficient seating to accommodate all the students who wished to study. This pressure on study space had occurred outside of the peak examination revision periods, and there was an urgent need to identify additional study space in time for revision in preparation for the January examination period. The Director of Library and IT Services reported that active consideration was being given to these issues, including the identification of additional study space and extending Library opening hours.

ACTION: Provost and Director of Library and IT Services to liaise with Students' Union Officers to consider the options for provision of additional study space and to make proposals thereon to the Executive Operations Group.

Finance and Planning Issues

16/157 RECEIVED:

Oral reports from the Provost and the Chief Financial Officer on finance and planning issues, noting:

- The University had recently successfully submitted to HESA the annual returns for students and for staff which were important *inter alia* because they informed the preparation of University leagues tables. Members of the academic staff had improved the accuracy of the staff return by ensuring that all of their qualifications were properly recorded, which would help Aston to maintain its high rating for teaching qualifications, an important element of the TEF.
- The final outturn for 2015/16 indicated that the University had achieved an operating surplus of £6.3 million which compared favourably to the originally budgeted surplus of £4.0 million. Tuition fee income exceeded the original budget by £1.8 million which represented a significant achievement in terms of student recruitment and allowed the Executive to agree further in-year academic investment within Schools. Cash balances exceeded budget due to slippage against the capital programme.

University Prevent Statutory Duty

16/158 RECEIVED:

An oral report from Professor Simon Green, Executive Lead for Prevent, on progress with the University's response to its statutory Prevent duty under the Government's strategy on counter-radicalisation. 1385 staff had so far completed Prevent training. The University Freedom of Expression and Events Policy had been implemented and an on-line events registration system was to be implemented early in the 2017 calendar year. A first draft had been prepared of the Annual Prevent Duty Report for approval by Council at its next meeting prior to submission to HEFCE.

16/159 NOTED:

That the Vice-Chancellor thanked the high proportion of Aston's staff who undertaken the Prevent training, which demonstrated that the University took its duty in this regard very seriously.

UNIVERSITY STRATEGY THEMES

16/160 RECEIVED:

An oral report from the Vice-Chancellor that in line with the new operating methodology agreed by the Senate, the membership would next split into four breakout groups to discuss the following strategic themes:

- i) 'Senate takes the Aston Learning & Teaching Strategy Two Page Challenge' as set out in SEN/16/51 and led by Dr Sarah Hayes, Senior Lecturer in Technology Enhanced and Flexible Learning;
- ii) Annual Review of Taught Programmes as set out in SEN/16/52 and led by Sarah Davies, Head of Quality;
- iii) 'How can we use the HEIF 5-Year Knowledge Exchange (KE) Strategy as an accelerator for the growth of Aston's KE activities and impact?' as set out in SEN/16/53 and led by John Richards, Funding and Industry Partner; and
- iv) Development of Senate KPIs as set out in SEN/16/54 and led by David Farrow, Executive Director of Marketing Strategy and Communication

At the end of the breakout discussions the four groups made the following reports to the reconvened Senate:

'Senate takes the Aston Learning & Teaching Strategy Two Page Challenge'

16/160 NOTED:

In this breakout session colleagues were grouped under key Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) metrics: Teaching Quality, Learning Environment, and Student Outcomes and Learning Gain. Via a lively discussion, members highlighted which key statements should be retained or be omitted from Aston's current Learning and Teaching Strategy. They agreed that a more concise and accessible document (closely integrated with TEF metrics) would encourage people to read, respond to and engage with the Strategy.

Further consultations would now be coordinated by a newly-convened Learning and Teaching Strategy Review Working Group, chaired by Dr Hayes and with representatives from all Schools and relevant professional support departments. This Group would meet on 16th November to integrate the Senate Breakout Group's responses into a model to be presented at four University-wide consultations to be held over the next three weeks. Feedback from each 2-hour consultation event would be

incorporated progressively. A Strategy Review Consultation web page would be released in the next week. IPad-based surveys would be made available for students to complete in the Foyer and give them the opportunity to complete Aston's Digital Experience Tracker Survey which would inform the development of Aston's Digital Learning Strategy.

These activities, and others being overseen by the Learning Technologies Management Committee, such as the soon-to-be-released Aston Teaching and Learning Community web pages for sharing of effective practice, would underpin the development of the revised Learning and Teaching Strategy. It was intended to offer the revised Strategy for scrutiny by a breakout group at the Senate meeting scheduled for 8th March 2017.

ACTION: Dr Sarah Hayes to co-ordinate the development of a revised Learning and Teaching Strategy for consideration at the next Senate meeting

Annual Review of Taught Programmes

16/161 NOTED:

On the basis of its consideration of extracts from the QAA's Higher Education Review Report (April 2015), the University's Monitoring and Review Procedures and a sample of the information and reports from the annual review of taught programmes for 2014/15, the Breakout Group concluded that Aston's processes for annual monitoring were thorough and effective. Monitoring and review took place at module, programme, School and University levels taking into consideration: a range of relevant metrics including progression, award and careers data; external examiners' reports and responses; PSRB reports (where applicable); module evaluation; and annual module reflection and feedback from students. Each School's Annual Monitoring Report contained an action plan and summaries of good practice. The LTC also produced a summary of the outcomes of Monitoring and Review; an action plan to address University-level issues identified by the Schools; and a summary of good practice identified by the Schools for enhancement purposes. The Breakout Group felt, however, that the University needed to do much more to celebrate, share and disseminate the outcomes and good practice identified through the Annual Monitoring and Review process both within and between Schools.

ACTION: Professor Robin Clark to convene a meeting of the Associate Deans Learning and Teaching to develop a strategy for the sharing and dissemination of the outcomes of, and good practice identified in, Annual Monitoring and Review.

How can we use the HEIF 5-Year Knowledge Exchange (KE) Strategy as an accelerator for the growth of Aston's KE activities and impact?

16/162 NOTED:

That, as background to its discussion, the Breakout Group received the University's Higher Education Innovation Funding: Institutional Five-Year KE Strategy, which had been submitted to HEFCE (SEN/16/53.2) on 27th October 2017. The Group focussed on two themes: i) "How do we continue to grow our collaborative research and exploitation projects with companies and public sector organisations to support all forms of innovation?"; and ii) "How do we enhance and fully exploit the strategic partnerships and collaborations with businesses created by our newly created Business Front Door Strategy, which incorporates our Account Management activities, in order to increase the effectiveness and impact of our KE activities?".

The Group noted that Aston was building from a strong base in terms of collaborative research and development, but agreed that more could be done within particular Groups and Schools. There was a strong feeling that more should be done to celebrate and share examples of best practice across the institution. The Group felt that Aston's website could be improved to help external contacts to navigate their way to the

information they need. Colleagues also felt that there were significant opportunities to streamline the University's ethics process perhaps alongside the ongoing review of Aston's clinical trials process.

In terms of strategic partnerships, the Group noted that there were a number of examples of good existing best practice (including the relationships with BMW, GE and CapGemini) which should inform the processes for the development of new partnerships. The Group strongly supported the Account Management approach in principle but felt that the model and potential benefits could be better promoted across the institution so as to communicate the added value it was bringing to these relationships in a more effective manner. Colleagues endorsed the need for the planned review of the effectiveness of training and incentives for Account Managers.

ACTION: Professor Paul Maropoulos and John Richards to work with the REO and Schools in taking the recommendations from the Breakout Group forward.

Development of Senate KPIs

16/163 NOTED:

The Breakout Group considered which of the University KPIs should be the responsibility of Senate or to which the Senate should contribute, and also whether it might be appropriate to develop KPIs to ensure the operational effectiveness of Senate (Senate KPIs).

The Group felt that a narrative description of Senate was required to frame how it functioned as the University's principal academic body responsible for the oversight of the quality of teaching and research and primary advisor on these issues to Council.

The Group felt that it would be useful to start with the government defined outcome measures of TEF and REF as an opportunity for Senate to identify the interaction and conflict between them and how they map on to or incorporate University KPIs.

Moving forward the Senate would need to draft a narrative describing its role and functions, and to agree which of the 40 University KPIs could be mapped to two overarching Senate TEF and REF KPIs. The process for achieving this needed further discussion and deliberation, and perhaps would be appropriate topic for an away-day or sub-committee. Central to this discussion would be to ensure that Senate adds value to existing processes (and KPIs) in the university rather than simply serving as a body that is primarily part of a communication cascade.

ACTION: Vice-Chancellor, Provost and Secretary to prepare a draft narrative for the Senate for discussion by a breakout group at the next Senate meeting.

WHAT COULD WORK BETTER?

Non-Smoking Campus

16/164 RECEIVED:

A request from a member of Senate that further consideration be given to the implementation of a non-smoking campus policy as this could help to improve the health of Aston's staff, students and visitors, and could also make the campus look cleaner. If this was not feasible, it was suggested that a review should be undertaken as to how the current rule of no smoking within 5 metres of a building could be better enforced. Students from Pharmacy and Health Psychology could provide assistance to members of the University seeking to stop smoking.

ACTION: Dr Frank Eperjesi to prepare a case for strengthening the non-smoking policy, including effective enforcement or identification of designated smoking areas, for reconsideration by the Executive Operations Group

OTHER BUSINESS

Matters Raised by the Academic Assembly

16/165 RECEIVED:

A report that the Academic Assembly had recently expressed concern in relation to the following matters:

- i) The effectiveness of attendance monitoring across the University and its possible impact on student retention;
- ii) High Student/Staff Ratios; and
- iii) Constraints on teaching space, particularly in ABS where overcapacity had resulted in students being required to sit on the floor.

ACTION: Provost to meet with Dr Jane Andrews, Chair of Academic Assembly, to discuss the resolution of these matters as a matter of urgency.

REVIEW OF THE 337TH SENATE MEETING

16/166 NOTED:

That members had valued the opportunity to break into small groups to discuss some strategic themes in more depth and agreed that this approach should be continued in future.

DATES OF SENATE MEETINGS IN 2016/17

16/167 NOTED:

That Senate would meet next year at 2:00 pm on the following Wednesdays: 8th March and 31st May 2017. The Joint Council-Senate Strategy Away-Day would be held on Wednesday, 3rd May 2017 (from 12:30 to 6:00 pm, followed by dinner) and the Senate Strategy Away Half-Day on Wednesday, 10th May 2017 (from 12:30 to 5:00 pm).

JGW/14.11.16