THE SENATE

Minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 16 June 2010 in the Hub Theatre

Present:

1) Ex officio

Mr Martin Bean, Vice-Chancellor
Professor Brigid Heywood, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)
Professor Denise Kirkpatrick, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Quality)
Professor Alan Tait, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Awards)
Professor David Vincent, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Strategy and External Affairs)
Dr Sharon Ding, Dean, Faculty of Education and Language Studies
Professor Chris Earl, Dean, Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology
Dr Simon Bromley, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences
Professor Phil Potts, Dean, Faculty of Science
Mr Jeremy Roche, Dean, Faculty of Health and Social Care
Professor David Rowland, Dean, Faculty of Arts
Ms Anne Howells, Director, Learning and Teaching Solutions
Professor Josie Taylor, Director, Institute of Educational Technology
Mr Will Swann, Director, Students
Mrs Nicky Whitsed, Director, Library Services

Appointed

2) Central Academic Units

Faculty of Arts

Dr Graham Harvey	Dr Lynda Prescott
Professor John Wolffe	

Faculty of Education and Language Studies

Mr Uwe Baumann	Professor Mary Kellett
Dr Jane Cullen	Mr Pete Smith
Dr Regine Hampel	

Faculty of Health and Social Care

Mrs Sue Cole	Dr Jackie Watts
Dr Verina Waights	

Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology

Dr Judy Ekins	Dr Toby O'Neil
Professor Joyce Fortune	Dr Sally Organ
Mr Derek Goldrei	Ms Linda Robson
Mr Anthony Meehan	Professor Anne de Roeck
Dr Tony Nixon	

Faculty of Social Sciences

Dr Troy Cooper   Dr Martin Le Voi
Dr Bob Kelly   Dr Diane Watson

Faculty of Science

Mr Robin Harding   Dr Peter Skelton
Professor Simon Kelley   Professor Ian Wright

Open University Business School

Dr Jacky Holloway   Ms Carmel McMahon

Institute of Educational Technology

Dr Robin Goodfellow   Mr Alan Woodley
Professor Eileen Scanlon

Regional/National Centres

Ms Celia Cohen   Mr Gordon Lammie
Dr Rosemary Hamilton   Dr Liz Manning

Other Central Units

Mr Derek Child

3) Associate Lecturers

Mr Paddy Alton   Dr Meg Hopkins
Dr Isobel Falconer   Mr Dave Horan
Mr Bruce Heil   Dr Michael Isherwood

4) Students Appointed by Open University Students Association

Ms Marianne Cantieri   Mrs Nikki Hadjipanteli
Mrs Roz Evans   Ms Laura Murpy (alternate)
Mr Sandy Gibson   Mrs Barbara Tarling

5) Academic-related Staff

Ms Pat Atkins   Mr Ian Roddis
Dr Juliet Bishop   Mr Derek Sheills
Mrs Lynda Juma   Ms Beverley Stewart
Mrs Bethan Norfor   Ms Elaine Walker
Ms Hilary Robertson

6) Co-opted members

Mr Andy Harding   Dr Peter Scott
Mr Rob Humphreys   Mrs Veronica Summers
Mrs Lucy MacLeod

In attendance

Mr Fraser Woodburn, University Secretary
Ms Jane Duffield, Senior Assistant Secretary (Central Secretariat)
Mrs Julie Tayler, Assistant Secretary (Central Secretariat)
Miss Teresa Coyle, Administrative Assistant (Central Secretariat)
Dr Kate Clarke, Director, Open University Validation Services
Dr Sally Crompton, Head of Open Broadcasting Unit
Ms Barbara Stephens, Regional Director, London

Apologies:

1) Ex officio

Professor James Fleck, Dean, Open University Business School

Appointed

2) Central Academic Units

Faculty of Arts
Professor Richard Allen   Dr Robert Wilkinson
Dr Richard Brown

Faculty of Education and Language Studies
Dr Frank Monaghan   Dr Peter Twining

Faculty of Health and Social Care
Dr Sarah Earle   Dr Sandy Fraser

Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology
Professor Uwe Grimm   Dr Helen Yanacopulos
Professor Hazel Johnson

Faculty of Social Sciences
Mr Robert Clifton   Professor Sophie Watson
Dr Timothy Jordan

Faculty of Science
Dr Andrew Norton   Dr Terry Whatson
Dr Payam Rezaie

Open University Business School
Mrs Keren Bright   Mr Richard Wheatcroft
Ms Lin Smith

4) Students Appointed by Open University Students Association
Mr Derek Naysmith

5) Academic-related Staff
Mrs Carole Baume   Dr Christina Lloyd
Mrs Sheran Burge   Mrs Gill Smith
Mr Ray Brown

1   MINUTES

The Senate **approved** as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 14 April 2010.

2   MATTERS ARISING

Faculty Committee Attendance

The Senate **noted** the response from the Co-ordinator of the Deans' Group regarding attendance at Faculty Committee meetings.

3   REPORT FROM AND QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIR

3.1   Appointment of new Directors

The Vice-Chancellor, Mr Martin Bean, reported on five new senior appointments. Ms Edith Prak had taken up the post of Director of Development at the beginning of May 2010. Mr Guy Mallison had joined the University as Director of Strategy in May 2010. Mr Martin Watkinson had moved from his previous position as Director of Strategy to become Director Government Relations. Mr David Matthewman had been appointed as the OU's new Chief Information Officer and would be responsible for aligning the University's IT infrastructure with its strategy. Dr James Miller would be taking up the position of Director of The Open University in Scotland from the beginning of August 2010.

3.2   Appointment of new Dean

The Vice-Chancellor congratulated Professor Anne De Roeck, who would take over from Professor Chris Earl as the new Dean in the Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology (MCT) from 1 September 2010.

3.3   OUSA Conference

The Vice-Chancellor had attended part of the OU Students' Association (OUSA) Conference in Nottingham in April 2010 and congratulated Roz Evans on all she had achieved on behalf of her constituency during her first year as President, and on being re-elected for a second and final term of office. Ms Evans had made a major contribution the progress of the OUSA Futures project, which had gained solid support at the conference.

3.4   The Open University in Ireland in Belfast - Opening of New HQ

The Vice-Chancellor had attended the official opening of the new headquarters of The Open University in Ireland in Belfast. Over the past year, student numbers had increased by more than 10% in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. The new hub with state-of-the-art video conferencing and the latest communication technologies would allow the University to become even more effective in delivering flexible OU programmes throughout Ireland. The Vice-Chancellor congratulated Dr Rosemary Hamilton on achieving her career-long dream of re-housing The Open University in Ireland in an expanded headquarters in a more accessible and high profile city centre location.

3.5   British Academy Film and Television Awards (BAFTA)

The BBC/OU co-production Th*e Virtual Revolution* had won a BAFTA for the best new media factual series. The success of this series, which had also won a prestigious

international Emmy Award earlier in the year, was attributed to the winning partnership between the OU team, which included OU Business School (OUBS) and MCT academics, and the BBC Factual Money programme unit.

3.6 Low Frequency Array Telescope (LOFAR)

The world's largest radio telescope, LOFAR, in which the OU was a key partner, had been formally opened that week by Queen Beatrix of the Netherlands at a special ceremony, which had been attended by astronomers from the UK and many other countries. LOFAR included 96 UK based antennae that had been installed during the previous week at the Rutherford Appleton's Chilbolton Observatory in Hampshire. It was partially funded through the OU's Science Faculty, thanks to strong support from Professor Brigid Heywood and Professor Phil Potts.

3.7 Economic and Social Science Research Council (ESSRC) Large Grant

The Open University, in partnership with five other UK universities, had been part of a successful ESSRC Large Grant bid for research into Poverty and Social Exclusion in the UK. The OU's primary contribution, led by Learning and Teaching Solutions (LTS), was in the dissemination of the research through the development of a new dedicated website, and would draw on the University's expertise in developing and maintaining open access sites, public engagement and data dissemination.

3.8 Experian Hitwise Online Performance Awards

During 2009, the OU's website, www.open.ac.uk, had beaten many other universities, including Liverpool, Sheffield, Manchester and Warwick, to be ranked first in the Education (Institution) category of the Experian Hitwise Online Performance Awards. These awards celebrated the most successful UK websites in more than 60 key industries, based on the market share of UK visits that a website had received throughout 2009 .

3.9 OU Access Centre

The OU Access Centre, which provided an assessment service for students applying to the government for a Disabled Student Allowance, had for the first time exceeded 2000 assessments in one year. This represented a 38% growth in assessments for the Centre, which had now exceeded its income target by 25%.

The Vice-Chancellor congratulated all of those involved in these achievements, and in the many others that he had not had time to highlight at the meeting, but that he had mentioned in his recent video broadcast.

THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

3.10 The General Election

As a result of the General Election in May, there were now governments of different parties in the four jurisdictions of the UK: a Conservative-Liberal Democratic party in Westminster, a minority Scottish National Party (SNP) government in Scotland, a Labour-Plaid Cymru coalition in Wales, and a four party executive in Northern Ireland. This was likely to lead to a greater divergence of policy in areas such as higher education where legislatures in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland had devolved powers. The OU would need to meet the different policy requirements in each part of the UK, which meant that the University would have to be even more mindful of each of the four nations when developing strategy and policy.

3.11   Reduction of annual public deficit

The first priority of the UK Government was to reduce the annual public deficit, which was currently standing at £156 billion, and to restore economic growth. In the emergency budget of 24 May 2010, the Government had announced cuts of £6.2 billion to public spending in 2010-11. Spending on higher education in England in 2010-11 had been cut by £200 million, which was made up of two elements: a reduction in the planned additional student places from 20,000 to 10,000, of which the OU had been awarded 1500 places; and a further reduction in core funding of £82 million, equivalent to a 2% cut in the teaching grant. It was not yet known what impact this cut would have on the OU. Expenditure reductions for 2011-12 and beyond would be outlined in the budget statement scheduled for 22 June and detailed in the Comprehensive Spending Review that had been scheduled for the autumn.

3.12   Independent Review of Higher Education (HE) Funding and Student Finance (The Browne Review)

The Government would look to the Review to help make HE more affordable, but had confirmed that it would wait for and pay attention to its findings. It was widely expected that students would be expected to contribute more through higher fees, but that loans would be available to help spread the cost. The OU had argued vigorously for loans for part-time students on similar terms to those for full-time students. The University hoped that the Browne Review would heed the call and that the Government would take the steps necessary to create a level playing field. The Browne Review was expected to report in October 2010, and the earliest date at which the new arrangements could be implemented would be autumn 2012.

3.13   The OU's national role

The Prime Minister, Mr David Cameron, had spoken at the OU on 7 June 2010, and had set out the size of the deficit facing the Government. He had expressed the view that the OU had a clear role in driving economic recovery:

"We must never take our eyes off the need for building strong and sustained economic growth in Britain – growth in which our universities, and perhaps the OU in particular, should play a huge part"; and

"The knowledge-based economy is the economy of the future and in building that economy – and recognizing that it is not just about young people's skills, but people's skills all through their lives – the OU has a huge, huge role to play. It is a great British innovation and invention."

In the following week, Mr David Willetts had suggested that the OU also had a role to play in helping further education colleges grow their HE provision. He had said that students should be able to live at home and study at a local college for an external degree from a university with a reputable brand, such as London University and the OU. The University was talking to the Minister and his advisors about ways in which such a scheme might operate. All options were being reviewed, but all recognised that there would be less money available.

3.14   Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland

Fees also remained an issue in Scotland. No political party in Scotland was currently advocating a return to fees for full-time undergraduate education in Scotland. However, many were questioning whether the current arrangements were sustainable. The Labour Party was arguing for a review of funding arrangements and the Cabinet Secretary was pressing the sector to engage in the search for a 'Scottish solution'.

The Welsh government had decided to abolish the universal fee remission grant for Welsh domiciled full-time students at Welsh HE institutions. The fees policy in Wales was at present more closely aligned with that in England. However, it was not known how the Welsh Government would respond if there was a lifting of the fee cap for full-time student in England.

In Northern Ireland, an independent review of variable fees and student finance arrangements in Northern Ireland had reported, but the report had not yet been published. A public consultation was planned for autumn 2010. In the meantime, Sir Graeme Davies was leading the development of a HE Strategy for Northern Ireland on behalf of the Department for Employment and Learning.

The University was trying to influence policy making in all areas of the UK.

THE INTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

3.15   Funding

The University had just been awarded 1500 full-time equivalent (FTE) additional student numbers (ASNs) in 2010/11 under the Universities Modernisation Fund, in spite of the overall cut in numbers from 20,000 to 10,000. This was an indicator of the value that the HEFCE (Higher Education Funding Council for England) perceived in the OU. The increased funding would help position the University to meet the challenges going forward and support initiatives to develop a more efficient University.

3.16   Student recruitment

Based on the May forecast, the University would achieve an overall growth in student recruitment this year of 9.9%. This represented an overall growth of over 7,000 FTEs, which would take the total student cohort to almost 80,000 FTEs. The Vice-Chancellor thanked everyone in Student Services, Marketing and throughout the University for delivering so well on recruitment. Much of the growth had been unplanned, but the University had been able to manage it and the associated cost base successfully.

In view of the fact that the University appeared to have over-recruited without any clawback of funding, a member enquired whether the 1500 ASNs mentioned in the previous item had already been recruited. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Strategy and External Affairs), Professor David Vincent, responded that these numbers had already been recruited, which was why the University had been able to make a successful bid for the ASNs. In response to a query, Professor Vincent said that all of these students were taking Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects.

The OU's financial position continued to be strong and recruitment for the year was almost complete. The University was advanced in taking action to drive efficiencies and to prepare itself for the future. Whilst the OU was in a strong position, it was important to continue to anticipate the changes ahead and plan for them, as the University's preparedness would put it in a position to innovate when other HE institutions would be forced to retrench.

3.17   Change of title

In accordance with the changes agreed at the Senate in April 2010, Professor Alan Tait's title would change from Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Awards) to Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Qualifications) from 1 August 2010.

4   STRATEGIC PLANNING AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE   S/10/3/1

The Senate **noted** the unconfirmed minutes from the meeting of the Strategic Planning and Resources Committee (SPRC) held on 21 April 2010.

5   LEARNING, TEACHING AND STUDENT SUPPORT COMMITTEE   S/10/3/2

5.1   A member who had raised the issue of recruitment targets for students from black and ethnic minority (BME) backgrounds remarked that he was pleased that the level of participation of BME students would now be monitored independently of other targets, and that it would be particularly helpful to do so by faculty. In the part time sector as a whole, BME students represented 15% of the student population in England. However, in MCT, this figure was only 12.5%. This picture was likely to emerge across disciplines and might imply that some of the University's targets should be stretched.

5.2   Another member commented that this proposal to collect information on ethnicity, particularly when taken together with the intention to integrate proposals for developing employability into existing staff tasks as outlined in item 4, would create an increased workload for the chairs of course teams. Inevitably, this would decrease the time and attention that could be dedicated to ensuring that students received the best teaching. The Director, Students, Mr Will Swann, said that the data regarding BME participation by course would be collected centrally and would not require additional work by course team chairs. However, course teams would be expected to respond to that data if required. The provision of employability data was a regulatory requirement: HEFCE was demanding employability statements for all programmes in all universities. The OU would endeavour to find the most cost-effective and efficient way of collecting such data. The HE economy that was likely to develop after the Browne Review would be one in which student employability would have growing significance and it would be necessary to explain to students the employability benefits of the OU's provision. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Awards), Professor Alan Tait, remarked that he understood the increasing complexity of prioritisation for course team chairs and other teaching staff, but the concerns for social justice and employability should be a natural part of the University's focus on teaching, and therefore integral to the University's work.

5.3   The Senate:

a)   **noted** the report;
b)   **approved** a recommendation to conduct an annual review of the student diversity performance indicators, at institutional level and broken down by faculty, drawn from the equality and diversity annual report.

6   QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE   S/10/3/3

The Senate **noted** the report on the discussion at the meeting of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) held on 10 May 2010.

7   HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE   S/10/3/4

7.1   The Vice Chancellor said that no objections to the list of nominations for the award of honorary degrees to be conferred in 2011 had been received since the last meeting of the Senate.

7.2   Members noted some minor errors on the paper.

7.3 The Senate **approved** the recommended list nominations for the award of honorary degrees to be conferred in 2011.

8 **CENTRAL DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE (CDC)** **S/10/3/5**

8.1 A member, who was an occasional member of the CDC, welcomed the reduction in cases that the Committee had dealt with in the past year. The work of the CDC had become more efficient and it should be recognised that this was largely as a result of the plagiarism project. However, as part of the CDC annual report, there should be more information on the cases that had been dealt with by the Academic Conduct Officers (ACOs). The workload of the ACOs and related staff was escalating and it was important that steps were taken to manage this effectively. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Awards), Professor Alan Tait, noted this point. Referring to paragraph 12 of the CDC report, the Director, Students, Mr Will Swann, commented that it was intended to provide the Senate with an overview of the processes and outcomes of the entire disciplinary structure and the handling of the academic, pre-disciplinary side of plagiarism. However, in order to do this, it was necessary to ensure that the data was robust and in one place.

8.2 Another member commented that it would be useful to have an annual report at regional level, as much of the work had been subsumed by the regions and nations. Mr Swann responded that the project team would consider this.

Action: WS

8.3 A member was concerned with the effect of the plagiarism activities on associate lecturers (ALs), where there seemed be some inconsistency. If a report were run on a student, some ALs were being asked not to mark that student's assessments until the report could be further investigated. This had been known to cause delays beyond the expected turn-around time, which was then be negatively recorded. Data should be collected to demonstrate what was happening and how it differed between course teams.

8.4 Referring to paragraph 6, another member thought that the ability for ACO's to apply the relevant penalty from the agreed tariff had, in some instances, been taken to excess and this had created some issues. Firstly, there were students who, because they had received a penalty in respect of an assignment, had had their examination results delayed by up to three months because the course marks had to be calculated manually. If the student then failed the examination and took a resit, they found themselves in the same situation again. Secondly, the amount of work involved meant that some ALs and regional staff were cautious about becoming involved in the procedures and would take more lenient view. This was an unsatisfactory situation, which it was hoped would improve over time. Mr Swann responded that he was unsurprised by these comments. The last meeting of the Steering Group had received a report on the turn-around times of ACOs, which had indicated some unacceptable delays. Work had begun to understand the circumstances of these delays, and there appeared to be a need for a small, central coordinating team to help and support ACOs across the University. A review of the assumptions made about workload was also taking place, which would indicate whether these been justified in the light of the experience of the first year. The University should not be in this situation at the end of another year.

8.5 Another member highlighted that the figures in the CDC report were the tip of an iceberg. There was a good deal of work that went on behind the few cases that were eventually referred to CDC. As the software to detect plagiarism was rolled out, staff would have difficulty in coping with its outputs and, unless the general workload associated with all cases of plagiarism was reduced, the system would not be able to cope in a year's time.

8.6 A member said that one of the OUBS course teams had reported that if plagiarism was tracked for long enough, using both sets of software, the number of cases began to go

down as students got the message. However, there was still a strong upward trend with regard to students from some of the international partnerships, which indicated that there was much progress still to be made.

8.7   The Senate **noted** the findings of the CDC report.

9   SPECIAL APPEALS COMMITTEE   **S/10/3/6**

The Senate **noted** the findings of the report.

10   STUDENT SUPPORT REVIEW   **S/10/3/7**

10.1   The Director, Students, Mr Will Swann, introduced the paper and apologised for an error in it. There had been an amendment to the cover sheet, which had not been updated in the body of the paper. The Senate was being asked to note and to comment on aspects of the report, not to approve.

10.2   The paper gave a progress report on the implementation of the recommendations of the Student Support Review approved by the Senate in April 2008. It set out some changes to the accountabilities for the actions arising from the recommendations, which made no difference to the weight given to them, but which brought them into line with *OU Futures* and allowed a more satisfactory integration of these activities with the developing Focus Areas.   The paper also provided information, and an opportunity to comment, on the evaluation strategy that would drive the character of the final report in June 2011.

10.3   There was a great deal of excitement and enthusiasm amongst all involved in the pilots, and a positive feeling about what was possible. The ease with which Student Services and faculties were able to work together made it much easier to solve problems, improve services and support students. Student Support Pilot Teams were becoming a source of much innovation, but the University would have to think carefully about what practices it wished to embed across the University. The more diversity, the greater the risk of inconsistency, particularly as students moved across different areas of the curriculum.

Recommendations 1 – 8: Personal and Personalised Support

10.4   A member sought clarification regarding recommendations 5 - 8. Recommendation 6 said that the resources allocated to Level 1 course support and pathway support would increase as a proportion of the total resources for student support. Recommendation 7 said that Level 2 and 3 undergraduate students would have access to course support from appropriately qualified staff. The paper stated that recommendations 5 and 7 were existing policies and required no further action. However, the final report of the Student Support Review Phase 2, and the debate at the Senate in April 2008, clearly linked recommendations 5 – 8. The background discussion indicated that, when these recommendations were taken together, the additional resource required for Level 1 would require a redirection of resources for Levels 2 and 3. Unless the overall resource available had increased, this was still the case. Several members shared the view that recommendations 6 and 7 were two sides of the same equation and it was impossible to evaluate one without the other, and that recommendations 5 and 7 should not be removed from sight. Confirmation was sought that any changes in policy would have to be approved by the Senate.

10.5   Mr Swann said that no concerted work had been done on these recommendations, which had caused the greatest comment and concern for the Senate in April 2008, because it was first necessary to understand the outputs of the Student Support Team pilots. It was for the faculties and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Awards) to decide on the teaching

and assessment strategies and the resources required for each course. The Student Support Review was just one way of examining this issue and there would not yet be any proposals emerging from it on the allocation of resources across courses, programmes and levels. The Senate had been invited to comment specifically on recommendation 6 because of its relationship to Level 1 Coherence. No further action would be taken at this time. The changes to the accountability for particular actions did not mean that there would no longer be any reporting. The final report in June 2011 would give an account of the action taken on all recommendations, including 5, 6, 7 and 8.

Action: WS

10.6 A member remarked that it was difficult to comment on the resource necessary, when there was no commentary on the experience within the pilots with regard to what was working or not, or where a shift of direction might be necessary. Mr Swann responded that he would be delighted to give a presentation to or separate seminar for members of the Senate, before the final report came to the Senate to better convey the work of the pilots. The Chair of the Associate Lecturers Committee said that a seminar would be useful and helpful. The Senate would have to make some difficult decisions when the final report was presented in June 2011, and members would wish to be well informed. The pilot teams might also give presentations to their regional committees, which would enable a wide number of ALs, staff and students to get some detailed first hand information to feed through to their Senate representatives. The Associate Lecturers' Committee were also keen to build links between the AL Assembly, from which the AL representatives would be chosen in 2011, and the Student Support Team pilots. A student member reported that the OUSA Senate Reference Group had had a presentation on the Student Support Review immediately prior to the Senate meeting, which had been extremely interesting and encouraging.

Action: WS

10.7 A member welcomed the paper and remarked on the enthusiasm and positive results that the pilot had generated in her region. It was encouraging that the paper was not recommending a 'one-size fits all' solution, but rather a mix and match approach to suit particular courses and qualifications. With reference to recommendation 4, regarding student choice in the personalised support that they receive, the member asked to what extent this linked to the Student Operating Model project, particularly the information, advice and guidance streams. Mr Swann responded that this project, which had been initiated in anticipation of further reductions in funding in the autumn, aimed to find ways of bringing down the demands on staff time by making it easier for students to find information online. It was critical that there was an element of truly personalised online advice and guidance.

10.8 Referring to paragraph 17, a student member commented that the high aspirations around personalised support had been approved by the Senate two years before. Discussions with the University about the VLE had revealed that the only control that a student had over the look and feel of their online experience was to switch off the style sheets and to look at plain text. This raised accessibility issues, not just questions of attractiveness. There was a long way to go before the University could say its services could be personalised. Mr Swann responded that the recommendations could not be implemented overnight: the transformation in the way the OU carried out its activities would take time, and the University had properly focussed its attentions on particular areas with the resources available. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Quality), Professor Denise Kirkpatrick, commented that the notion of personalisation was intended to extend across a range of online environments. The VLE was on the road map for development and featured in the Learning and Teaching Strategy, but it would not necessarily be implemented during the 12 months of that strategy because of the availability of resources.

10.9 Another member said that whilst recommendation 4 was important, the development of the personal programme tutor was more critical. If it became necessary to choose between options because of the financial situation, the latter should be given a higher priority.

10.10 With reference to recommendation 4, a member commented that the OU was good at thinking for students and deciding what services to push at them, but it did not have a good history of asking students to consider what they wanted from the University. Students could be asked whether they wished to opt out of any services, or to opt in to services that some parts of the University wished to trial. It was necessary for the OU to change its mindset in order to put students at the centre of its thinking.

Recommendations 9 – 13: Qualification Based Services Programme

10.11 Referring to paragraph 27 and the facility for students to withdraw from qualifications, a member commented that, if the strategy was successful, students who discovered that they had chosen the wrong programme might wish to transfer to another. As the quality assurance processes of the University became more programme based, it was important to be able to capture the fact that students were transferring, rather than withdrawing from the OU altogether, or the statistics would be distorted.

10.12 A member commented that evaluation was difficult because there was so much that might influence the retention and progression of students that it was difficult to identify what actually made the difference. The metrics used to evaluate the progression and retention of those students who declared their qualification intention might be different to those used for students who just wanted to study a module and who had no interest in continuing to a qualification. An Amazon approach might be used in this instance: if a student has studied one course, then they may be interested in a related one. Mr Swann said that work in Focus Area 4 was focussed on establishing measures of progression that were more appropriate to the different kinds of student in the OU. The intention was to collect data in four categories: completion, or the proportion of students completing a module; progression, or the proportion of students that moved from one course to the next; success, or how many students actually achieved their stated study goal; and how fast students moved through OU study, or how many credits students achieved in a given period of time. Once these metrics had been specified, and student study goal data was available, the OU would be able to segment students into those who shared common study goals and support them accordingly. Professor Kirkpatrick commented that an Amazon style recommendation engine was being built as part of the SocialLearn project. The SocialLearn pilot would be used to trial and refine the engine, but it was hoped that this would feed into supporting student progression and selection.

10.13 A member said that although there was no pilot team running in Scotland, there had been a focus on retention for some years. Data was important in enabling conversations between academic staff and those in student services about particular difficulties and how these might be addressed. It also helped the University to target specific groups of students, which was particularly valuable at a time of scarce resources. Partnership working between academic staff and student services was key, but it was also important to focus on the relationship between AL's and students, as this was crucial to the retention and progression project.

Recommendations 19-20: Extending Contact with Students

10.14 Referring to recommendation 19, which suggested that all faculty-based academic staff would engage directly with students for a minimum of 10 days per academic year, a member suggested that this would require a change in the terms and conditions of service of academic staff. Currently, staff were required to teach for 10 days at a residential

school, but other forms of direct student contact were not specified. If the pilots demonstrated that it was desirable to put this recommendation into practice, then negotiations should commence to revise the terms and conditions of service. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Awards) said that this was not a fair representation of terms and conditions. Central academic staff were expected to engage in a residential school or equivalent. There was a wide variety of practice across academic units, such that if it was not practical for a member of academic staff to attend a residential school, they could extend their student contact in other ways, for example in student forums.

10.15 A member enquired whether some of the questions in the evaluation could be broadened to include areas that were not covered by the pilots, for example how many students attended face to face sessions, and whether these were tutorials or some other type of session. This would provide valuable information to compare with the pilots. Mr Swann said that the only data currently available in this area was inferred from student end of course surveys. Some work was being undertaken on this issue and Mr Swann undertook to provide details.

Action: WS

10.16 A member commented that the issue of recording the number of students attending tutorials highlighted another difficulty. As there was a correlation between attendance and performance, students were encouraged to attend tutorials. However, it was impossible to prove that it was attendance at the tutorials that resulted in a better performance. It was those students who were already keen and assiduous about their studies, who tended to attend tutorials. When looking at the results of extending contact with students, it was necessary to be careful that a cause and effect relationship was not inferred simply because there was a correlation. Another member said that in OUBS projects had been run where tutorial attendance had been logged and analysed, and this data was available.

Evaluation Strategy

10.17 Referring to the Course Tutor/Associate Lecturer questionnaire mentioned in paragraph 57, a member suggested that the questionnaire be extended to those course tutors who were not directly involved in the pilots, but who had students who were. Mr Swann said that he would seek to build this in to the survey.

Action: WS

10.18 Another member remarked that it was easy to get bogged down in just evaluating the regions that were directly involved in the Student Support Teams. For example, Physical Sciences was not confined to the one region where the pilot was taking place, so it was important to find out whether the pilot's work had impacted on Physical Science students in other regions.

10.19 The Senate:

a) **noted** that recommendations 1-4 and 14-18 of the recommendations approved by the Senate in April 2008 remained with the Student Support Review for implementation and piloting;

b) **noted** the formal reallocation of implementation and reporting responsibility for recommendations 8, 9-13, 19-26 to the Focus Areas, individuals or projects listed in section 3 of this paper.

11   EMERITUS PROFESSORS   S/10/3/8

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

a) Professor Colin Gray
b) Professor Dennis Walder
c) Professor Rosemary O'Day
d) Professor Tim Benton
e) Profess Lorna Hardwick
f) Processor Dorothy Atkinson
g) Professor Janet Newman
h) Professor Paul Lewis

12   VISITING ACADEMICS   S/10/3/9

The Senate **approved** the introduction of a new process for the appointment of individuals who currently held or have held academic posts, but were being proposed as visiting academics at The Open University at level above that of their current post.

13   THE COUNCIL   S/10/3/10

13.1   The Vice-Chancellor highlighted a correction to be made to section 4 of the paper S/10/3/10 The Council where there was a brief summary report on the Finance Committee. Paragraph 4.1, which referred to the Funding Council's grant announcements, should read:

13.2   "The increase in grants for England and Wales were welcome and here the OU had done better than the rest of the sector. In Scotland it was more on a par with other HE providers."

13.3   The Senate **noted** the report on the Council's discussions at the meeting of the Council held on 11 May 2010.

14   ACTION BY THE CHAIR   S/10/3/11

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

15   FUTURE ITEMS OF BUSINESS   S/10/3/12

The Senate **noted** the list of potential items for discussion at the meeting of the Senate in October 2010.

16   FAREWELL AND THANKS   C/10/1/11

The Vice-Chancellor reminded the Senate that the nomination period for members as of 1 September 2010 to be elected to Senate committees was open until noon Wednesday 24 June 2010. Further information and nomination forms were available from the Central Secretariat.

The Senate thanked Mr Tony Wilkins, who was retiring at the end of June 2010, for managing the AV for Senate.   The Senate also thanked those members who were retiring or standing down for their services to the Senate, including:

Retiring members:

• Dr Peter Skelton
• Mr Robin Harding
• Mr Derek Child
• Dr Rosemary Hamilton
• Mr Gordon Lammie

Members standing down:

• Professor David Vincent
• Professor Chris Earl
• Dr Richard Brown
• Dr Uwe Baumann
• Professor Mary Kellett
• Dr Frank Monaghan
• Dr Sandy Fraser
• Dr Jackie Watts
• Professor Hazel Johnson
• Ms Linda Robson
• Dr Tony Nixon
• Dr Martin Le Voi
• Professor Sophie Watson
• Mr Robert Clifton
• Dr Diane Watson
• Professor Simon Kelley
• Dr Andrew Norton

• Mr Alan Woodley
• Mr Richard Wheatcroft
• Ms Lin Smith
• Ms Bev Stewart
• Dr Juliet Bishop
• Mr Ray Brown
• Mrs Sheran Burge
• Dr Isobel Falconer
• Mr Paddy Alton
• Mr Bruce Heil
• Dr Meg Hopkins
• Mr David Horan
• Dr Michael Isherwood
• Mrs Veronica Summers
• Mr Andy Harding
• Mrs Lucy MacLeod
• Mr Rob Humphreys

17   DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS

Meetings would be held on the following dates:

Wednesday 13 October 2010
Wednesday 26 January 2011
Wednesday 6 April 2011
Wednesday 8 June 2011

Julie Tayler
Assistant Secretary
Central Secretariat
j.d.tayler@open.ac.uk
June 2010