THE SENATE

Minutes

This paper presents the confirmed Minutes of the last meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 14 October 2015 at The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes.

The Senate **approved** these Minutes as a correct record of the meeting on Wednesday 27 January 2016, subject to the amendments to Minutes 12.8 and 12.40.

Keith Zimmerman
University Secretary

Sue Thomas
Working Secretary to the Senate
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THE SENATE

Minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 14 October 2015 at 2.00pm
in the Hub Theatre, The Open University, Walton Hall

PRESENT:

1) Ex officio

Mr Peter Horrocks, Vice-Chancellor
Professor Belinda Tynan, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning Innovation)
Professor Kevin Hetherington, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy)
Professor Richard Brown, Interim Executive Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Professor Mary Kellett, Interim Executive Dean, Faculty of Education and Language
      Studies and Health and Social Care
Professor Anne De Roeck, Interim Executive Dean, Faculty of Science and Mathematics,
      Computing and Technology
Professor Rebecca Taylor, Dean, Faculty of Business and Law
Mr Jeremy Roche, Dean, Faculty of Education and Language Studies and Health and
      Social Care
Professor Hazel Rymer, Dean, Faculty of Science and Mathematics, Computing and
      Technology
Professor Patrick McAndrew, Director of the Institute of Educational Technology
Mrs Nicky Whitsed, Director, Library Services
Mr Chris Rooke, Director, Learning and Teaching Solutions

Appointed

2) Central Academic Units

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences

Faculty of Arts

Professor Graham Harvey	Dr Cristina Chimisso
Dr Lynda Prescott	Dr Naoko Yamagata
Professor John Wolffe	

Faculty of Social Sciences

Dr Troy Cooper	Dr Anastasia Economou
Mr Matt Staples	Dr Catriona Havard
Dr Jovan Byford	Dr Helen Kaye
Dr Deborah Drake	

Faculty of Education and Language Studies and Health and Social Care

Faculty of Education and Language Studies (FELS)

Dr Uwe Baumann	Mrs Annie Eardley
Dr Jane Cullen	Professor Regine Hampel
Dr Tim Lewis	Dr Indra Sinka
Dr Elodie Vialleton	

Faculty of Health and Social Care

Mrs Sue Cole   Miss Christine Taylor
Mr Mick McCormick

Faculty of Science and Mathematics, Computing and Technology

Faculty of Science

Professor Monica Grady   Dr Janet Haresnape
Dr Arlëne Hunter   Professor Hilary MacQueen
Dr Claire Turner   Professor David Rothery
Dr John Baxter

Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology

Dr Leonor Barroca   Dr David Bowers
Ms Maggie Holland   Dr Rachel Hilliam
Dr Tony Nixon   Professor Andy Lane
Dr Shirley Northover   Dr Toby O'Neil
Dr Peter Robbins   Mr Brendan Quinn
Dr Hayley Ryder   Dr Magnus Ramage

Faculty of Business & Law

Ms Carmel McMahon   Dr Kristen Reid
Dr Sharon Slade   Mr Mike Phillips
Miss Carol Howells

Institute of Educational Technology

Dr Anne Adams   Mr Chris Edwards

Other Central Units

Dr Liz Marr

3) Associate Lecturers

Mrs Frances Chetwynd   Mr Bruce Heil (alternate)
Dr Clare Spencer   Dr Fiona Aiken
Dr Tim Parry   Dr Robert Johnston
Dr Tricia French

4) Students Appointed by Open University Students Association

Miss Ruth Tudor   Mr John Murphy
Mr Josh Brumpton   Mrs Nicola Simpson
Miss Lorraine Adams (alternate)   Dr Barbara Tarling

5) Academic-related Staff

Dr Donna Smith   Mr Mike Innes
Mr Jake Yeo   Mr Michael Street
Ms Pat Atkins   Dr Christina Lloyd
Ms Clare Riding   Mrs Joanne Smythe
Mr Phil Berry   Mr Simon Horrocks
Dr Victoria Crowe   Mr Billy Khokhar
Mr David Smith   Miss Barbara Poniatowska

6) Co-opted members

Dr David Knight   Mr Rob Humphreys
Professor John Domingue   Mr John D'Arcy

In attendance

Mr Keith Zimmerman, University Secretary
Mrs Dawn Turpin, Head of Governance
Ms Sue Thomas, Senior Manager, Governance
Mrs Julie Tayler, Senior Manager, Governance (until the end of Minute 12)

Miss Teresa Coyle, Manager, Governance

Observing

Mr Lucian Hudson, Director of Communications
Mr Fraser Woodburn, Interim Director, External Engagement
Dr Jenny Stewart, Head of the Office of the Director, Students
Ms Kathryn Baldwin, Vice-Chancellor's Business Manager

APOLOGIES:

Appointed

2) Central Academic Units

Faculty of Arts

Dr Ole Grell

Faculty of Health and Social Care

Professor Jan Draper   Dr Mary Twomey

Institute of Educational Technology

Professor Eileen Scanlon

3) Associate Lecturers

Dr Linda Walker

4) Students Appointed by Open University Students Association

Mr David Humble

6) Co-opted members

Mr Christopher Goscomb

In attendance

Mr Andrew Law

1 WELCOME AND THANK YOU

1.1 The Vice-Chancellor, Mr Peter Horrocks, welcomed the following new members to the Senate:

Professor John Domingue, Director KMi (co-opted)
Dr Elodie Vialleton, FELS
Mr David Smith, Other Units, academic related member
Mr Tim Parry
Dr Tricia French
Dr Linda Walker (in absentia)
Dr Fiona Aitken
Dr Robert Johnson
Ms Nicola Simpson
Dr Barbara Tarling

1.2 The following members attended the meeting in new roles:

Mr Keith Zimmerman, University Secretary
Mr Fraser Woodburn, Interim Director, External Engagement
Professor Kevin Hetherington, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy)
Professor Richard Brown, Interim Executive Dean, Arts and Social Sciences
Professor Mary Kellett, Interim Executive Dean, Education and Language Studies and Health and Social Care (HSC)
Professor Anne De Roeck, Interim Executive Dean, Maths, Computing and Technology (MCT) and Science

1.3 The following members participated in the meeting remotely:

Professor Monica Grady, Science
Mr Phil Berry, Other Units
Mr Mick McCormick, Health and Social Care

1.4 The Vice-Chancellor thanked Christine Taylor, who was retiring from the University, for her contribution to the Senate.

2 MINUTES   S-2015-03-M
                                                     S-2015-04-M

2.1 The Senate **approved**:

a)   the minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2015;

b)   the minutes of the meeting held on 16 July 2015 subject to the inclusion of an amendment to minute 1.13 proposed by Dr V Crowe:

Minute 1.13 to read (*new text shown in italics*):

Another member expressed her support for the proposed configuration and the concept of Students First. *Reflecting on the supplementary analysis which presented data on Q qualification students only,* she urged the University as it implemented the changes to focus on all students and not to forget those students still studying on old qualifications frameworks.

2.2   A member drew attention to the vote recorded in minute 1.25. He commented that the minute was correct but he wished to record his concern over the manner in which the vote was taken. He requested that in future the Senate should be asked to vote clearly in sequence, for or against a proposal or a motion with any abstentions.

2.3   The University Secretary acknowledged that this was the correct procedure and it would be adhered to in future.

3   MATTERS ARISING   **S-2015-05-01**

Paragraph 8: Minutes of 10 June 2015, Minute 15.6

3.1   A member expressed concern over the decision of the Academic Staff Promotion Committee to amend the terms of reference of the Academic Staff Promotions Appeals Committee to bring all appeals into line under the ground of defect in procedure only. She was concerned that although reference was made to detailed procedures being in operation in Faculties, there may be instances where staff considered that their cases had not been considered fairly.   The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) reiterated that the Academic Staff Promotion Committee was entirely satisfied that robust procedures were in place in Faculties. Promotion cases were considered fairly and consistently by impartial Committees and the purpose of an Appeal Committee was not to re-consider a case but to consider any alleged procedural defects in their consideration. A proposal for an amendment to the terms of reference for the Academic Staff Promotions Appeals Committee would be going forward to a future meeting of the Academic Quality and Governance Committee for consideration.   The member requested that the Academic Quality and Governance Committee consider the proposed amendment carefully.

Minute 7.1: 10 June 2015

3.2   A member drew attention to the action point in relation to the provision of access to IT systems and facilities for part-time postgraduate research students.   The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) reported that the matter was still under discussion and he would report back to the next meeting of the Senate with further information.

Action: PVC (RAS)

3.3   The Senate **noted** the responses to the matters arising.

4   REPORT FROM AND QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIR

Students First and Locations Analysis

4.1   The Vice-Chancellor explained that he intended to make some opening remarks to provide context to the debate on the paper relating to the Locations Analysis (S-2015015-09). Mr Horrocks reminded members of the Senate that at the meeting in June and at the Special Meeting in July, they had considered proposals for putting Students First and for the future configuration of faculties. He commented that while he had been very pleased with the support expressed for innovation and increasing the academic voice within the University, he had been surprised that more adverse comment had not been received.

4.2   The Vice-Chancellor reminded members of the context of the external environment in which he had set his proposals. He reported that considerable effort had gone into working with the Department of Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS), the Treasury and with partner institutions to draw attention to the challenges the part-time sector in higher education faced. Mr Horrocks considered that some progress had been made but the announcement of the detail of the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR) for 2015-16 was imminent and

this was likely to have challenging implications for the higher education sector as a whole and particularly the University. Competition continued to be fierce for students and research funding and also from providers of alternative qualifications such as apprenticeships.

4.3 The Vice-Chancellor drew Senate's attention to reports that the Government was likely to introduce a Teaching Assessment Framework (TEF) to evaluate teaching at universities. Whilst some aspects of such an evaluation could be advantageous to the University, it was also likely to concentrate on student progression and completion rates. These figures were not strong for the University and provided another contextual aspect to both the Students First proposals and the recommendation from the Locations Analysis Project.

4.4 Mr Horrocks explained that with these issues in mind, it was essential that the University "put its house in order" for the sake of its students. It was essential that the University expanded its income and challenged its costs to maximise value for students. To achieve this, the University also had to challenge how it operated to meet students' needs. Mr Horrocks acknowledged the severe impact this would have on staff and their families and apologised that such measures were required. He emphasised his admiration for all the staff potentially affected by the recommendation of the Locations Analysis Project, and their dedication, care and professionalism towards students. He acknowledged that the recommendation might seem counter to the very principles that the University stood for, but it was vital that the University operated within its means.

4.5 Mr Horrocks reaffirmed that he and the members of the Vice-Chancellor's Executive (VCE) cared deeply for the future of the University. He urged the Senate to consider the recommendation of the Locations Analysis Project with this contextual background in mind. He hoped the Senate would look carefully and calmly at the future of the University.

University Secretary

4.6 The Vice-Chancellor, on behalf of the Senate, recorded his thanks to Mr Fraser Woodburn who was retiring as Secretary of the University after 17 years. He thanked Mr Woodburn for his immense contributions to the leadership of the University and for his advice to the Senate.

5   STRATEGIC PLANNING AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE   S-2015-05-02

5.1 An Associate Lecturer member queried the reference in minute 10 to the paper *SPRC-2015-03-02: Students First* being classified as confidential. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that it was only temporarily classified in that way and it was now available to staff.

5.2 Another member drew attention to minute 5 and expressed concern that the information presented to the Committee was not accurate or clear. She considered there to be discrepancies between the data provided to SPRC and the data gathered by the Institute of Educational Technology (IET). She requested that information was scrutinised carefully before being presented for consideration. Another member commented that the definitions of data sets were not always clear which could result in accuracies. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning Innovation) explained that the Analytics Project in the University was currently examining issues in relation to sources, definitions and the use of data. The points raised would be followed up.

Action: PVC (LI)

5.3 The Senate **noted** the unconfirmed Minutes from the meeting of the Strategic Planning and Resources Committee held on 24 June 2015.

6   QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE   S-2014-05-03

The Senate **noted** the report of the meeting of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee held on 22 June 2015.

7   RESEARCH COMMITTEE   S-2015-05-04

The Senate **noted** the report of the meeting of the Research Committee held on 1 July 2015.

8   CURRICULUM AND VALIDATION COMMITTEE   S-2015-05-05

8.1   An Associate Lecturer member drew attention to the detailed discussion on Turnitin (Tii) recorded in minute 3 and explained that this reflected the strength of feeling at the meeting in relation to the issue. She commented that Tii was used at many other higher education institutions (HEIs) in the UK and worldwide and by not adopting it the University was out of line with the rest of the sector. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning Innovation) informed the Senate that the University was currently assessing issues in relation to Tii and accessibility. The developers of Tii had acknowledged that adjustments to its software were required to improve accessibility but these could take some time to implement. The University was assessing the risks and costs involved in implementation and the feasibility of establishing the necessary support for the estimated 20,000 students who might experience difficulties using the software. It was anticipated that a report would be ready for consideration by the Education Committee early in 2016.

8.2   A representative of OUSA enquired whether the 20,000 students to which the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning Innovation) referred were students who were registered disabled, or who may potentially report issues using the Turnitin software. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor, (Learning Innovation) confirmed that detailed information was currently being analysed but the figure given was an estimate of those who might experience difficulties using the software.

8.3   The Senate **noted** the confirmed minutes of the meeting of the Curriculum and Validation Committee held on 8 July 2015.

9   LEARNING, TEACHING AND STUDENT SUPPORT COMMITTEE   S-2015-05-06

The Senate **noted** the confirmed minutes of the Learning and Teaching and Student Support Committee held on 29 June 2015.

10   SENATE MEMBERSHIP PANEL   S-2015-05-07

The Senate **noted** the report of the meeting of the Senate Membership Panel held on held on 24 June 2015.

11   HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE   S-2015-05-08

Additional Honorary Awards 2016

The Senate **approved** the two additional nominations recommended by the Honorary Degrees Committee for the award of honorary degrees at future degree ceremonies.

12   LOCATIONS ANALYSIS

12.1   The Vice-Chancellor explained that during the discussion of this item, he would be advised by the Head of Governance on issues of procedure. Mr K Zimmerman would present the paper to the Senate and answer questions raised by members, though if required Mr Horrocks would respond in his role as Vice-Chancellor of the University.   The debate would focus initially on the paper presented to the Senate (S-2015-05-09) and would then focus on the issues Senate might wish to draw to the attention of the Council and on the motion proposed. (S-2015-05-10). Mr Horrocks reminded the Senate that it was within its remit to advise the Council of its views but the final decision on the recommendation proposed was the responsibility of the Council.

S-2015-05-09: Locations Analysis, S-2015-05-Tabled, S-2015-05-Comments

12.2   Mr Zimmerman introduced the paper and drew attention to elements within it including the consultation and option appraisal process (paragraphs 4-10), the detail of the recommendation from the project (paragraphs 16-26) and information on the context to the recommendation (paragraphs 27-39). He explained that a specific implementation date had not been given as, if approved, further planning was required. Mr Zimmerman also drew attention to paragraph 40 which set out the benefits to students of the recommendation.

12.3   Paragraphs 44-50 set out the implications for staff of the recommendation. Mr Zimmerman explained that it would be for Faculties to agree appropriate arrangements for their regionally-based staff to enable them to continue in employment. However, whilst every effort would be made to minimise it, it was anticipated that a significant number of staff in other groups would be unable to relocate and would leave the University.   This impact was regretted but the recommendation had to be considered as the right decision for the University's students and the long-term future of the institution.   Mr Zimmerman assured the Senate that the University was very conscious of its responsibilities towards students and its staff. If the Council approved the recommendation, staff affected would receive support and students would experience a well-managed, planned transition (paragraphs 55-66). Mr Zimmerman acknowledged that the University faced difficult choices. Although other options had been considered, funding them would increase the risks of reduction in other services to students and ultimately have consequences for the success of students and the future of the University.

12.4   A member of the Senate stated that this was a very contentious matter for the Senate. He believed that all members of University staff wanted students to succeed. He also believed that staff were in agreement that the current locations of the University required assessment and that the external environment facing the University was very challenging. He agreed that there was an urgency to find a way forward. However, having acknowledged these facts, the member stated that many staff did not feel they could support the recommendation in the paper. Opposition had been expressed across the University with concerns being described in a range of ways including "profound" and "significant". The member did not consider that these strong opinions were reflected in Appendix D to the paper before the Senate. The member also commented that he believed the University's regional locations helped to ensure academic staff were visible to students. He believed that a strong regional presence led to greater public engagement with research as well as curriculum functions. He agreed there was a case to reassess roles and responsibilities in regional locations but not one to remove them altogether.

12.5   Another member drew attention to the projected savings from the recommendation to close regional centres and asked for a comparison of the savings to the University's annual turnover.

12.6   A representative of the Open University Students' Association (OUSA) reported that the OUSA Senate Reference group had met Mr Zimmerman recently and she wished to draw the points the Group had raised at that meeting to the attention of the Senate.   She explained that students were very concerned over the loss of expertise amongst staff and the effects on morale of those who remained if the recommendation was approved. Student representatives were not convinced that the concentration of staff as proposed would provide better services for students and feared the University was moving towards a call centre approach to supporting students. She feared this could result in students being passed amongst different staff to resolve queries and also increased the risks of inconsistent advice being given. Students were also concerned that there was no guarantee that the proposed savings would be dedicated to improving student support.

12.7   Another member was concerned that there was a risk that the proposed new arrangements could adversely affect accreditation in respect of the University's award under the Athena Swan Charter.   She considered it to be unfortunate that the University's Athena Swan team had not been consulted in the drawing up of the recommendation. If the University lost its Athena Swan status as a result of the proposals this could have a detrimental effect on the University's reputation and research status.

12.8   Another member informed the Senate that the Auditor-General in Scotland was currently conducting an audit of universities in Scotland and the OU was included in this exercise. She was concerned that a view might be expressed on the balance of funding as a result of the recommendations from the Locations Analysis Report.

12.9   Mr Zimmerman commented that faculties had not made strong cases for regional presence to support research but in instances where faculties had a requirement, this could be provided in more economic ways than at present. It was also important to acknowledge that such a presence may emerge in areas where the University was currently not represented. Less permanent investment in fixed locations would enable flexibility to respond to such circumstances. Mr Zimmerman advised that the annual turnover of the University was approximately £400 million. In response to the points raised by OUSA, Mr Zimmerman commented that the loss of expertise amongst staff was well noted and understood and had been factored into the balance of risks identified within the recommendation. Such change however presented opportunities to provide better services and enable Student Support Teams (SSTs) to perform more effectively, for example, by increasing their staffing.   A guarantee of investment in certain business areas could not be given as it was not possible to commit to how resources would be used in the future, and it would be irresponsible to do so at this stage. The primary focus of funds released however would be to address shortcomings identified in the analysis and be directed to areas to help students succeed.   The point in respect of the audit in Scotland was acknowledged and maintenance of levels of funding for nation offices had been confirmed.

12.10 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) reported that he had responsibility for examining the impact of the recommendation on staff tutors, 70% of whom were female. Three areas were being examined in particular, the creation of different working conditions for staff tutors compared to those of central academics, the valuing of the role of staff tutors and the risk that awards and accreditation such as Athena Swan awards might be harder to attain. An equality analysis would be carried out and appropriate mitigation against the risks and concerns would be put in place. It was also important to focus on the relationships between staff tutors and centrally based academic staff overall and not just in relation to the locations analysis.

12.11 The Dean, Faculty of Education and Language Studies and Health and Social Care (HSC) acknowledged that this was a very difficult time for colleagues at the University with challenges being faced that were the most radical since the 1960s. He had witnessed the distress of colleagues following the closure of the East Grinstead regional centre and wished the University did not have to make such difficult decisions. He felt the

recommendation was logical in its aim to improve services to students but was unsure how it would work. He reported that at a HSC Faculty meeting concerns had been expressed over the process of consultation, and inaccurate capturing of the activities in regional centres. HSC colleagues believed that the University's mission for social justice could be in jeopardy if the recommendation was approved and the professional programme could suffer as result of losing a regional presence. His colleagues regretted that a clear plan for implementation was not available either and considered that a number of risks were apparent in the transition period including disruption to students and loss of expertise. HSC had always benefited from a strong local presence through the regional centres and there was concern that the core programmes in the faculty would suffer if the transition was not planned carefully for both students and staff.

12.12 A member was concerned that as the proposals for faculty configuration were progressing at the same time as the proposals for locations, they might be seen as confusing. He agreed with the comments from OUSA that if the recommendation was approved, support to students would not increase. He also felt that as the Locations Analysis Project progressed, its parameters had changed, particularly since June of this year. The member was concerned that there was no evidence that the University could handle this level of change. He feared there would be job losses and disillusionment amongst remaining staff and drew comparisons to issues with tutor/student allocations in the London region following the closure of the East Grinstead office.

12.13 An Associate Lecturer representative commented that if the recommendation was approved by Council, it could result in a risk of staff tutors not being dispersed across England. They could be clustered around Milton Keynes, Manchester and Nottingham. This could adversely affect the delivery of staff development to Associate Lecturers and a policy was required on this. The relationships between staff tutors and Associate Lecturers were relied upon and it was important to ensure these were supported.

12.14 Another member expressed her concern that the proposed English centres will no longer be academic centres. She did not consider that regional academic staff could work effectively from home and renting space from partners or serviced offices were not viable alternatives. Regionally based academics were key to support Associate Lecturers and provide academic support to students and the Project had not assessed the impact of the proposals on the balance of these relationships.

12.15 Mr Zimmerman commented that currently students waited too long for responses to questions or assistance and that affected their progress. Those service standards could not continue. The scale and pace of the challenges facing the University could not be ignored and it was vital that a plan was developed with the risks well understood. Mr Zimmerman explained that the parameters of the project had not changed, however the project had responded to issues arising from the consultation, for example the importance of SSTs and the difficulties they were currently facing. Mr Zimmerman informed the Senate that the issues arising in tutor/student allocations in London were not a result of the closure of the East Grinstead centre. This would be reported fully elsewhere. Faculties would be asked to work on how best to manage staff tutor and Associate Lecturer relationships and the location of their regionally-based staff.

12.16 The Director, Access, Careers and Teaching Support explained that the proposed changes had to be seen in the context of improving support to students. Many of the changes referred to in the paper were parts of other policies, such as the Group Tuition Policy and were already beginning to be put in place. Pilot schemes for events management were due to be trialled in 2016 and these had also been planned before the Locations Analysis Project reported. He also confirmed that although difficulties had been experienced in tutor/student allocations in London and the South East this year, students and Associate Lecturers had been informed of their outcomes earlier than in the previous presentation.

12.17   The Interim Executive Dean, Faculty of Maths, Computing and Technology and Science, acknowledged the difficult situation the University faced. However she believed that the challenges faced had provided an opportunity for the University to reflect on the complexity of its models and the paramount need to focus on student progression and retention. The University needed initiatives such as Students First and the Locations Analysis Project to realign to achieve this focus.   It was right to highlight the risks of the end state of the Locations Analysis Project recommendation, but the University had to progress and articulate its requirements for the future.

12.18   The Interim Executive Dean, Faculty of Education and Language Studies and Health and Social Care expressed her support for the previous comments. She believed that the recommendation would provide the University with much more agility to respond to demands. She assured the Senate that Faculties would be taking their responsibilities very seriously in implementing the recommendation if it was approved.   Responding to an earlier point, she confirmed that the business needs of professional programmes would be carefully considered.

12.19   Another member expressed her support for previous comments especially those from the Dean, Faculty of Education and Language Studies and Health and Social Care. She believed there to be a lack of connection between the principles of the Locations Analysis Project, the processes undertaken within it and the final recommendation.

12.20   An Associate Lecturer member informed Senate that the past two years had been very challenging as Associate Lecturers became familiar with new ways of working with SSTs and new qualifications. He was very concerned that the majority of core staff within SSTs would not relocate so the University would lose significant experience and knowledge. Although staff would be replaced, he felt it could take many years for them to gain the knowledge lost. This would not result in a better service for students. He commented that by locating SSTs together, the University was in danger of creating a call centre approach to support. This could adversely affect Associate Lecturer integration with SSTs which was critical to helping students progress.

12.21   The Interim Director, External Engagement reiterated previous comments that the external environment facing the University was challenging, in terms of both finance and policy towards part time education.   The proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) would present the University's progression and completion rates to audiences not familiar with the challenges of part time higher education. He believed it was essential and urgent that the University put in place measures to improve student support and progression.

12.22   In response to points raised, Mr Zimmerman confirmed that the paper (S-2015-05-09) explained all the processes within the project and its outcomes. He commented that at present there was a lack of clarity for students as to whom they should approach with problems and this required resolution. He acknowledged experienced staff would leave the University but he still believed the proposals were the best way to move forward. He reiterated that the proposals were designed to support SSTs and that there were no plans to merge them into the sorts of 'call centres' that members appeared to have in mind. He agreed that Associate Lecturers needed to be working closely with SSTs and he believed the proposed changes would facilitate this.

   Tea Break

12.23   The President, OUSA, expressed concern over the future effectiveness of SSTs should experienced staff choose not to relocate and leave the University.

12.24   A member commented that when he joined the Senate a year ago, he had been informed that the Senate was the "academic conscience" of the University.   From that ethical stance, he considered that the recommendation showed a lack of valuing staff especially staff in

regional centres, and all their expertise. The assumption had been made that many would leave and he felt that would be very damaging to the University. He likened the University to a rapacious corporation and believed it was far superior to that. He informed the Senate that he felt very uncomfortable being associated with the recommendation and decisions being taken upon it. The member believed that the University was kept afloat by significant goodwill from its staff and by those who valued its mission but that goodwill could only be pushed to a certain point. If that goodwill was lost, the costs would be significantly higher than the £4.7m projected saving of the proposed recommendation. That prospect concerned him greatly.

12.25   A member explained that she had worked supporting students in different roles for many years. She strongly supported SSTs providing learner and academic support as the model for the future but acknowledged frustrations as they struggled to keep up with demand for services. She agreed with a previous point that the University did not view them as a call centre and saw the relationships with others including Associate Lecturers as essential. She commented that SSTs had been overwhelmed with responsive work and staff had not had time to work more proactively to support students. To enable them to do this, investment in SSTs had to increase and this would not be possible without additional resources. She also commented that although the knowledge of experienced staff would be missed if they chose to leave, she had been very impressed by the speed at which new staff gained knowledge.

12.26   A member queried how the projected savings of £4.7m would be accessible in practical terms. She enquired whether the funds would be available immediately and how the costs of implementing the recommendation would be counted against the proposed saving.

12.27   Another member agreed that changes were required to the support offered to students. He agreed that SSTs needed to work more proactively and respond more quickly and that resources were required to make such improvements. However the quality of the support offered was vitally important and this could not be measured in financial terms or by means of buildings but in terms of human capital and how it was used effectively. He considered it very unwise to introduce such changes at a time when many students under transitional funding arrangements in England would finish their studies in 2017. He fully understood the commitment to improving support for students but he could see no reference to valuing staff and the difference they made to SSTs by providing support to those transitional students.

12.28   A representative of OUSA commented that she was very pleased that the emphasis was on putting students first. However she was a student based in Europe and three years ago the arrangements for supporting students in Europe were changed. She felt, as a result of those changes, that students were no longer supported well and this had adverse effects on the student experience and progression and outcomes.

12.29   Mr Zimmerman commented that he was very mindful of the experience of staff working in regional centres. He believed a balance had to be found between the esteem and value put on their work and the extent to which the University relied on their goodwill over a long period of time. It was unrealistic to expect colleagues to work under the current pressures they faced any longer and changes were necessary in a context where there were no simple ways to release funds for improvements. The costs of implementation would be drawn from strategic expenditure funds and as funds were released, for example though ending of leases on buildings, they could be spent elsewhere. Mr Zimmerman explained that students on transition funding arrangements would be supported to the conclusion of their studies and if, on the balance of risks, it was advisable to retain experienced staff until this point that would be the case. It was important to consider the risks too of poor service to students who did not contact the University and perhaps struggled on their own. New staff would be recruited to provide more proactive support. Mr Zimmerman acknowledged

the students' perspective of support for students in Europe and commented that changes could be attributable to a number of drivers or be the product of other changes.

12.30   The Vice-Chancellor responded to an earlier point and agreed that the Senate was the academic conscience of the University and it was appropriate to focus on the ethics of decisions. However it was necessary to look at the future of the University as a whole and the reality of business decisions relative to the external environment was unfortunately uncomfortable. Mr Horrocks emphasised to the Senate that the issue of locations was not being handled in the same way as a corporation might and there had been numerous opportunities for debate and staff would be fully supported through the change. Changes were necessary to sustain the values in which the University believed and if they were not implemented then the way forward would not be clear. It was essential that the University supported students who were struggling with their studies and the recommendation from the Locations Analysis Project was an attempt to optimise student support.

12.31   A representative of OUSA recognised that change was necessary and acknowledged that the current configuration was not delivering the level of service required. He queried, however, whether the solution proposed was the right one and expressed concern that the paper lacked detail on the implementation processes and proposed end position.

12.32   A member believed that the recommendation did not have the support of the University community. He drew attention to comments submitted by faculties expressing concern and he felt that many regional colleagues were prepared to accept working hard if it meant retention of their positions. He felt that staff were subjected to a stream of constant change and it was therefore difficult to judge what was successful or not in improving retention and progression rates. He urged the University to give SSTs an opportunity to deliver outcomes in a stable situation. He also drew attention to some of the University's key competitors who were expanding regional study centres with advisors, many of which were in the same locations as the OU regional centres. He commented that regional services constituted a small part of the University's overall budget yet they were fundamental to the services it provided. He felt a review of the University as a whole should take place and not just of staff in regional locations.

12.33   Another member commented that the Group Tuition Policy previously approved by the Senate had fundamentally changed tuition for students. This had an impact on regional staff and staff in central academic units (CAUs). Those changes were proceeding and the University was currently in a difficult situation with old structures running alongside new curriculum based structures. She urged the University to proceed with implementing the changes. It was clear that progression and completion rates required improvement and she felt the proposals had potential gains in these areas that would not be realised if the old structures were retained.

12.34   A member agreed with previous speakers in respect of the external challenges facing the University and agreed it was essential for the University to support those students who do not progress. She was concerned however as to whether the recommendation would achieve those stated aims. She believed that the skills and expertise required were currently within SSTs and queried why SSTs were required to relocate to locations where Student Recruitment and Fees (SRF) functions already existed.

12.35   A representative of OUSA voiced his disappointment that there was no reference to Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) in the paper by which the success of the proposals would be measured.

12.36   Another member drew attention to the many change initiatives progressing at present within the University and hoped that sufficient planning took place at strategic level to ensure the impacts were clear.

12.37 An Associate Lecturer member commented that he did not oppose the recommendation but shared others' concerns over the process of transition and how the success or otherwise would be measured. He also commented that there was potential for the University to be more radical and operate in a more local way to support its social mission on a more local basis.

12.38 A member participating remotely commented that retention, completion and progression rates had been consistently impressive in professional programmes such as Social Work and Nursing with the current location arrangements and due to the expertise and knowledge regional colleagues brought to their relationships with both students and local employers/sponsors. He urged caution that the Locations Analysis Project recommendation could threaten those business-to-business relationships and retention/progression/completion rates. He suggested lessons could be learnt from professional programme models of support and the way their practices successfully retained students and ensured they progressed and completed their studies.

12.39 Another member pointed out that the decision was taken to close advice lines during Saturday evenings as call volumes were so low. She felt there was a disparity between the stated needs of students and their actions.

12.40 The Director, OU in Wales commented that he was disappointed that the recommendations from the project did not do more to future-proof the University in the context of further constitutional change for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. He pointed however to reductions in public funding in recent years and to the probability of still more reduction. He also commented that the UK Government had indicated its support for further education in the area of vocational opportunities for adult learners and he believed this could be at the expense of support for part time higher education. He reiterated colleagues' support for the University's mission and values but was unsure as to what alternative proposals were being put forward for consideration by Council by those supporting the motion before Senate. solutions could be dawn to Council's attention.

12.41 Mr Zimmerman explained that a number of detailed options were considered and this analysis showed that due to issues of space and numbers it would be significantly more expensive to relocate SRF functions. He explained that if the recommendation was implemented, VCE would determine the priorities required and sequence the changes appropriately and flexibility. Interdependencies between projects would be tracked. In regard to KPIs, Mr Zimmerman commented that success would be assessed against current policies and the closing of gaps in provision of student support. Mr Zimmerman acknowledged the comments relating to the lack of detailed implementation plans and the pressure and uncertainty facing staff. He explained that the University was trying to provide a more sustainable position for the future delivery of support for students.

S-2015-05-10: Motion to the Senate

12.42 Mr M Staples proposed the motion which stated:

The Senate:

a) Advises the Council to reject the current recommendation (option 5c) of the Locations Review on the grounds that it is operationally and reputationally very high risk and fails adequately to support the academic mission of the University.

b) Advises VCE to explore further the other options modelled, seeking additional advice and guidance from the academic faculties, ALs and OUSA, in order to achieve a structure that effectively supports that mission.

12.43   Professor Wolffe seconded the motion and clarified that the motion was not asking for the maintenance of the status quo position, but was opposing the recommendation proposed by the Locations Analysis Project.

12.44   A member commented that he welcomed the scrutiny of the recommendation by the Senate. He was concerned that part (b) of the motion might lead to further delay and uncertainty for the staff likely to be affected. He urged the Senate to think carefully about the impact on staff who had continued to work in an exemplary manner providing support to students since the announcement of the recommendation.

12.45   The Vice-Chancellor commented that he understood the reservations expressed over the recommendation. He felt however that a decision had to be reached after approximately 18 months of project work. Council would have the responsibility to make such a decision.

12.46   Following a vote the motion was **carried** with 41 votes in favour, 33 against and 9 abstentions.

Post meeting note:

Two votes against the motion were received from those attending online but not included in the tally reported to Senate at the time.

13   ANNUAL QUALITY REPORT   S-2015-05-11

13.1   The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) introduced the report and highlighted the action that the Senate was required to take in respect of it. The report evaluated evidence on the management of quality and standards during the preceding committee year. It comprised a summary of the themes emerging from the business of Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee and an overview of institutional quality-related performance indicators. The report would used as the annual report on institution-led review submitted to the Scottish Funding Council

13.2   A member informed the Senate that she had raised inaccuracies in paragraph 24 of the report with the author. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) confirmed that these concerns would be followed up.

13.3   An Associate Lecturer member commented that the results of the National Student Survey (NSS) in respect of the University had declined in recent years. She acknowledged that the overall satisfaction rate for the University was high overall in the sector, but she felt that the response to the decline as set out in paragraph 25 did not seem particularly robust. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning Innovation) recognised that the decline was disappointing and in response to this the University had set up a Task Force comprising key stakeholders to investigate it further. The effects of any interventions arising from it may not be apparent for the next survey but the Task Force would work in a very focussed way to improve results for subsequent years.

13.4   In relation to paragraph 13, an Associate Lecturer member supported the reference to the improvement of Associate Lecturers' understanding of the qualifications from the Institute of Educational Technology (IET) within which they taught modules. However, he asked that greater clarity be given as to the context in which students should approach their tutor for advice on qualifications. It might be more appropriate for them to seek advice on matters relating to qualifications from other colleagues.

13.5   Another member asked for a revision to paragraph 15 of the report which related to the Department of Social Work being encouraged to find ways to support black students to greater levels of achievement. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic

Strategy) agreed that the final sentence would be revised to give an indication of clearer actions and responsibility in this area.

Action: PVC (RAS)

13.6 Subject to the amendments above, the Senate **endorsed** the report and the statement of assurance required by the Scottish Funding Council and contained in paragraph 35.

14 TAUGHT POSTGRADUATE CLASSIFICATION S-2015-05-12

14.1 An Associate Lecturer member referred to paragraph 15 and asked for clarification as to whether the Senate was being asked to approve the move to a pass mark of 50% for all taught postgraduate (PGT) awards and that all qualifications were aligned within a consistent classification framework. She supported the use of merits and distinctions and viewed them as motivational for students. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) confirmed that this was the case.

14.2 The Senate **approved** the recommendations**:**

(a) to move the pass mark for all taught postgraduate (PGT) awards to 50%;

(b) to align all PGT awards within a consistent classification framework comprising the following classifications: fail, pass, merit and distinction.

15 LEARNING AND TEACHING VISION AND PLAN S-2015-05-13

15.1 An Associate Lecturer member sought clarification of the reference to "Academics engaged in assignment marking" in the final bullet point in Appendix 2 on page 9. She considered that the support given before and after assignment marking was critical and could not be separated from the marking itself. It was not clear from the bullet point if such support would be provided to students. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning Innovation) explained that many different models of assessment were under consideration which may include assignment marking. The concerns raised would be referred back to the Project Team.

15.2 The Senate **noted** the report of progress and future plans of the Learning and Teaching Vision and Plan, *Learning Now for the Future.*

16 ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE REVIEW: STANDING ORDERS AND
SCHEDULE OF DELEGATION OF THE SENATE S-2015-05-14

The Senate **approved** with immediate effect:

a) revised Schedule of Delegation for the Senate;

b) revised Standing Orders for the Senate.

17 RESPONSE TO PREVENT (COUNTER-TERRORISM) DUTY S-2015-05-15

17.1 An Associate Lecturer member commented on paragraph 7 (f) and in particular that Associate Lecturers were the group of staff having most direct contact with students. He considered it vital that Associate Lecturers were aware of their responsibilities in respect of the legislation and the appropriate procedures to follow if they had any concerns. The

University Secretary agreed and assured the Senate that procedures would be put in place to improve communication and provide training on the processes to be followed. Another member commented that the work so far was an excellent starting point and he commended the Steering Group on their approach particularly in respect of paragraph 7 (d). He hoped that further reports would be made to the Senate as well as the Council on this important work.

17.2   The Senate **noted** the planned University response to the Prevent (Counter-Terrorism) Duty.

**18   CODE OF PRACTICE FOR RESEARCH AND PROCEDURES
        FOR DEALING WITH RESEARCH MALPRACTICE: AMENDMENTS   S-2015-05-16**

18.1   A member queried the wording of paragraph 8 in Appendix 2, the procedure for dealing with allegations of malpractice or misconduct and suggested that this be amended to include reference to statutory or professional bodies.   The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Academic Strategy) responded that this was not possible as the University was required to comply with the Universities UK Concordat on Research Integrity in its procedures and use its terminology.

18.2   The Senate **approved** amendments to:

(a)   the Code of Practice for Research at the Open University;

(b)   the procedure for dealing with allegations of malpractice of misconduct.

19   RESEARCH DEGREES REGULATIONS: AMENDMENTS   S-2015-05-17

The Senate **approved** amendments to regulations EdD5.4 and RD7 in the Regulations for Postgraduate Research Degrees.

20   ANNUAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW   S-2015-05-18

The Senate **noted** the report on its effectiveness.

21   EMERITUS PROFESSORS   S-2015-05-19

The Senate **approved** the recommendations from the Chair and Readership Subcommittee that the title Emeritus Professor be awarded to:

Professor David Messer;
Professor Alan Tait.

22   THE COUNCIL   S-2015-05-20

The Senate **noted** the report on matters discussed at the meeting of the Council held on 14 July 2015.

23   ACTION BY THE CHAIR   S-2015-05-21

23.1   A member expressed concern that the Academic Appeals Procedures had not been discussed again by the Senate and had been approved through Chair's Action. The University Secretary explained that for the reasons set out in the paper, decisions had needed to be taken quickly.   The Procedures had been discussed in detail with those who had raised issues previously.

23.2   The Senate **noted** the report on action taken by the Chair since the last meeting of the Senate.

24   FUTURE ITEMS OF BUSINESS   **S-2015-05-22**

The Senate **noted** the potential items for the agenda for the Senate meeting in January 2016 subject to the inclusion of the following additional items:

Academic Strategy
University Strategy
Faculty Configurations
Faculty Governance
Executive Deans Appointment Process

25   DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Meetings of the Senate will be held on the following dates:

Wednesday 27 January 2016
Wednesday 13 April 2016 (tbc)
Wednesday 8 June 2016

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