

THE SENATE

Minutes of the 340th meeting of the Senate, held on Wednesday, 22nd November 2017

PRESENT:	Professor Alec Cameron (Chair) Professor Sahar Al-Malaika Rabia Ahmed Amna Atteeq Dr Michael Butler Alan Charters Professor Simon Green Saskia Loer Hansen Professor Christos Ioannidis Dr Fiona Lacey Professor Paul Maropoulos Dr Shehzad Naroo Professor Helen Pattison Tristan Ripke Professor Corinne Spickett Dr Eirini Theodosiou	Professor Asif Ahmed Dr Shakil Ahmad Professor Frank Austermühl Karen Caine Professor Leon Davies Professor Sarah Hainsworth Professor Helen Higson Dr Anne Jenichen Alison Levey Dr Ryan Murphy Reema Quessou Professor Gertrud Reershemius Neil Scott Professor Edward Sweeney Jenny Thompson
APOLOGIES:	Dr Jane Andrews Dr Philip Davies Professor Frank Eperjesi Professor Chris Hewitt Professor Julia Kotlarsky Dr Carol Marley Professor Paul Topham Dr Keqing Wang Dr Sylvia Wong	Alice Coombes Professor George Feiger Dr Doina Gherghel Dr Sarah Junaid Professor Chris Langley Professor Ute Stephan Professor Jonathan Tritter Professor James Wolffsohn Dr Uwe Wunderlich
IN ATTENDANCE:	Alison Birch (for M17/52) Mark Smith	David Farrow John Walter (Secretary)

FOR REPORT AND APPROVAL

Welcome

17/1 RESOLVED:

To welcome the following new Senate members:

- Saskia Loer Hansen (PVC International),
- Professor Sarah Hainsworth (PVC and Executive Dean, Engineering and Applied Science),
- Reema Quessou (President of the Students' Union),
- Amna Atteeq (Vice-President Education),
- Alice Coombes (Vice-President Welfare) and
- Tristan Ripke (Undergraduate Student),

and Mark Smith, Executive Director of Business Engagement, who would be attending meetings.

Constitutional Matters

17/2 RECEIVED:

Paper SEN-17-0704-A containing a report on constitutional matters.

Senate Membership 2016/17

17/3 RECEIVED:

- i) Paper SEN-17-0703-A, a list of the Senate Membership for 2016/17.
- ii) A report that Dr Jane Andrews has decided to step down as Chair of the Academic Assembly and as a member of Senate. There were currently two vacancies for Academic Assembly representatives on Senate which the Assembly has been asked to fill.
- iii) A report that the Senate membership currently comprised 45% women and 23% colleagues from black and Asian minority ethnic backgrounds.

17/4 RESOLVED:

To thank Dr Jane Andrews for her excellent contribution to the Academic Assembly and the Senate.

Ordinances relating to the Appointment of the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellors

17/5 RESOLVED:

To recommend to Council that the Ordinances relating to the appointment of Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellors be amended in order better to reflect current practice, as set out in paper SEN-17-0705-A.

Disciplinary Board 2017/18

17/6 RESOLVED:

To approve the nomination and appointment of the Chair and Alternative Chair of the Disciplinary Board for the current academic year, and the nomination of Senate nominees and the appointment of Academic Assembly nominees to the Board, for two years until July 2019 as set out in paper SEN-17-0724-A.

Minutes

17/7 RESOLVED:

To approve the minutes of the 339th meeting of the Senate, held on Wednesday, 31st May 2017.

Matters Arising

17/8 RECEIVED:

Paper SEN-17-0707-A, a summary of actions taken in response to matters arising from the previous meeting and oral reports on the following items:

Proposed amendment to the Ordinance 5.3: The Award of Degrees, Diplomas, and Certificates (M16/234)

17/9 NOTED:

That Council (14.7.17) had ratified the action of the Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council, in approving on behalf of Council and on recommendation from the Senate, the addition of the Master of Physics (MPhys) to the list of to the list of University Integrated Masters Degrees in Ordinance 5.3.3.7.

Impact Strategy (M16/238)

17/10 NOTED:

The Research Impact Strategy had been circulated to Senate members.

Periodic Review of Taught and Research Programmes – Sharing Good Practice (M16/254)

17/11 NOTED:

That CLIPP had organised a Sharing Conference on 25th October, designed to showcase good practice from across the institution and bring staff up-to-date with some exciting new developments.

How can we enhance the Aston Research Environment? (M16/255)

17/12 NOTED:

That the Senate's feedback on how the Aston Research Environment could be enhanced would inform Aston's future REF Strategy.

Students' Union Strategy (M16/256)

17/13 NOTED:

That Council (14.6.17) had endorsed the SU Strategic Framework and thanked the SU officers for their efforts in preparing it.

Key Performance Indicators (KPI) (M16/257)

17/14 NOTED:

That the Executive (27.6.17) had endorsed ten Mission Critical KPIs, and in particular two newly agreed KPIs for research: i) Research and Knowledge Exchange income; and ii) PhD and Professional Doctoral candidates enrolments. The KPIs would need to be reviewed in the light of the new University Strategy.

Student Participation in Senate Meetings (M16/258)

17/15 NOTED:

That the University and the Students' Union were working together in partnership to ensure that student views were represented and that they informed the activities of the institution. The

“Student Voice” initiative was being used to ensure that the student voice was heard at all levels within the organisation and that student representation structures worked effectively.

Processing of Payments (M16/258)

17/16 NOTED:

That the Chief Financial Officer had ensured that colleagues across the University were made aware of the actions taken to address some temporary staffing issues impacting on the speed of processing of some payments.

Communications about Scholarly Activities and Events Organised at a Local Level (M16/258)

17/17 NOTED:

Focus groups had been held with staff to identify ways in which communication channels could be improved. The Intranet was being relaunched and communications channels such as Aspects were being enhanced.

Council

17/18 RECEIVED:

The minutes of the Council meetings of 14th June and 11th October 2017.

International Strategy Committee

17/19 RECEIVED:

The minutes of the International Strategy Committee meeting of 7th November 2017.

Learning and Teaching Committee

17/20 RECEIVED:

The minutes of the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) meetings of 27th June and 7th November 2017, together with a report from LTC and its sub-committees to the Senate in paper SEN-17-0709-A.

Proposed amendment to the Terms of Reference of the LTC and Delegation of Authority to its Sub-Committees

17/21 RESOLVED:

To approve a recommendation from LTC that the following areas where LTC had delegated authority from the Senate to approve policy, be delegated further to the Programme Approval Steering Committee and the Collaborative Provision Strategy Group respectively:

- the introduction of new taught programmes of study and programme; modification and withdrawal;
- the policy for collaborative activity;

and that responsibility for the University admissions policy for taught programmes be delegated to the Undergraduate and Postgraduate Admissions Forum. These amendments were proposed

to facilitate decision-making where there was the greatest expertise and to enable decisions to be made without unnecessary delay.

Annual Report of the Senate to Council on Academic Governance 2016/17

17/22 NOTED:

That the draft Annual Report of the Senate to Council on Academic Governance 2016/17 had been discussed and endorsed by LTC (also refer to Minute 17/51).

New Programmes, Modifications and Withdrawals

17/23 RECEIVED:

A list of the new programmes, modifications and withdrawal of programmes approved by the Learning and Teaching Committee under delegated authority from the Senate in the period 24th April to 16th October 2017.

Approval of Academic Policies and Regulations

17/24 NOTED:

That the Learning and Teaching Committee had approved the following policies and regulations under delegated authority:

- Policy around curriculum change for 2018 and 2019 entry
- Monitoring and Review policy for 2017-18: AU-LTC-17-0612-A
- Periodic Review policy for 2017-18: AU-LTC-16-0442-A (1)
- Academic Regulations for 2017-18
- Admissions policy for the Medical School.

Research Committee

17/25 RECEIVED:

The minutes of the Research Committee (RC) meeting of 17th October 2017.

Revised Terms of Reference for the Research Committee

17/26 RESOLVED:

To approve the revised terms of reference for the Research Committee set out in Paper SEN-17-0709-A.

PRES Task Group

17/27 NOTED:

That the Chair of the Research Committee had asked the Dean of the Graduate School to form and Chair a Task Group to address the issues identified in PRES 2017 including; research environment, how best to develop research culture and research ethos, provide career advice to postgraduate students and ensure excellent postgraduate experience at Aston. The membership would include a member from each School and a student, as well as a member from Registry, RKE, Library, IT, Marketing, Careers and CLIPP (also refer to Minute 17/52).

Research Ethics and Compliance with Regulatory Body Requirements

17/28 NOTED:

That the Chair of the Research Committee had drawn up the terms of reference for an external review of Aston's structures and processes to support Health Research Authority requirements, Human Tissue Authority Licence compliance and University Research Ethics. Specifically, the review would consider the organisation, procedures and resources required to meet these obligations, given Aston's current and projected portfolios of activity. It would also consider the impact of taught courses (e.g. the MSc Scientists in Training Programme) that required students to seek HRA approval and the proposal that Aston established a Clinical Trials Unit (CTU). The review would be led by an external expert in this field, to provide best practice advice and expert insights. The University Executive had endorsed the terms of reference.

Schedule of Research Grants and Contracts

17/29 RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL:

That paper SEN-17-0710-A, being the Schedule of Research Grants and Contracts, be approved and that the following members of staff be congratulated on attracting substantial awards:

Dr P Lewis	ESIF / ERDF	1,141,868
Dr A Hine	European Commission	1,094,425
Dr C Murdoch, Prof A Ahmed	European Commission	966,912
Dr M Chernysheva	Royal Academy of Engineering	596,744
Dr J Du, Dr D Morris; Prof T Mickiewicz; Dr H Izushi; Prof C Ioannidis; Dr C Corradini; Dr A Delis	Lloyds Bank PLC	513,386
Dr A Watkins	BBSRC	506,484
Prof S Turitsyn, Dr Y Prylepskiy	European Commission	283,556
Dr H Ye	European Commission	280,671
Dr Y He, Prof D Lowe	Innovate UK - Technology Strategy Board	220,710
Dr A Bigdeli	ESRC	205,263
Dr L Rossi, Dr D Cornford; Dr M Chli	KTP / Rimilia	202,005
Dr K Zhou, Prof S Turitsyn	Innovate UK - Technology Strategy Board	196,936
Prof B Tighe	Johnson & Johnson Vision Care Inc.	161,692
Dr S Bellary	European Commission	145,545
Prof J Wolffsohn	Innovate UK - Technology Strategy Board	129,631
Dr S Bellary	European Commission	125,407
Dr A Matopoulos	European Commission	125,365
Dr C Buckingham	European Institute of Innovation & Technology	121,756
Prof T Bridgwater	EPSRC	114,808
Prof P Maropoulos	EPSRC	105,998
F Leyva	Mr Alan Fletcher	100,000

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

17/30 RESOLVED:

To ratify the action taken on behalf of Senate by the Provost as set out in Paper SEN-17-0711-A.

Report on Student Disciplinary and Fitness to Practise Matters

17/31 RESOLVED:

To approve a report on student disciplinary and fitness to practise matters in paper SEN-17-0722-A, noting that Aston's existing robust fitness to practice procedures would facilitate the operation of the new Aston Medical School.

Honorary Degree Nominations

17/32 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 paper SEN-17-0712-A.

17/33 NOTED:

That the Awards and Honours Advisory Committee was aware that, although this list of Honorary Graduands was more diverse than in previous years, further effort was needed to ensure that women and ethnic minorities were properly represented. Members of Senate were encouraged to assist this process by nominating candidates from a diversity of backgrounds.

Appointment of External Examiners

17/34 RESOLVED:

To approve the Annual Report on the appointment of External Examiners for Research Degrees (by institution) 2016/17 in paper SEN-17-0713-A.

Appointment of Emeritus Professors

17/35 RESOLVED:

To approve the appointment of Professor Jonathan M Gibson as an Emeritus Professor following his retirement from the University.

Action: Provost

UNIVERSITY STRATEGY

Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive's Report

17/36 RECEIVED:

Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive's Report in paper SEN-17-0714-A, 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.

17/37 NOTED:

- i) That the principal short term focus for future Aston-Cranfield collaboration would be on specific areas of joint activity and opportunity which were of benefit to both institutions, and in accord with the Aston's new strategy. In addition to the existing joint Transnational Education activity in Oman with the new University of Muscat, two new strategic

opportunities, in research and education, were currently being pursued jointly by the two institutions, namely:

- The opportunity to make a joint submission to the 2021 Research Excellence Framework, either in some disciplines or cross-institutionally; and
 - The opportunity to develop new courses, including new course structures, curriculum and pedagogy, for a new University in Milton Keynes, funded by a joint HEFCE Catalyst bid.
- ii) That the University would shortly be submitting a bid for funded medical places to commence in 2019/20 to the recent HEFCE/HEE invitation to bid for 1,000 new funded medical places.

University Strategy Review

17/38 RECEIVED:

- i) Paper SEN-17-0715-A being a summary of recommendations from the Senate Strategy Session Summary held on 18th October 2017.
- ii) Paper SEN-17-0726-A being the draft University Strategy which had been revised in the light of feedback from the Senate and the consultation exercise held with Schools, professional support departments and students.

17/39 NOTED:

- That the Strategy proposed that Aston, as a medium-sized university, needed to focus further on its areas of strength. Aspiring to be the 'UK's leading university for business and the professions' continued to represent the identified path for Aston. However, change and an uncertain external environment demanded that Aston express and enact its strategic direction in a more focused manner.
- That the Strategy was structured around Aston's three main groups of beneficiaries: (students; business and the professions; and its region and society). It was predicated on the assumption that the teaching, research and other activities of the University should be directed towards the benefit of those giving Aston its licence to operate (and its financial sustainability).
- That while the Strategy was drafted on the basis of a five-year time horizon, given significant uncertainty politically and economically, regular reviews would be prudent. The proposed strategy was designed to be implementable, financially sound, and to meet all relevant legislation and standards.
- That the draft Strategy would be presented to the next meeting of Council (28.11.17) for approval. A full communications and implementation plan would be put in place once the strategy had been approved.
- That the student representatives suggested that the students of the University should be invited to play a proactive role in shaping the implementation of the new Strategy. They recommended that students should be given the opportunity to benefit the community and society (eg through clinical placements or IT project work for local businesses and organisations) which would also help them personally to develop valuable social and professional skills. The Students' Union and the University has already agreed to work more closely in partnership in the provision of services for students.

University Objectives for 2017/18

17/40 RECEIVED:

Paper SEN-17-0716-A and an oral report from the Vice-Chancellor on the University's draft objectives and priorities for 2017/18 which had been endorsed by the Executive at the Senior Management Strategic Retreat 2017 and discussed by the Council.

17/41 NOTED:

- The draft objectives would be revised to include a more specific target for the objective to: "establish and implement Business Front Door, develop strategic Account Management process and test with **an initial group of 10 target organisations**".
- That relevant Schools and support departments had been requested to develop action plans and strategies to achieve the objectives and targets.

Issues raised by Student Representatives and the Students' Union Senate

17/42 RECEIVED:

A report from the SU in paper SEN-17-0717-A, together with oral reports from the President and Vice-President Education (VPE).

17/43 NOTED:

- That the SU had been trying new approaches to engage its members, including an effective Union "Chit Chat" event for students to find out about and comment on the work of the officer team in an informal setting.
- That the SU had been supporting the academic interests of students. For example, the VPE had been asked to explore the implications of removing the facility for international students to use dictionaries during examinations for translation purposes. The key reason for this being that international students on Tier 4 visas should already have an appropriate level of English. Following a small survey to gauge the view of international students and to provide this data to Academic Services, it had been agreed that English dictionaries would be available for all students during examinations. A number of other peer universities also made this provision available.
- That the SU was supporting a proposal that students should not have to meet the cost of printing their final project dissertations which would also help Aston's sustainability agenda. The Provost and the VPE had discussed the possibility of removing the requirement to print dissertations and the Schools were being consulted.
- That the SU was supporting a Buddy Scheme for international students in order to promote a sense of belonging in the Aston student community and potentially to aid the retention of these students. Such a mentoring scheme would involve connecting international students with home students to support them settling in at Aston. Senate members suggested that the home students would also benefit considerably from engaging with students from other countries and cultures, and this could be used to promote the benefits to both parties in the buddy relationship.
- That the Learning and Teaching Committee had endorsed a proposal from the Union to ensure that best practice in relation to Group Work was shared and made consistent across the University. This would ensure that students on all courses understood what was expected and how they could raise concerns if they feel members of the team were not contributing equally.
- That the Advice and Representation Centre (ARC) was the highest rated service in the Aston community in the student satisfaction survey 2016/17.

- That the SU had established a new Student Voice department and had recruited a Student Voice Manager (Lewis Lay) and a Student Voice Coordinator (Edward Robinson).

Amendment of Statutes & Ordinances Related to the Academic Staff

17/44 RECEIVED:

Paper SEN-17-0706-A and an oral report from the Chief of Operations and Estates on proposals to amend the Statutes and Ordinances relating to the Academic Staff. The paper detailed the rationale and indicative timescales for the proposed changes and included the draft new Statute and Ordinances. The paper constituted the formal requirement to consult Senate about proposed changes to Statutes, Ordinances and conditions of service of the Academic Staff, and the suggested timescales would provide Senate the opportunity to take account of feedback from the Academic Assembly (who had received the same papers); consult on this topic and to make recommendations to Council. It was suggested that Senate should form a Sub-Group which could report to a Council Sub-Group by 9th March 2018.

17/45 NOTED:

- That in consideration of the view that equitable treatment of staff was important, the proposed changes were intended to apply to all staff of the University, giving consistency of approach whilst retaining the right to Academic Freedom and an independent presence on dismissal appeal panels for Academic Staff. Whilst the proposed procedures may have changed, the University maintained that the proposed changes were of no detriment to Academic Staff, with provision largely having been moved from Statutes to Ordinances.
- That it was intended to consult members of the professional support staff concerning the changes.

17/46 RESOLVED:

- i) That the Provost and Secretary should agree the membership of a Senate Sub-Group to review and comment on the proposed changes and to seek and take account of feedback from members of the Academic Staff and the professional support staff. The Sub-Group should be representative of all Schools, academic and support staff.
- ii) That members of the Senate who wished to volunteer for membership of the Senate Sub-Group should inform the Secretary by Monday, 4th December 2017.
- iii) That the Chief of Operations and Estates and the Director of HR and Organisational Development should hold Town Hall meetings to explain the implications of the proposals to staff.

ACTION: Provost and Secretary

Finance and Planning Issues

17/47 RECEIVED:

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

- That the recently submitted HESA Staff and Student returns for 2016/17 should result in an SSR of 20:1 (an improvement of 0.8) which would not make a significant impact on the next set of league tables. Although additional teaching and research staff appointments had been made last year, these had been matched by Aston's success with growth in student numbers.
- That the latest TEF metrics demonstrated that Aston would retain Gold, despite a small drop off in performance in some metrics. The University had not been successful in its bid

to take part in the TEF subject-level pilot to take place from autumn 2017 to spring 2018. It appeared that the introduction of a postgraduate TEF would be deferred for a few years.

- That the 2016/17 financial outturn demonstrated Aston's growing financial strength, with total income rising by 8.0% to £162.4m in an increasingly competitive market. Key drivers of growth included an increasing student population due to successful recruitment, increased research grant capture and improved commercial income streams. Costs increased by 2.4% to £148.8m. The operating surplus before taxation was £13.6m (8.4% of income), an improvement of £8.9m over the prior year. The University was committed to improving its financial performance and surplus in order to invest in its people and estate in order to deliver exceptional teaching and research.
- This year's student recruitment period was one of the most competitive ever and Aston had not been able to meet its challenging stretch recruitment targets. As at 31st October 2017 students (intake and returners) to the value of £104.4m had been enrolled, £2.4m lower than the budget income target. This was largely explained by lower Home/EU undergraduate numbers than planned, primarily in LSS, and under-recruitment of Home/EU Postgraduate students in all areas, but particularly in ABS owing to the higher targets set there. Savings on scholarships and additional opportunities had been identified to offset this and it was anticipated that the planned budget surplus of £7.8m would be achieved.

University Prevent Statutory Duty

17/48 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. 96% of staff had so far completed Prevent training, which was exemplary for the HE sector. At its next meeting (28.11.17), the Council would be asked to approve the University Prevent Duty Annual Report which summarised actions relating to the University's Prevent duty, including a review and refreshment of the University's Prevent risk assessment and an updated action plan addressing any issues identified. The Chair of Council would then be invited to sign off the Prevent return to HEFCE confirming Aston's compliance with the Prevent duty.

17/49 NOTED:

That members queried whether the University's Prevent duty was extended to students following transnational programmes outside the UK and EU. It was clarified that the Prevent duty extended to students enrolled with Aston University. It would therefore be prudent to engage with international partners over the need to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism and where appropriate to consider the provision Prevent training for staff involved in teaching students overseas.

UNIVERSITY STRATEGY THEMES

17/50 RECEIVED:

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

- i) Quality Assurance and Academic Standards: to consider a draft Senate Annual Report to Council (SEN-17-0718-A) and led by the Provost.
- ii) Research and Enterprise: to consider the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2017 Outcomes and Action Plans (SEN-17-0719-A) and led by the Dean and Manager of the Aston Graduate School.

- iii) International Strategy: “How to Win and Where to Play” (SEN-17-0720-A) and led by the PVC International.

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

Senate Annual Report to Council

17/51 NOTED:

That the draft Senate Annual Report to Council was intended to provide a comprehensive summary of all aspects of quality assurance and enhancement processes, giving details of strengths and weaknesses and how the University was addressing them. The Breakout Group, which included representation from the Executive, academics, professional staff and students, was pleased to recommend that the Council sign off this annual assurance. They based their decision on the comprehensive nature of the report and the work that had been undertaken behind it. They were pleased to see significant external evidence to back up assertions, as well as data driven evidence of impact, and challenging action plans for the coming year to ensure further continuous improvement. They saw clear evidence of a focus which put students clearly at the centre of all that was being done.

The Breakout Group also made some useful recommendations for next year’s report. These include diagrams to map processes and procedures, flagging more clearly the importance of the University’s widening participation activity, bringing out more strongly the systematic work being done in Schools to help students as individuals and to maximise retention. It was agreed that next year we should also feature the work we are undertaking on learner analytics to help maximise individual student outcomes, and the initiative being started to review the Exceptional Circumstances system.

ACTION: Provost and the Director of Quality and Enhancement, to take forward the above suggestions for enhancing the effectiveness of academic governance, quality assurance and enhancement of academic standards. Senate’s Annual Report to be presented to Council

Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2017 Outcomes and Action Plans

17/52 NOTED:

That the Breakout Group considered that research environment and research culture were critical for the success of an academic unit. It was recognised that the challenge was to define the elements that comprised research culture and research environment and how Aston could ensure that it provided this vital creative condition for staff and students. It was unanimously agreed that it was about the community of researchers, not the individual, but that work pressure often led to individuals sacrificing contributions to the community in order to meet expectations and deadlines (eg for grants, publications, teaching excellence, etc). It was agreed that students were an important part of a successful research culture and the University needed to identify ways to ensure that they felt part of a community of researchers. This was particularly relevant for the non-laboratory based disciplines where PRES results indicated a level of isolation amongst some students.

ACTION: Professor Reershemius and Alison Birch to ensure that the feedback from the Senate Breakout Group feeds into the work of the PRES Task Group

International Strategy: “How to Win and Where to Play”

17/53 NOTED:

The Breakout Group discussion focussed on five key areas: what do we mean by “market led”; the benefits of having international students on campus; support of staff to promote internationalisation at all levels; internal barriers or work practices, and identifying success stories. The following key messages were noted:

- In terms of the geographical market, does Aston have the necessary expertise and market information ? Would there be different geographical “markets” for different activities (recruitment, TNE, research etc.)? Aston should not attempt to enter markets where there would be no long term return. The limited resources to support this work should be shared, to ensure they are used to maximum effect.
- Does Aston have the right expertise, course portfolio and research focus to meet its perceived “markets” needs? Markets should be identified that would benefit from Aston’s strengths and focus. Identifying the right partners in the right markets might be critical to quality delivery of programmes, recruitment and research. The importance of research connections in bringing international opportunities were discussed.
- Barriers to success included: staff capacity, need for more support “from the centre”, and not “wasting time” on unsuccessful initiatives. Balance of agility and quality was felt to be key: reputation for quality in UK education was essential; Aston’s relative ranking could be a barrier and highly ranked institutional partners might help to counter this.
- Facilitators for success included: quality processes supporting developments, mentoring staff in Schools, involvement of the Students’ Union in supporting internationalisation of the student body at Aston, and identifying and sharing good practice.

ACTION: PVC International to ensure that the feedback from the Senate Breakout Group informs the new International Strategy

WHAT COULD WORK BETTER?

17/54 RECEIVED:

Paper SEN-17-0721-A which raised the following issues raised by a Senate member:

- *“There are major inconsistencies across the University: not everyone seems to be aware that the University has a ‘central pot’ for maternity leave cover and it could also address the inconsistencies that exist, in particular poor practice from some managers”*. The Provost reported that the policy to provide University funding for temporary cover for staff on maternity was launched in February 2017. The policy was currently displayed on the intranet. Since the launch, HR Business Partners has been bringing the policy to the attention of all line managers who had staff about to go on maternity leave. The Chief of Operations and Estates had also briefed the School Managers. It was felt that this targeted approach was a more effective means of raising awareness of line managers than a broader communication across the whole organisation.
- *“With the increase in the numbers of academic and students being recruited to the University, I think that there is a need to look at how support staff are expected to cope with this”*. The Provost reported that University recognised the important contribution that professional support staff played in delivering Aston’s Strategy. The University needed to ensure that it operated effectively and efficiently, and to this end had employed Paul John, as Director of Quality and Process Improvement, who would be leading a series of process reviews to assist staff in redesigning processes, to reduce wasteful activity, to operate more efficiently and to enhance the quality of services provided. This would involve investment in new technology to underpin University operations (reporting, records, communications, and information sharing). The aim of these reviews was not focused on reducing the number of staff.

17/55 RECEIVED:

A report from Senate members that some of the arrangements for recent Open Days had been sub-optimal which had frustrated the staff involved in their efforts to showcase the University in the best possible light, and that there was an urgent need to address these issues. The Provost reported that these issues had been raised at a recent meeting of the Executive Operations Group (EOG). EOG had agreed that it was necessary to invest more in Open Days and agreed proposed additional expenditure. More importantly it was agreed that essential work needed to be done on changing culture and engagement of staff with regard to Open Days (and other outward facing events, such as graduation and clearing/enrolment). A working group would be formed to help action this.

DATES OF SENATE MEETINGS IN 2017/18

16/56 NOTED:

Senate would meet at 2:00 pm on the following Wednesdays, 14th March and 30th May 2018. The Senate Strategy Away Day would be held on from 12:30 to 5:00 pm on Wednesday, 18th October 2017 and the Joint Council-Senate Strategy Away-Day from 12:30 to 6:00 pm on Wednesday, 2nd May 2018, followed by dinner.

16/57 RESOLVED:

That Outlook diary invites be sent to Senate members for the above meetings.

JGW/27.11.17