

THE SENATE

Minutes of the 341st meeting of the Senate, held on Wednesday, 14th March 2018

PRESENT:	Professor Alec Cameron (Chair) Professor Sahar Al-Malaika Rabia Ahmed Amna Atteeq Dr Michael Butler Alan Charters Professor Frank Eperjesi Professor Sarah Hainsworth Professor Helen Higson Dr Sarah Junaid Alison Levey Professor Helen Pattison Professor Corinne Spickett Dr Eirini Theodosiou Dr Keqing Wang Dr Sylvia Wong	Professor Asif Ahmed Dr Shakil Ahmad Professor Frank Austermühl Karen Caine Professor Leon Davies Professor George Feiger Professor Chris Hewitt Professor Christos Ioannidis Dr Fiona Lacey Dr Shehzad Naroo Tristan Ripke Professor Edward Sweeney Professor Jonathan Tritter Professor James Wolffsohn Dr Uwe Wunderlich
APOLOGIES:	Alice Coombes Dr Doina Gherghel Saskia Loer Hansen Professor Julia Kotlarsky Dr Carol Marley Reema Quessou Neil Scott Jenny Thompson	Dr Philip Davies Professor Simon Green Dr Anne Jenichen Professor Chris Langley Professor Paul Maropoulos Professor Gertrud Reershemius Professor Ute Stephan Professor Paul Topham
IN ATTENDANCE:	Sarah Davies (for M17/88) Louise Foster-Agg (for M17/87) Sally Puzey (for M17/89) John Walter (Secretary)	David Farrow Victoria Mee (for M17/87) Mark Smith

FOR REPORT AND APPROVAL

Welcome

17/58 RESOLVED:

To welcome the following new Senate members:

- Dr Mike Peters – newly elected Chair of the Academic Assembly
- Julia Shipley – postgraduate student representative.

Annual Schedule of Business for the Senate

17/59 RECEIVED:

Paper SEN-17-1060-A providing a proposed schedule of business for the Senate, which was designed to help ensure that Senate systematically covered the key areas of business for which

it was responsible and to meet any reporting deadlines. It also provided guidance and deadlines to colleagues responsible for preparing Senate papers.

17/60 RESOLVED:

To approve the proposed schedule of business for the Senate subject to the following changes:

- i) Replace “annual reports from key academic support areas” with “the reports of reviews of Student-facing Professional Services”.
- ii) Add “A report from the Academic Assembly Standing Committee” as a standing agenda item.
- iii) Add “consider any matters referred by the Council or the Executive” to possible ad hoc items.

Minutes

17/61 RESOLVED:

To approve the minutes of the 340th meeting of the Senate, held on Wednesday, 22nd November 2017.

Matters Arising

17/61 RECEIVED:

Paper SEN-17-1034-A, a summary of actions taken in response to matters arising from the previous meeting and oral reports on the following items:

Ordinances relating to the Appointment of the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellors (M17/5)

17/62 NOTED:

That Council (28.11.17) had approved a recommendation from the Senate that the Ordinances relating to the appointment of the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and Pro-Vice-Chancellors be revised in order better to reflect current practice, subject to the inclusion of the following revised phrase for the appointment of the Provost: “.....Appointments Panel established by the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive in consultation with the Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council”.

Amendment of Statutes and Ordinances Related to the Academic Staff (M17/46)

17/63 NOTED:

The Provost had nominated the following members to the Senate Sub-Group to review and comment on the proposed changes to the Statute and Ordinances and to seek and take account of feedback from members of the Academic Staff and the professional support staff: Professor Helen Higson (Chair), Dr Ryan Murphy (ABS), Dr Keqing Wang (AMS), Professor Sarah Hainsworth (EAS), Dr Uwe Wunderlich (LSS), Professor Chris Langley (LHS), Jenny Thompson (professional support staff representative) and John Walter (Director of Governance). Richard Billingham and Alan Charters were to present the proposals to the Sub-Group. However, work on the proposed changes to the Statute and Ordinances relating to the Academic Staff was currently in abeyance. The Sub-Group would be convened at a future date if and when appropriate.

University Prevent Statutory Duty (M17/48-49)

17/64 NOTED:

That Council (28.11.17) had endorsed the report on actions relating to the University's statutory Prevent duty taken in 2016/17 and the updated risk assessment and action plan. It had agreed that the Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council, acting on behalf of the Council, be authorised to sign an assurance statement confirming to HEFCE that the University had had due regard to the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism (the Prevent duty).

Senate Annual Report to Council (M17/55)

17/65 NOTED:

That Council (28.11.17) had endorsed the Senate's Annual Report to Council on Academic Governance and agreed that the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, as the Accountable Officer acting on behalf of the Council, be authorised to sign an assurance statement on academic quality required, as Part 2 of the Annual Accountability Return to HEFCE. The Senate Breakout Group's suggestions for enhancing the Annual Report to Council would be taken up and used in next year's report.

International Strategy: "How to Win and Where to Play" (M17/53)

17/66 NOTED:

That the International Strategy was being revised and updated in the light of the new University Strategy and the beneficiary statements and value propositions that were being developed for Aston's three main beneficiary groups. Senate would have the opportunity to comment on the revised International Strategy in due course.

Outlook Diary Invites for Senate Meetings (M17/57)

17/67 NOTED:

That outlook diary invites had been sent to Senate members.

Council

17/68 RECEIVED:

The minutes of the Council meetings of 28th November 2017 and 14th February 2018.

International Strategy Committee

17/69 RECEIVED:

The minutes of the International Strategy Committee meeting of 1st March 2018.

Learning and Teaching Committee

17/70 RECEIVED:

The minutes of the Learning and Teaching Committee (LTC) meeting of 27th February 2018.

Research Committee

17/71 RECEIVED:

The minutes of the Research Committee (RC) meeting of 23rd January 2018.

Schedule of Research Grants and Contracts

17/72 RESOLVED:

That paper SEN-17-1050-A, being the Schedule of Research Grants and Contracts, be approved and that the following members of staff be congratulated on attracting substantial awards:

Prof S Turitsyn; Dr S Sygelto; Dr S Sergeyev	European Commission	2,870,276
Prof N Doran; Prof A Ellis	EPSRC	717,568
Prof E Rafailov	EPSRC	553,410
Dr A Goddard	BBSRC	520,984
Prof T Bridgwater	European Commission	381,372
Prof L Davies	Carl Zeiss Vision UK Limited	375,804
Prof S Hainsworth	EPSRC	354,512
Dr J Yang; Dr L Lin; Dr C Serrano	Innovate UK - Technology Strategy Board	276,215
Dr Y He; Dr L Rossi; Dr X Jiang	KTP / Majestic 12 Ltd	254,245
Dr L Shapiro	Nuffield Foundation	240,521
Prof S Green	ESRC	226,632
Dr R Herzallah	The Leverhulme Trust	180,078
Prof S Al-Malaika	Aquapak Polymers Limited	140,000
Dr C Jones	The Leverhulme Trust	121,590
Prof B Tighe	Janssen Research & Development LLC	113,967
Prof S Turitsyn	The British Council	100,000

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

17/73 RESOLVED:

To ratify the action taken on behalf of Senate by the Provost as set out in Paper SEN-17-1049-A which included:

- i) Approval of the Appointment of a Senate Nominee on the Disciplinary Board
- ii) Approval of a recommendation to Council for the following minor change to Ordinance 5.3.3.3 containing the list of University First Degrees: from 'Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery/Chirurgery (MBChB)' to 'MBChB Bachelor of Medicine, Bachelor of Surgery'. The Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council had subsequently approved the change on behalf of the Council.
- iii) Appointment of a Member of a Council Tribunal.
- iv) Approval of a School Prize.

UNIVERSITY STRATEGY

Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive's Report

17/74 RECEIVED:

Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive's Report in paper SEN-17-10544-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.

University Strategy Review

17/75 RECEIVED:

- i) Paper SEN-17-10555-A, being a leaflet providing information for staff on the new University Strategy, which was to be circulated and published on the Aston website during the next week.
- ii) An oral report from the Vice-Chancellor that the Executive had recently endorsed proposed value propositions for Aston's three beneficiary groups (ie students; business and professions; and the region and society) and strategic objectives, target outcomes and KPIs. The Executive had also endorsed a Programme Management Plan setting out a proposed framework and timescales for the management and delivery of a portfolio of projects designed to implement Aston's strategy and deliver the target outcomes for Aston's three beneficiary groups.

17/76 NOTED:

- That the Academic Assembly Standing Committee had requested information on the anticipated timetable for completing the University Strategy. The Vice-Chancellor reported that the University Strategy had been approved by Council and it was hoped that the value proposition statements, target outcomes and KPIs for the three beneficiary groups would be agreed at the Council/Executive Away Day scheduled for 19-20 March. Work on the projects to deliver the Strategy was already underway, for example in relation to the student journey project which involved a comprehensive review of the student enquiry and admissions processes. A series of supporting strategy reviews would be undertaken, in areas such as learning and teaching; research; and international activity, to ensure that they were focussed on meeting the needs of beneficiaries.
- The Senate would receive regular progress updates on the Strategy implementation and would be invited to contribute to the review and development of the supporting strategies.

Academic Initiatives

17/77 RECEIVED:

An oral report from the Provost on the following academic initiatives:

Aston On-Line

17/78 NOTED:

The Aston On-Line initiative, in partnership with Keypath Education Ltd, now offered four on-line programmes which were helping to increase postgraduate and international student recruitment. Recruitment to the on-line MBA had been particularly encouraging. However, two on-line accounting programmes had not recruited successfully as they did not currently lead to professional body accredited status. This has resulted in revenue being £2.9 million lower than

plan, although costs had been reduced commensurately, so that the initiative should break even. The University had benefited considerably from the improvement of systems and processes to support the administration and delivery of on-line programmes, which was being extended to the benefit of students following traditional taught programmes. New programmes, including accredited accounting programmes, were in the advance stages of development.

Degree Apprenticeships

17/79 NOTED:

That Aston's Degree Apprenticeship programmes had proved to be very successful with a total of 344 apprentices currently enrolled, from 19 different employers on three programmes, with a plan to increase this to 740 next year via a range of new programmes for a broader range of employers, including: Chartered Manager (Level 6); Digital and Technology Solutions (Level 6); Embedded Electronic System Design and Development (Level 6); Executive MBA Apprenticeship (Level 7); Healthcare Science Practitioner: Audiology (Level 6); Nuclear Engineering Foundation Degree Apprenticeship (Foundation for Level 6); Postgraduate Engineer Degree Apprenticeship Level 7); and Professional Engineer (Nuclear Engineering)(Level 6).

HEFCE Catalyst Funding

17/80 Aston had been successful, with Cranfield University, in an application for a HEFCE Catalyst grant to develop new curriculum and pedagogy in the context of the proposed Milton Keynes University (MK:U). This grant was worth £800k to Aston, and was contingent on the award to Cranfield University of a project to develop MK:U. This would provide the opportunity for Aston to develop new delivery models, including accelerated degrees for delivery at MK:U, and possibly at Aston in due course. Cranfield expected to receive the outcome from MK Council in March or April.

Issues raised by Student Representatives and the Students' Union Senate

17/81 RECEIVED:

A report from the SU in paper SEN-17-1056-A, together with an oral report from the Vice-President Education (VPE), including the results of the recent elections for the new sabbatical officer who would take up office in July 2018 in which record numbers of candidates had stood and students had engaged in voting.

17/82 RESOLVED:

To congratulate Amna Atteeq on her election as the new Students' Union President for 2018/19, noting that her objectives for the year would include: contributing to the enhancement of student employability; additional information boards across the campus to advertise Union events and activities; development of the buddy scheme for home and international students; and enhancing support and advice for students experiencing mental health and stress problems.

Finance and Planning Issues

17/83 RECEIVED:

An oral report from the Provost on finance and planning issues, noting:

- That Aston had informed the new Office for Students (OfS) that it would be seeking registration in the Approved (fee cap) category to gain the following proposed benefits

from 2019/20: eligibility for public grant funding for teaching or research; access to the student support system; eligibility for a Tier 4 sponsorship licence; and Degree Awarding Powers (DAPs) and University Title (UT). The University would need to submit an application to register as an HE Provider with the OfS by 30th April 2018 in order to ensure that its new medical students could apply via the UCAS early applications system for 2019/20 entry. The OfS had recently issued detailed guidance on registration and compliance following its consultation exercise conducted before Christmas. The Provost and the Chief Financial Officer had established a group drawn from relevant areas across the University to ensure that Aston was in a position to submit a strong application to the OfS and to meet the ongoing conditions for registration as an HE provider. The Group had agreed a schedule of work to be undertaken in preparation for registration with the OfS and compliance with the new HE regulatory framework, identifying an Executive Sponsor and a Lead for each area of activity. The University was required to submit a student protection plan (which sets out what actions Aston will take to minimise any impact on students if their course, campus or institution were to close); a self-assessment of compliance with consumer protection law; and a self-assessment of governance and management arrangements. The Group would also prepare a communications plan to ensure staff across the University were aware of the new requirements.

- That as part of the OfS registration the University would be required to submit an access and participation plan. Consideration was being given to: the development of an incentivised scholarship focused on A Level achievement for applicants who select Aston (this should impact on tariff scores and enrolments); the provision of a learning account for students to help meet some of their educational costs; and development of new pathway programmes in STEM & Management subjects. Proposals would be circulated to Senate members for comment and endorsement in due course.

Strike Action

17/84 RECEIVED:

A tabled paper, presented by the Provost, setting out proposed measures to address the implications on student assessment, progression and achievement of the ongoing strike action being carried out by UCU members across the University. The strike action had led to some disruption to taught contact hours and assessment. The Provost has established a cross-university group which had sought to mitigate the effects of the strike as much as possible, in line with the University's obligations under its contract with the students and the requirements of the Competition and Markets Authority (CMA). In most areas of the University there has been no disruption, but all Schools had experienced some cancelled events. The Provost had arranged town hall meetings with students to discuss their concerns and to provide information and reassurance about the actions the University was taking to minimise the impact of the strike on their learning, assessment and outcomes.

17/85 RESOLVED:

- i) To approve the following General principles behind the proposals:
 - Ensuring that students, individually and collectively, are treated fairly and (as far as practically) consistently
 - Ensuring that academic standards and quality are not compromised, particularly in relation to progression or graduation
 - Ensuring that we have a cross-University approach which can be adapted to local circumstances and which can be communicated clearly to students, staff and external examiners
 - Ensuring that we can minimise any complaints and successful compensation requests

- Ensuring that we take into account the various legal obligations we have for students, professional and regulatory bodies, accreditation bodies, collaborative partners, placement providers and sponsoring organisations,.
- Ensuring that there is a clear audit trail of the University decision making process so that Council can be assured better that the quality of learning and teaching and academic standards have been maintained.

ii) To approve the following proposals:

1. That all Module Leaders be asked if there has been any change in the assessment on their module.
2. If there are changes to assessment in a module the Module Leader must submit to the relevant Associate Dean outlining the assessment change they want to make, and the rationale for it.
3. All applications will be reviewed by the School Learning and Teaching Committee and recommendations made to the Provost and Deputy Vice Chancellor, on behalf of the University Learning and Teaching Committee and the Senate.
4. At Module Boards all modules will be considered in terms of the potential consequences of industrial action and actions to be agreed as necessary to take account of these consequences.
5. Chairs of all Examination Boards will be asked to record any possible effects on students so that this can be taken into account when assessing overall performance and in writing references. This will be done for all years including instructions to take into account each year as current first and second year students progress towards their degrees.
6. Where essential, that the Provost and Deputy Vice Chancellor, acting on behalf of the Learning and Committee and the Senate (and with the advice of the cross-University sub-group), approve such changes to assessment, the delivery of materials or the setting of new assessment deadlines as recommended via the School Learning and Teaching Committees.
7. That, if the industrial action continues and has further effects, proposals for further amending assessment procedures, delivery of material to students and examination arrangements be brought to the Senate virtually, by the Provost and Deputy Vice Chancellor for approval.

iii) To endorse the decision to use any monies not paid to striking staff to the benefit of students. Consultation would take place with students on the exact form for this fund.

iv) That the Provost should write to all students, including via appropriate social media, to inform them of the actions being taken to mitigate the impact of the industrial action and what they should do if they feel that their learning or performance has been impaired.

ACTION: Provost

UNIVERSITY STRATEGY THEMES

17/86 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) To consider a draft self-assessment against the OfS guidance on consumer protection law focussing on information to students (paper SEN-17-1057-A) – led by Victoria Mee, Director of Legal Services and Louise Foster-Agg, Head of Undergraduate Admissions.

- ii) To consider a draft student protection plan for submission to OfS (paper SEN-17-1058-A) - led by Sarah Davies, Director of Quality Assurance and Enhancement and Alison Levey, Director of Student and Academic Services.
- iii) To consider recommendations from the Task Force for Enhancing the Quality of Research Environment and Research Student Experience (paper GSMC-17-1061-A) – led by Sally Puzey, Director of Research Strategy and Impact.

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

Self-Assessment against the OfS Guidance on Consumer Protection Law – Information to Students

17/87 NOTED:

That Group requested provision of the following information to assist with open days and applicant visit days:

- i) Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) that explain the University’s rankings and the process of the allocation of accommodation to students, particularly first year students.
- ii) A dummy offer letter for each subject accompanied by an explanatory note about the different sections with staff and student ambassadors (particularly those to undertake the calling campaigns),
- iii) A specific summary note on the differences between students who study as degree apprentices and full time undergraduates.

The Group also suggested that the answers to certain of the FAQs could be displayed on screens around the campus during open days and applicant visit days.

ACTION: Victoria Mee and Louise Foster-Agg to take forward the recommendations of the Group.

Student Protection Plan

17/88 NOTED:

That the Group considered the guidance and template from the Office for Students and a first draft of the Student Protection Plan from Legal Services. The Group considered University strengths and weaknesses in this area, where colleagues thought any risks might be and how we could mitigate those risks. Members felt that the most significant risks arose from: the fact that Aston operated from a single campus; the increasing reliance on IT for teaching, learning and assessment; the provision of specialist facilities to support student learning and research; and particularly for research students, the reliance on supervisors with very specialist expertise. In conclusion, the Group estimated the University to be at a relatively low level of risk, but that there were some policies and plans which would benefit from review, refreshing and wider publicity.

ACTION: Sarah Davies and Alison Levey were tasked to work with Legal Services to draft the University’s submission to the OfS and to also draw up an action plan for areas requiring further enhancement.

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

17/89 NOTED:

- That there was general support for an Annual Research at Aston conference, and for using one central event to replace all School events. A balance between plenary sessions and

subject-specific parallel sessions would provide the opportunity to present to both lay audiences and subject specialists.

- That there was less support for PhD placements as it was felt that these could interrupt the flow of PhD studies. Contributors were keen to discuss the skills needed by PhD students more generally however and it was felt that although the PRES had asked students what they needed, it would also be worth surveying Supervisors about what they felt students needed.
- That there was interest amongst Group members in looking at the destination data for PhD students as this could help inform training. Destinations of Leavers from Higher Education (DLHE) data was considered annually by the Graduate School Management Committee. It was recognised that many doctoral students already had a profession or were studying whilst they were in employment, so the destination data do not necessarily reflect changes in employment status achieved as a result of completing their studies at Aston.
- That the Group felt that departmental seminars were essential in creating a positive research environment. Inviting external speakers was a key element of departmental seminars.
- There was discussion about how Aston could create a sense of cohort amongst its student population, when it currently did not have CDTs. Accommodation, space and events were an important part of this.
- That the PRES report was recommended for consideration by the Executive.

ACTION: Professor Reershemius and Sally Puzey to take forward the recommendations of the Group.

WHAT COULD WORK BETTER?

17/90 RECEIVED:

A report that the Academic Assembly Standing Committee had raised the following issues:

- *“Attendance monitoring – problems due to staff not being able to access data. An Attendance Policy is not in place.”* The Provost reported that student attendance data was currently being collected via an electronic monitoring system and analysed to establish whether it was robust and fit for purpose; so it was not appropriate to allow staff access to the data at this stage. However, each School had a member of staff who viewed the data and contacted individual students who appeared to be at risk. Students were able to view their own data and could raise any data accuracy issues with a member of the team. A pilot project was underway in Pharmacy, which required accurate attendance monitoring for professional body accreditation, and a number of technical issues had been identified which had been/were being resolved. Each School had a representative(s) on the attendance monitoring group who was supposed to keep their School informed about the work of the group.

ACTION: Provost to encourage members of the attendance monitoring group to be more proactive in sharing information about the work of the group with their School colleagues.

- *“The staff Induction process needs to be improved”*. The Chair of Academic Assembly reported that some colleagues were concerned at the somewhat sporadic provision of staff induction. Some had not received a University-level induction, although they may have received School level induction. There appeared to be considerable inconsistencies in the quality of the induction programmes provided by different Schools. Colleagues were disappointed that there was not a central resource or handbook template which made reference to important generic induction information. The information was probably available, but in a number of different places (intranet, website, staff portal, blackboard, etc). Alan Charters, Chief of Operations and Estates reported that Human Resources and Organisational Development and CLIPP had been developing a more systematic and effective University induction programme, but unfortunately it had been necessary to cancel a recent offering owing to a lack of uptake by staff. Members of Senate also highlighted the importance of guidance and support for new colleagues following the initial period following induction – this had been recognised in preparing the Athena SWAN applications.

ACTION: Alan Charters to raise the concerns expressed by the Academic Assembly and Senate members about staff induction at University and School level with colleagues in HR&OD and CLIPP. The Executive Deans and Heads of Subject Groups should make every effort to encourage their colleagues to attend the University induction.

NEXT MEETING

17/91 NOTED:

Senate would next meet at 2:00 pm on Wednesday, 30th May 2018.

JGW/21.03.18