



## THE SENATE

### Minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 8 June 2011 in the Hub Theatre

#### Present:

##### 1) Ex officio

Mr Martin Bean, Vice-Chancellor  
 Professor Alan Bassindale, Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)  
 Professor Alan Tait, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Qualifications)  
 Dr Simon Bromley, Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences  
 Professor Anne De Roeck, Dean, Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology  
 Dr Sharon Ding, Dean, Faculty of Education and Language Studies  
 Professor James Fleck, Dean, Faculty of Business and Law  
 Mr Jeremy Roche, Dean, Faculty of Health and Social Care  
 Professor David Rowland, Dean and Director of Studies, Faculty of Arts  
 Professor Hazel Rymer, Dean, Faculty of Science  
 Mr Will Swann, Director, Students  
 Professor Josie Taylor, Director of the Institute of Educational Technology  
 Mrs Nicky Whitsed, Director, Library Services  
 Ms Anne Howells, Director of Learning and Teaching Solutions

#### Appointed

##### 2) Central Academic Units

###### Faculty of Arts

Professor Richard Allen	Dr Lynda Prescott
Professor Suman Gupta	Dr Bob Wilkinson
Dr Graham Harvey	Professor John Wolffe

###### Faculty of Business & Law

Mrs Keren Bright	Mr Mike Phillips
Dr Jacky Holloway	

###### Faculty of Education and Language Studies

Dr Regine Hampel	Professor Karen Littleton
Ms Felicity Harper	Mr Pete Smith
Dr Steve Hutchinson	

###### Faculty of Health and Social Care

Mrs Sue Cole	Dr Sarah Earle
Professor Monica Dowling	Dr Verina Waights
Professor Jan Draper	

###### Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology

Dr David Bowers	Professor Andy Lane
Dr Judy Ekins	Dr Nicolas Moss
Professor Joyce Fortune	Dr Toby O'Neil
Professor Uwe Grimm	Dr Sally Organ

**Faculty of Social Sciences**

Dr Troy Cooper  
 Dr Helen Kaye  
 Dr Raia Prokhovnik

Professor Michael Seward  
 Dr Jason Toynebee

**Faculty of Science**

Dr John Baxter  
 Dr Payam Rezaie  
 Dr Nick Rogers

Dr David Rothery  
 Dr Terry Whatson  
 Professor Ian Wright

**Institute of Educational Technology**

Dr Robin Goodfellow

Professor Eileen Scanlon

**Other Central Units**

Dr Rebecca Ferguson

**Regional/National Centres**

Mrs Lynda Brady  
 Mrs Celia Cohen

Dr Liz Manning  
 Ms Barbara Stephens

**3) Associate Lecturers**

Dr Isobel Falconer  
 Mr Bruce Heil  
 Mr John James

Dr Barbara Korner (alternate)  
 Mr Ronald Macintyre (alternate)  
 Dr Walter Pisarski

**4) Students Appointed by Open University Students Association**

Mrs Marianne Cantieri  
 Ms Laura Murphy  
 Mr David Reed

Mrs Tania Rogers  
 Mr Carey Shaw  
 Mrs Sandra Summers

**5) Academic-related Staff**

Mrs Liz Armitage  
 Mrs Carole Baume  
 Mr Martin Kenward  
 Mr Billy Khokhar  
 Dr Christina Lloyd  
 Mrs Bethan Norfor

Ms Hilary Robertson  
 Mr Ian Roddis  
 Ms Gill Smith  
 Mr Michael Street  
 Ms Elaine Walker

**6) Co-opted members**

Mr John D'Arcy  
 Dr James Miller

Dr Peter Scott

**In attendance**

Dr Kate Clarke, Director, Open University Validation Services  
 Mr Andrew Law, Director, Open Media Unit  
 Mrs Liz Burton-Pye, Developments Manager, Learning Innovation  
 Mr Lucian Hudson, Director of Communications  
 Mr Guy Mallison, Director of Strategy  
 Ms Nikki Bolleurs, Programme Director, Student Support Review (minute 9)  
 Mrs Rachel Burn, Programme Manager, Student Support Review (minute 9)  
 Dr Ann Pegg, Lecturer, Centre for Inclusion and Curriculum (minute 10)  
 Professor John Allen, Professor of Economic Geography, Social Sciences (minute 11)

**Apologies:**

**1) Ex officio**

Professor Denise Kirkpatrick, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Quality)

**Appointed**

**2) Central Academic Units**

**Faculty of Business & Law**

Ms Carmel McMahon

Mr Alessandro Saroli

**Faculty of Education and Language Studies**

Dr Jane Cullen

Dr Peter Twining

**Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology**

Mr Derek Goldrei

Dr Helen Yanacopulos

Dr Shirley Northover

**Faculty of Social Sciences**

Dr Bob Kelly

Dr Hugh Mackay

**Faculty of Science**

Dr Robert Saunders

**Institute of Educational Technology**

Professor Agnes Kukulska-Hulme

**3) Associate Lecturers**

Mr Paddy Alton

Dr Roma Oakes

**5) Academic-Related Staff**

Ms Fiona Carey

Mr Tony O'Shea-Poon

Mrs Lynda Juma

**6) Co-opted Members**

Mr Rob Humphreys

Dr Petrina Stevens

**1 MATTERS ARISING**

S/11/2/M

The Senate **approved** as a correct record the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 6 April 2011.

**2 MATTERS ARISING**

With reference to Minute 13.4 (p18), an associate lecturer (AL) member said that the mood of the Senate had been supportive with respect to the proposal that ALs should be included in the composition of exam and assessment boards (EABs), and that this should be minuted. The Chair suggested that the minutes should reflect that "other members of the Senate shared the view that this should be considered". The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Qualifications), Professor Alan Tait, said that the correction regarding the use of 'full-time' had been agreed. It was not uniform practice to include ALs on EABs, but he would consider this option and report back to the Senate.

**Action: PVC (CQ)**

**3 REPORT FROM AND QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIR**

- 3.1 The Chair extended a particular welcome to some new members attending their first meeting of the Senate. Mrs Marianne Cantieri had been elected as the new President of the OU Students Association (OUSA) at the OUSA Conference in April 2011. Mrs Tania Rogers was the new OUSA Vice-President for Education, responsible for consideration of the University's educational programmes and related matters. Mr Andrew Law, Director, Open Media Unit, was joining the Senate as an 'in attendance' member, replacing Dr Sally Crompton.
- 3.2 Professor Tim Blackman had been appointed as the new Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship) and would join the OU in September. Professor Blackman was currently Professor of Sociology and Social Policy in the Faculty of Social Sciences at Durham University and had been a member of the Academy of Social Sciences since 2004. He was also Dean of Durham University's Queen's campus in Stockton-on-Tees, which had had a £20 million income stream and an investment programme of £17 million pounds in the last two years. Another prestigious position held by Professor Blackman was as Director of the Wolfson Research Institute, which conducted research on human health and well-being. The Institute brought together researchers from across almost all of Durham University's academic departments, along with their national and international networks. This was a pivotal role for the University and the appointment would be communicated internally and externally in due course. The Chair thanked Professor Alan Bassindale for stepping into the breach during the search for Professor Brigid Heywood's successor and for his great service to the University.
- 3.3 Referring to some of the good news from around the University, the Chair said that two academic staff members, Professor David Rowland, Dean of the Faculty of Arts, and Professor Peter Taylor, Faculty of Science, had been appointed as auditors for the Quality Assurance Agency's (QAA) Institutional Review process in England and Northern Ireland, starting in September 2011. Professor Richard Allen, Faculty of Arts, and Ms Mary Langan, Faculty of Social Sciences, had been re-appointed as QAA auditors. The University had nominated four students as Student Reviewers and all had been appointed: Roz Evans and Lisa Carson, both former Presidents of OUSA, Charlotte Richer and Anthony Bagshaw.
- 3.4 In the Arts Faculty, Professor Helen King had been named as one of two Classicists in the *Guardian/Observer's* list of the UK's top 300 public intellectuals on 8 May 2011.

- 3.5 A student Kris Haddow, who was studying towards BA (Hons) in Literature, had won the 'See Me Scotland' creative writing competition, themed on 'support'. See Me Scotland was a national campaign to end the stigma and discrimination of mental ill-health.
- 3.6 The Faculty of Arts, in partnership with the British Library, and the National Libraries of Wales and Scotland, had been awarded a Block Grant Partnership: Capacity Building award by the Arts and Humanities Research Council. With the overarching theme of 'The Arts and Their Audiences', the award of £150,000 was for five PhD studentships over the next three years in the departments of History, Music and Literature.
- 3.7 Dr Amanda Wrigley, an associate lecturer on A219, *Exploring the classical world*, who completed her PhD in the Department of Classical Studies in 2009, had won the Philadelphia Constantinidis Essay in Critical Theory Award 2010 for publishing a chapter of her thesis.
- 3.8 The Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology (MCT) had recently scored some notable successes on the accreditation front. One of the three most prominent engineering institutions, the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE), had for the first time accredited the OU's three engineering degrees – the Bachelor and Master of Engineering, and the Master of Science in Engineering.
- 3.9 With reference to recent activities in the political arena, the Chair said that there had been big changes in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland as a result of the May 2011 elections. The elections had delivered a decisive victory for the Scottish National Party (SNP), a Labour-led administration in Wales and a strengthened coalition approach to devolved government in Northern Ireland.
- 3.10 The election of an SNP majority government in Scotland meant that tuition fees, or a graduate contribution, for full-time students was off the agenda in Scotland for the next five years. The SNP's emphatic pre-election commitment to maintain 'free' higher education provided an opportunity to call for this policy to be extended to part-time students. Colleagues in Scotland were continuing to engage positively with officials at the Scottish Government to explore how support towards tuition fees for some part-time students could be offered to a wider group of students. These discussions had been aided by the results of a Mori/IPSOS poll, commissioned by the OU in Scotland, which had found that while over one in three people in Scotland would consider going back to study part-time at university, a quarter would be put off by the cost of tuition fees.
- 3.11 The Labour Welsh Government would continue with its tuition fee grant policy, which would cover the cost of fees above the current level of £3,375, for full-time Welsh domiciled students, wherever they studied in the UK. However, as all Welsh HEIs were seeking to charge £9,000, there would be increased pressure on the higher education budget to cover this cost. There were implications here for the total funding pot available for part-time students and providers, however positive the Government's intentions for part-time student loans were. News of a small but welcome increase in grant from the Higher Education Funding Council for Wales (HEFCW) had previously been reported. Since then, the funding for the Widening Access Strategy had been announced and the OU in Wales would again receive an increase, securing £1.32 million for next year. This was as a result of high performance in targeted widening access recruitment across Wales and colleagues in Wales deserved thanks for and congratulations on this achievement.
- 3.12 In Ireland, the outgoing Ulster Unionist minister at the Department of Employment and Learning (DEL) published five options for fees prior to the assembly election. These ranged from no fees to a fee level comparable to the situation in England following the Browne Review; the higher fee options envisaged a greater reduction in block grant to HEIs. These options were subject to public consultation until Friday 10 June 2011. The decision on funding arrangements would be an early priority for Dr Stephen Farry, the new

DEL minister and the first from the Alliance party. The Open University's presence in the Republic continued to develop with the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny, having attended the OU's Dublin pre-graduation event and also meeting the OU's National Director during the Queen's state visit to the Republic of Ireland. In the Republic, the OU had been included in an important national initiative which provided part-time education and training funds for people in Ireland who had lost their jobs because of the economic downturn. The Irish Higher Education Authority had granted 205,000 euros to the OU in Ireland during the first year of a multi annual fund to support 50 registrations on the University's *Discovering Mathematics* (MU123) module and 100 places on its *My Digital Life* (TU100) certificate programme. This was the first time that the University had received funding directly from government to support its operation in Ireland. Not only did this establish the University's credentials to contribute further to the national recovery and Irish higher education, but most importantly it enabled the OU to make a difference to more lives in these challenging times.

- 3.13 In England, the University's discussions with Government to secure the best deal for part-time students continued. At the beginning of May 2011, the Vice-Chancellor presented evidence to the Government Select Committee into the Future of Higher Education. This provided a great opportunity to argue for the importance of:
- a) Protecting the current level of £372m widening participation funding from HEFCE;
  - b) Protecting the current level of £72m to cover the additional costs to universities of supporting part-time students;
  - c) Clarity around transitional arrangements for part-time students as we move from the current system to the new arrangements for tuition fee loans.
- 3.14 The Vice-Chancellor's evidence, together with that of the other panel members from organisations like the 157 Group of Further Education Colleges and The Sutton Trust, would inform the Government's approach to widening participation to be presented in the forthcoming White Paper on the Future of Higher Education in England, due to be published in mid-June 2011. In addition to information on how the Government intended to support widening participation, the White Paper was expected to include proposals on controlling the number of students attending university, and supporting alternative ways of accessing higher education - such as attending a private university or a Further Education College
- 3.15 The University continued to prepare to ensure it was able to respond to future changes. A report providing an overview of the objectives, methodology and timescales of the UK Market Strategy project, one of the three work streams within the University's Strategic Response programme, was included elsewhere on the agenda. The Vice-Chancellor would continue to work with the Senate to ensure that as the OU moved from its strategic response to execution, it did so effectively in all dimensions of the University.
- 3.16 Referring to the People and Planet Green League table published by The Guardian on 7 June 2011, which ranked UK universities according to their environmental policies and performance, a member asked about the University's response to the OU's poor performance where it had been ranked 126 out of 138. The University Secretary, Mr Fraser Woodburn, responded that it was difficult for the OU to score highly in that league table, because it was designed for campus-based universities with student residencies. It was also very focussed on inputs, not outputs. As the OU did not fit this model, the University had asked to be excluded from the survey, but this request had been refused to date. Nevertheless, there were measures in the survey that were relevant to the OU and on which the University could improve, and the University would be working on these.

- 3.17 Another member requested an update on the situation with regard to replacing the Director, Business Development. The Vice-Chancellor said that the University was at the end of the first stage of a three-part process. The aim was to get someone in post by August 2012.
- 3.18 The member also asked for a view on the new University that was planning to charge fees of £18,000 per year. The Vice-Chancellor commented that this University was clearly targeting an elite audience. A parallel could be seen in the MBA arena, where there was huge variation in fees depending on the way in which the programme was offered. This was evidence that the landscape of higher education (HE) in the UK was beginning to change in many different ways. The Government had now said that private providers would have access to student loans of up to £6000. Many different types of provider would start to offer many different choices and opportunities. These would be challenges for both students and institutions alike. This news had illustrated that there was room at the top end of the price spectrum for HE provision and that there might be a polarisation of the UK HE sector that would begin to exclude some populations of students.

#### **4 STRATEGIC PLANNING AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE (SPRC) S/2011/3/01**

- 4.1 Referring to confidential minute 6 regarding the centralisation of IT desktop support, a member from the Faculty of Arts said that many colleagues had expressed concern about the prospect of this change. Whilst it was necessary to reduce costs, this should be done in a manner that was sensitive to local situations. The existing Faculty-based support worked extremely efficiently and it was doubtful whether centralisation would provide any real savings; indeed, a less responsive service was likely to lead to extra overall costs, through the loss of staff time in waiting for IT problems to be resolved. Whilst centralised support may have been successfully piloted in other units, had consideration been given to the challenge of scaling up such provision across the University, while at the same time meeting the specialist and distinctive needs of particular CAUs? There was also a wider issue of process regarding a lack of prior consultation with all staff about the proposed changes. Where compulsory redundancies were a possibility, the need for sensitivity was appreciated, but this did not wholly override the responsibility to keep informed those whose work may be significantly affected and to listen to and respond to their legitimate concerns.
- 4.2 The University Secretary, Mr Fraser Woodburn said that the legitimate concerns of staff were about the level of service that they would receive, but the proposal was being implemented after consultation with the Deans and the University was confident it could provide an acceptable level of service at reduced cost. The issue of the level of service had yet to be fleshed out in a service level agreement, and there might be opportunities to discuss what this level might be. There were positive advantages about the new arrangements, for example, as the technology on desks became more diverse and complex, there were gains to be had from IT staff supporting units being more closely integrated with IT staff in the central team who were responsible for the more complex areas. Prof David Rowland, Dean, Faculty of Arts, said that the proposal had originated collectively from the faculties. The new arrangement would be challenging for the Arts faculty and he would be in discussion with IT staff to see how this disruption could be minimized. Another member said that she was unable to comment on the extent of the consultation. The heads of department were concerned about the response time and were not convinced that the gains outweighed the losses, especially if technology was being used for a meeting.
- 4.3 Referring to SPRC minute 5.9 concerning the availability of loans to OU students, an associate lecturer member asked whether information was available as to whether OU students were likely to take out loans, given their other commitments and liabilities. Mr Woodburn said that the consultants, Monitor, had been doing work in this area and had discovered that many of the University's potential students would want to take advantage of

government loans and would find them an attractive option. However, this was not the case for all: some would not be eligible and others would not wish to take them up. It would be necessary to explore an alternative source of loans, perhaps through the University's loan scheme, the OU Student Budget Accounts. Loans might be extended over a longer period of time, rather than as at present over the lifetime of the module, and this might be attractive to a different category of student. In response to a further enquiry, Mr Woodburn said that this information would be available in the report on the UK market strategy. A workshop would be run for members of the Senate in September 2011, in which the UK market strategy would be presented.

4.4 The Senate **noted**:

- a) the unconfirmed Minutes from the meeting of the Strategic Planning and Resources Committee that took place on 13 April 2011;
- b) the unconfirmed confidential and restricted Minutes from the meeting.

**5 LEARNING, TEACHING AND STUDENT SUPPORT COMMITTEE (LTSSC) S/2011/3/02**

5.1 A member said that whilst the revised paper on Insufficient Academic Progress (IAP) (Appendix to paper S/2011/3/02) made a better case for the changes than the one previously presented to the Senate, many of the fundamental issues remained. Referring to the IAP Exceptions Policy, the critical issues were primarily in respect of a student's past record. The Restricted status came into force on the final or third strike for a student, but it would be preferable if more flexibility could be given by taking the whole of a student's record into account. Some students might suffer similar problems to others, but in the wrong order, which would be manifestly unfair. Category f) in paragraph 21 - 'exceptional and compelling personal circumstances' - could be seen as a catch-all, but it was not intended in that way. The requirement for evidence of successful study elsewhere (paragraph 22), would be very difficult for many disabled or additional requirements (DAR) students, who often had nowhere else to study. The requirement to achieve a single OU module of at least 30 credits in order to clear the restricted status (paragraph 23) was without basis: a sequence of 10-point courses would get the student to that status. It would cause difficulties for advisors trying to discuss appropriate routes of study with students to help them move forward. For example, a student might have a single course left to do, such as a 15-20 credit point course in science, which would not meet this criteria. There were points in the paper which did not allow sufficient flexibility to take account of individual circumstances at a point when they were vulnerable and often where they had previously been good students.

5.2 The Director, Students, Mr Will Swann, responded that the Exceptions Policy would not only work with the last of three successive modules. Paragraph 1 of Annex 2 said that 'an application should clearly demonstrate that a student could not have anticipated the circumstances that prevented successful completion of, or led to withdrawal from *one* of the three successive modules leading to restriction'. When a student wanted to be treated as an exception, they would be able to say that they had got into difficulty with the policy not because of the last module, but because of any module. The current policy was dysfunctional. 18,000 students encountered it each year, but only when they were on the verge of being excluded. The University should, and could, alert them much earlier. The current policy did not provide information on the criteria that had to be met in order to allow students to continue after they had reached restricted status, and this had led to unacceptable variations in outcome for similar cases. The University did not want to find students caught in this trap for reasons beyond their control, so the conditions in paragraph 21 included the catch-all 'exceptional and compelling personal circumstances' in order to provide the necessary flexibility. Currently, by default, the University was allowing students to study and repeatedly fail, which was not educationally responsible. The new policy



would enable the University to act responsibly and consistently towards all students and allow them to take some responsibility for their own progress, to alert them at an early opportunity to the existence of the policy and its implications for them and for them to take early advice. A great deal of effort would continue to go into information, advice and guidance (IAG). The policy had been drawn up in wide consultation with regional advisory staff.

- 5.3 A student member said that LTSSC had taken the points he had made in their meeting on board, but that this might not be reflected in the documents as well as might have been hoped. Paragraph 31 did reflect that the University should not rely on notes on a student's home page or on email, as not all students used these effectively, but that these would reinforce the current service of person-to-person guidance. If students failed to engage with the initial notification, then the University should put as much effort in to IAG as it had with the Student Support Review pilots. The guidance should not be solely on-line. With reference to paragraph 14, another student member asked whether, if the Senate agreed the policy, it would be implemented immediately, and how many students would receive an email alert. Mr Swann said that all reasonable steps would be taken to contact students, particularly those who did not respond to the first contact, as this would be in the OU's interest as well as the students. The policy would be implemented as soon as possible, but with sensitivity to those in the transitional period. With reference to paragraph 10, all references to courses should be taken out for the sake of clarity.

**Action: WS**

- 5.4 Another member agreed that the paper was a considerable improvement on the previous version put to the Senate, but suggested that the alert system should be included in the regulations, so that if the student was not alerted before he/she registered for the third time, then the OU would be at fault. Mr Swann said that he would be happy to build something about the alert system into the regulations and give the OU a clear responsibility to alert the students.

**Action: WS**

- 5.5 The member also said that the document did not allow students to register with special permission. For example, if they had been failing at Level 3, they could be advised to study at Level 2. Another condition should be added to allow students to register for a module that had been approved by the University. Mr Swann replied that he would be happy to include such a requirement, where students could be allowed to return to study if they did so at a particular level. This might be difficult to express, but he accepted the principle.

**Action: WS**

- 5.6 Referring to Annex 2, a member said that the introductory paragraph, which said that 'a student will only be considered for permission to register for further study with the OU if they have not successfully completed any of their three successive modules due to the circumstances detailed below' might be misinterpreted if it was taken out of context. It might be understood to mean that students would only be allowed to register for further study if they had not successfully completed three successive modules, or that the OU favoured failed students. Mr Swann agreed that the wording should be revisited outside of the Senate meeting.

**Action: WS**

#### 5.7 The Senate:

- a) **noted** the report from the meeting of the Learning, Teaching and Student Support Committee (LTSSC) that took place on 16 May 2011;
- b) **approved** the Insufficient Academic Progress exceptions policy.

**6 HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE****Honorary Awards 2012**

S/2011/3/03

- 6.1 The Senate **approved** the list of nominations recommended by the Honorary Degrees Committee for the award of honorary degrees of Doctor of the University (DUniv) and Master of the University (MUniv) to be conferred in 2012.

**Honorary Degrees – Changes to Procedures**

S/2011/3/04

- 6.2 An associate lecturer member asked whether all members of the Senate, including associate lecturers and students, would receive the paper and when the AL and student Senate Reference Groups would see the paper. The University Secretary, Mr Fraser Woodburn confirmed that the paper would be circulated to all members of the Senate, but it was not the intention to circulate it to non-members. Whereas the circulation of some papers to everyone enabled discussion and facilitated the attendance of any substitutes, this particular paper was not discussed at the Senate. The member observed that at present all members of the Reference Group saw the paper and fed in comments. Mr Woodburn observed that the wider the group receiving the paper, the greater the danger of a breach of confidentiality. He suggested that members of the Senate might consult members of the Reference Group. The member suggested that the current process was more secure. Mr Woodburn proposed that the non-members of the Senate were consulted when the Reference Groups met.
- 6.3 The Senate **approved** the new procedure for the approval of nominations from the Honorary Degrees Committee for the award of honorary degrees of Doctor of the University (DUniv) and Master of the University (MUniv) by the Senate.

**7 CENTRAL DISCIPLINARY COMMITTEE**

S/2011/3/05

- 7.1 The President of OUSA, Mrs Marianne Cantieri, said that paragraph 8 had caused some confusion as none of the student members of CDC had received the briefing pack referred to. Another member commented that at the last CDC meeting at which she had been chair, the student members had had the documents and had consulted them during the meeting. Mr Swann offered to investigate the matter and to ensure that this documentation was provided.

**Action: WS**

- 7.2 The Senate **noted**:

- a) the findings of the report of the Central Disciplinary Committee for the period 1 May 2010 to 31 April 2011;
- b) that a separate report of the operation of the plagiarism would be presented to the Senate in October 2011.

**Action: WS****8 SPECIAL APPEALS COMMITTEE**

S/2011/3/06

The Senate **noted** the findings of the report of the Special Appeals Committee of the Senate (SAC) for the period June 2010 to May 2011.

**9 STUDENT SUPPORT REVIEW – FINAL REPORT**

S/2011/3/07

- 9.1 The Vice-Chancellor welcomed Nicky Bolleurs and Rachel Burn, who had led the Student Support Review (SSR) project, to the meeting.

**Introduction**

- 9.2 The paper was introduced by the Director, Students, Mr Will Swann. The Senate was being asked to take a decision that would determine the future nature and organisation of learning support in order to enhance the student experience, to be flexible in responding to changes in student needs and the University's environment, and to provide a cost-effective model.
- 9.3 In April 2008, the Senate had approved the establishment of pilot Student Support Teams, which had three defining features.
- a) First, they would group students and assign resources to support them based on the subject or qualification that they were pursuing, not on where they lived.
  - b) Second, they would take responsibility for supporting students' movement along a pathway from module to module, towards their ultimate study goal.
  - c) Third, they would combine the skills and knowledge of staff in faculties and Student Services, and associate lecturers (ALs).
- 9.4 Since then, the seven pilot teams had supported over 11,000 students in order to develop and test new forms of student support that would enhance the student experience. The pilots and their outcomes had been the subject of thorough and systematic evaluation, and had been extensively documented. The report before the Senate summarised the outcomes of the evaluation, based on a substantial public record of the work of each pilot team. In January 2011, members of the Senate had had the opportunity to hear directly from the pilot teams and to scrutinise their work and the conclusions that they had themselves reached about the value and outcomes of the pilots.
- 9.5 The pilots had covered many issues and practices in student support. Implications had emerged for the way the University supported potential students to enter the University; for the future roles of associate lecturers, learner support staff in Student Services, staff tutors and others; for the way student progress should be monitored; for the way in which the University could foster student academic communities; for the way it used data intelligently to improve student retention; and for many other components of a well functioning student support system. All these lessons were now being applied through a number of strategic developments that would allow the University to embed what had been learned about best practice and extend it to many more students.
- 9.6 The key issue for the Senate was the proposal that the University should change the fundamental organising principle for student support, from one based on geography, to one based on curriculum: that students should be grouped and supported on the basis of shared study goals, not on shared geographical location.
- 9.7 There were three fundamental reasons for taking this approach. First, the University needed a structure that encouraged it to see, support and take responsibility for the whole of the student journey from entry through to ultimate study goal. The majority of students entering the University were aiming for qualifications and most chose the bulk of their studies from one or two well defined subject domains. Second, the University needed to ensure that the two great engines that drove the quality of student experience at the OU – the faculties and Student Services – worked in greater harmony and efficiency together to

ensure a better understanding of students and their needs. Third, the pilots had illustrated that effective student support was subject-specific. Questions about the right signals to watch for in student behaviour, the right time and the right way to intervene, had answers that were subject-specific, and required the accumulation of subject-based expertise.

- 9.8 The evidence accumulated through the pilots had persuaded all those directly involved, whether in the faculties, Student Services, associate lecturers or on the Steering Committee on which two Pro-Vice-Chancellors sat, that this change could be made to the benefit of students, without long term addition to the University's cost base, without risk to student satisfaction, and with the positive likelihood that the OU would drive up student retention and progression.
- 9.9 If the Senate approved the recommendation, Student Services would continue the close engagement with the deans, and with the associate lecturer and staff tutor communities, which was already under way. The Senate would receive reports and have the opportunity to comment, particularly over the next 12 months.
- 9.10 There were two issues on which the SSR project team were not yet ready to seek the Senate's support. The first was the position of the nations in the student support structure. The University would have to decide for students in Scotland, Ireland and Wales whether nation or curriculum would be primary. This was not simply a matter of geography, but of political development and market position. The decision to be taken by the Senate would be without prejudice to this choice. The second was the exact number and composition of student support teams. Work was underway on this and, subject to the Senate's decision on the fundamental principle, would continue, seeking an outcome that was student led, as well as practicable. On both these issues, a paper would be returned to the Senate.
- 9.11 No strategic decision for a complex organisation like the OU would ever be taken in conditions of complete certainty. There were risks in change, but there were also risks in failing to change. The OU's student support structure, despite many changes at the margin, had remained essentially unchanged in over forty years. In that time, technology had opened up new ways to support students far beyond the communication channels that the OU's founders had designed for. The University was about to enter a radically new funding environment. The change that the Senate was being asked to support was one not only fit for today's world, but one that would help the OU to be fit for the world to come, where getting students through to their chosen qualification aim would matter as never before.

## Response

- 9.12 Many members of the Senate welcomed the direction of travel of the report and supported the general principle of focussing on student retention, progression and completion through curriculum based student support. Those who had participated in Student Support Team pilots had found the experience a positive one. The pilots had illustrated much good practice and surfaced many lessons that could be implemented in the future. However, there were also many concerns about making a wholesale structural change, the need to maintain geographically based support, the impact on the curriculum, roles and ways of working.

## Evidence

- 9.13 Several members said that the statistics produced by the results of the pilots were not impressive and that the pilots had been conducted with relatively small groups of students, and would not necessarily scale up to support large populations of students. One member observed that only 50% of the pilots had achieved a positive result and this did not justify the enormous structural change proposed. Each pilot had included a number of factors, but these had not been isolated in order to test which factor had caused the most improvement. There was concern amongst colleagues that the University was moving too quickly to adopt

this new approach on a wholesale basis. Another member agreed that the evidence for a wholesale change was quite marginal in terms of the number of students involved and the preponderance of the statistics. When considered in the context of the danger and uncertainty of the new environment, this suggested that a complete move to the new system would be precipitate. Another member said that, at a time of uncertainty when the University had no spare cash, it would be reckless for the Senate to approve a wholesale reorganisation of the OU, based on extremely flimsy evidence and with no detail of how it might be implemented. The positive results claimed in respect of the engineering pilot (T173 & T191) had actually been negative, if like was compared with like. Mr Swann responded that the University had been contemplating these changes for 5 years and, whilst it was always possible to collect more evidence, it was now time for the Senate to make a judgement. It would have been preferable for every pilot to have produced a significant increase in student completion and progression, and the review had not been a scientific, controlled experiment. However, 11,000 students and 900 associate lecturers did not constitute a small sample and the review had provided rich evidence on which the Senate now had to base its judgement.

### **Retention of geographically based support**

- 9.14 A member said that it would not be sensible to abandon completely the support provided on a geographic basis. Curriculum based Student Support Teams would work well in some programme areas, but not in others. In particular, geographic support would continue to play a vital role at Level 1. This had been illustrated by those pilots that had operated at a regional level and had used face-to-face interaction, which had performed well. Another member suggested that an alternative model might be offered, which was less extreme, and which offered a shift to a whole student curriculum based approach combined with the current strengths of the regional structure.
- 9.15 Mr Swann responded that the report did not suggest that facilities provided on a geographic basis should be discarded and that its recommendations did not represent a complete change. Already, the OU did not have a purely geographical system, but operated with a curriculum led structure in areas such as Openings, the MBA programme, and postgraduate Social Sciences and Mathematics, Computing and Technology (MCT). The difficulty with a hybrid model was that it led to uncertainty about who was responsible for the student experience from entry to final study goal. Whilst there was uncertainty about the future environment, it was clear that students would become increasingly focussed on qualifications and the need for progression and completion, as would the funding bodies. In future, the University would be expected to account for the proportion of students who successfully reached their qualification aim, and the current data for this was extremely disappointing. If the support structure did not focus on ownership for the whole student experience, with the responsibility and accountability shared across Student Services and the faculties, the OU would find itself in considerable difficulty. A curriculum-led structure would be more successful in achieving this than a geographic one, but the University was still committed to retaining the 13 regional and national centres. Many services that were important and relevant to students, such as those dealing with careers and employers as sponsors, would continue to be provided locally. Where faculties, in developing their tuition and assessment strategies, decided that face-to-face tuition was important, then it would be provided; but it was as easy to provide this within a curriculum led structure, as in a geographic one.
- 9.16 Despite Mr Swann's verbal assurances concerning the retention of local support, an associate lecturer member was concerned about how this had been articulated in the proposals, as what was written set up a stark opposition between curriculum and geographic location. Evidence in the document had illustrated that face-to-face tuition compared favourably to on line tuition, but if the emphasis of the proposal was on curriculum, it would be too easy to assume that support could be conducted on line. The development of a curriculum strategy in the nations might also become more difficult.

Recommendation 1 in paragraph 26 should be amended to state that student support should be primarily based on curriculum, but in a geographic context. In this way, it would be clear that the responsibility was on the faculties to provide that support, but there would be a reminder that geography was still important. Another member supported this suggestion. Mr Swann said that he was wary of reworking recommendations on the floor of the Senate and would prefer to leave them as they were. However, he repeated the reassurance that the balance between on-line and face-to-face tuition, or synchronous and asynchronous tuition, was entirely independent of the recommendations in the report. The decision taken by the Senate would be without prejudice to future choices about the respective role of nations and curriculum.

- 9.17 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Qualifications), Professor Alan Tait, said that he had been a member of the steering group, together with Dr Sharon Ding, Dean of the Faculty of Education and Language Studies (FELS), and had viewed the proposals from the perspective of the faculties and academic areas. There were two strong characteristics behind the recommendations. The first was in respect of the nature of the expertise needed to support students. At present, being close to students in terms of their geographic location was seen to be the primary means of providing quality to student services. However, the aim of these proposals was to bring greater expertise into the subject, qualification or programme areas in order to deliver greater benefits. The University would give up a level of geographically based generalism, for a level of curriculum based specialism. On balance this change would bring more gains than losses. The second characteristic was that the proposals acknowledged the University's current, poor completion rate for qualifications. As the University entered the new funding regime in England, qualification completion would become a matter of even greater importance and transparency. The University had to find ways of supporting students through to qualification completion, and a key part of this was building up expertise in the curriculum, as proposed by the paper. There was enough evidence in those hybrid areas of the University's student support system that already focussed on the curriculum to demonstrate that it worked. The University should now have the courage to make the necessary change.
- 9.18 A member said that the OU had built up its reputation not only on the quality of its courses, but also on the support given to the 'whole' student. How would the proposed system protect the needs of, for example, a student based in Gateshead, studying a course that did not fit with the team in Gateshead, who was disabled and required a home exam, and was also on financial support? Or the needs of the 8000 OU students on the continent, who needed specialist support with regard to qualification recognition. Mr Swann responded that, at present, support for the disabled student, moving from module to module, was distributed across a wide range of people. Some of that support was unrelated to the curriculum, such as the need for a special examination, but was critical to the student's ability to participate and succeed. Consequently, behind the curriculum-based teams, there would continue to be a range of specialist services, such as support for disabled students, which would be delivered locally. The same principle would apply to students in Europe, who needed to benefit from a curriculum based approach and from being part of an international academic community. Specialist expertise would be available for the core teams to refer to as necessary.
- 9.19 A member said that there was experience in student support in the regional centres, which was extremely flexible. The convergence of the work of Student Services and Central Academic Units (CAU) was extremely important. It existed in some regions and nations, but more needed to be done and the work of the Student Support Teams had supported this activity. Whilst it was right to go down the curriculum and pathway route, there would still be an element of geographic support that would be fully catered for and managed by experts within the local areas.

- 9.20 A member commented that the Faculty of Health and Social Care (HSC) had significant experience of programme based approaches, where work based learning and external engagement was becoming increasingly important. Whilst focussing on curriculum, it was important to consider how the OU's footprint in a local region would be maintained, particularly in respect of liaison with and influence on employers. Another member from the Faculty agreed that local presence and visibility were vitally important. Professional programmes, worked based learning, in-house groups, and partnership arrangements involved ways of working with agencies and supporting students locally that had not been tested in any of the pilots. The idea of regional and national faculty staff working virtually to support local partnerships was acknowledged in the report (paragraph 33, for example), but this was not enshrined in the recommendations. The recommendations should acknowledge the continuing importance of geography where appropriate. Mr Swann agreed that, in an increasing number of curriculum areas, the University was dependent on establishing successful partnerships with employers and employer organisations. This was one of the reasons that the option to reduce the number of regional centres in England had not been pursued and the local base had been maintained.

### Curriculum issues

- 9.21 A member commented that in some faculties, the curriculum was highly integrated. There were distinct programmes, but much of the curriculum was shared across them. Staff worked collaboratively and innovatively across boundaries and had developed a number of new programme areas in response to the external environment. If the University was to divide into silos around the existing curriculum, it would be harder to respond flexibly and to develop new programme areas, the success of which was often due to detailed partnership work in particular geographic locations. Other members agreed that it was essential to guard against the creation of different kinds of silo within curriculum areas.
- 9.22 The member also observed that much of the curriculum was being reviewed in the light of the post-Browne world, with particular regard to issues such as employability. Consequently, it might not be the best time to make such changes to the curriculum. Mr Swann responded that the structure was intended to be flexible enough to respond to changes in the external environment. This was particularly important in the immediate future and consequently the recommendations, if approved by the Senate, would be implemented in a phased way. There would not be a complete implementation until 2013/14. At that time, more information would be available on the volume of students and how those students were distributed across curriculum areas. There would continue to be changes to the curriculum in future, with new areas emerging, and the structure would enable the University to build up and scale back subject based support teams across locations as necessary.
- 9.23 Referring to the principle of having separate Student Support Teams for the undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, an associate lecture member acknowledged that these had a different discipline identity and different student support needs, but said that they were also part of the pathway route for a complete student journey and qualification aims. In view of the Council's recommendation to strengthen the postgraduate market, how separate would these teams be? Mr Swann said that as this was not one of the recommendations, he would not provide a detailed response in this meeting, but would take account of the point moving forward.

**Action: WS**

### Deans' Perspectives

- 9.24 The Dean, Faculty of Education and Language Studies (FELS), Dr Sharon Ding, said that the key issue was to support students in their aims and aspirations. It was therefore essential that Student Services and the faculties worked together. The majority of students had a qualification aim, so it was sensible to organise support to meet this requirement by

structuring it around the curriculum rather than geography. This would make it simpler for the University to provide the best support possible for its students. Consequently, the accountability for student success would move to the faculties. This was right and appropriate, but in order for the faculties to deliver the appropriate student support, they would need tools to help them. The recommendations contained in the report would provide these tools.

- 9.25 The Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Dr Simon Bromley, asked whether the majority of central academics were aware of the extent to which the faculty's ability to do anything useful about student retention and progression was limited at present. The tools to enable faculties to take students' qualification aims more seriously were not currently available, and the price that the University was paying for the distributed way in which it offered support should not be underestimated. If faculties were to be more accountable and responsible for the performance of students through the curriculum, in order to drive up the University's completion rates, the faculties needed to have the tools for the job and the only way this was possible was through a more integrated and coherent way of working with colleagues in Student Services.
- 9.26 The Dean, Faculty of Health and Social Care (HSC), Mr Jeremy Roche, said that the fundamental issue was one of quality. The University already produced world class materials, but its ability to compete in the new market place would be hampered if it failed to deliver world class learner support. For-profit providers would be entering the market that would be very efficient and devoted to customer care. No-one had disagreed with the proposition that there were aspects of the OU's customer care that were lacking at present. The situation referred to in paragraph 16, where only 54% of comparator students who were referred for support elsewhere in the University said the department or person they were referred to met all of their needs (compared to 91% of pilot team students) could not be allowed to continue.
- 9.27 Dr Ding observed that it was possible that there would be an additional workload on the faculties in the medium term as student support moved from Student Services. The Dean and Director of Studies, Faculty of Arts, Professor David Rowland queried the cost neutrality of the proposals, particularly in respect of the additional costs that were likely to fall on faculties in the longer term. Mr Swann said that the change would bring a greater level of accountability to the Deans and the faculties for the student experience. This was the right thing to do, but it was essential to ensure that the faculties had the necessary resources at their disposal to deliver that accountability. The faculties already provided most of the resource that Student Services expended on student support through the inter unit planning and contracting process (IUPC). The division of resource in this arrangement was currently fit for purpose, but might have to be reviewed in the future if the Senate approved the direction of travel recommended in the proposals. Dr Simon Bromley commented that the IUPC was fit for purpose on a module by module basis, but it would need to be rethought on a curriculum and qualification basis. There were also potential efficiencies to be gained by faculties working with Student Services personnel who were no longer having to work with every other faculty, and would thereby become more specialist around the curriculum that they would primarily be serving. There might be increases in short term costs and a shift in where the costs lay, but in the long term it would not only be cost neutral, but also improve the University's efficiencies.
- 9.28 Professor Rowland said that there had not been time for wide consultation in the faculty about the proposals. However, the report had been seen by the Faculty's programme committee, which embraced the whole spectrum of faculty membership, and had been broadly supported. The paper contained little detail about implementation and consequently there were concerns about job security as a result of the proposed changes. It was important, therefore, that consultation about the implementation took place not only with Deans, but also with a wide range of faculty staff. Mr Roche said that the paper had been discussed by the HSC Committee. Similarly, there had been support for the direction



of travel and the principle of curriculum based support, but there had also been understandable concerns around operational issues in the new world.

### Staff roles

9.29 A member said that the Senate should be clear on what it was agreeing to now and what decisions it would be asked to take in the future. It was not clear whether the Senate would be presented with further information about how the proposals should be implemented, together with details of the effect on staff roles and ways of working, but these issues should be debated. Would the papers referred to in paragraph 54 be for the Senate to note or for substantive discussion and approval? Mr Swann said that the Senate's approval would be sought on the position of the nations with regard to Student Support Teams, and on the actual number and curriculum content of each Student Support Team. The latter had significant implications on the way in which the student experience would be structured and would be brought back to the Senate once agreement had been reached with the faculties on the detail and the options. There were a wide range of other issues around how the direction of travel would affect staff tutors, support staff working in Student Services, associate lecturers, and others. It was apparent that the Senate would take a close interest in the implementation phase and a paper would therefore be put to the Senate in the autumn with a proposal for how these issues should be structured and give the Senate an opportunity to make clear which of those issues it wished to have a vote on and which not.

**Action: WS**

- 9.30 Members observed that the proposals would require a massive cultural change and it was important not to underestimate the effort involved with implementation. The question of how the existing roles of staff would be organised differently and the workload implications arising from that also needed careful consideration.
- 9.31 A member said that involvement in the pilot teams had been a rewarding experience, but the work had often been difficult and complicated. This complexity would continue: support staff would be in different places and considerable co-ordination would be required behind the scenes on behalf of the students. Consequently, although some advisors were keen to proceed with the proposals, many more were cautious. Not only would they have to offer advice and guidance on topics within a very specialist area, but they would also have to provide general advice. There was also some concern about becoming too specialist, as this would lessen the variety of the role. The report said that Student Support Teams would vary in size according to the number of students to be supported. However, the absolute number of students did not determine the work of a team: the complexity of the qualification and the amount of support required by students varied considerably between different programme areas.
- 9.32 Another member commented that the students on the engineering pilot (T173 & T191) had accessed modules from many different programmes and, whilst the team had done some excellent work based on the role of pathway tutors, there was a concern that one set of complex relationships would simply be replaced by another. The Social Science pilot (RO3) had been very successful, but it had been based in one region only, using local staff to support local students and appointing local ALs as pathway tutors. This had proved an excellent model from which there was much to learn. However, the pilots had been focussed on students and had not looked at AL management, so it was difficult to imagine how the role of staff tutor could be carried out effectively under the new structure.
- 9.33 A member observed that all of the pilots had included pathway tutors or pathway guidance of some kind, but this was specifically excluded from the report. This was disappointing as, even at the interim stage, pathway tutors were seen to be particularly successful with regard to student progression. Mr Swann responded that he was well disposed to pathway and programme based student support. Consequently, such support was now included in

the AL role. It was now a matter for faculties, programme teams and module teams to extend the programme-based element of tuition, if they believed there was value in doing so, and the infrastructure was already in place to enable them to do so.

### Associate Lecturers' perspectives

- 9.34 Several associate lecturer members said that the AL Executive broadly supported the direction of travel in the report and the recommendations contained in the paper.
- 9.35 An associate lecturer member said that whilst his own experience of being part of a SSR pilot team had been positive overall, this experience had not been consistent across all ALs, some of whom had not felt part of the team. This had been identified as a learning outcome by the pilot team and should be improved in any future implementation. It was important to ensure a long term commitment to a strong implementation team that would tie up the different learning outcomes identified by the SSR in order to create consistency of practice across all faculties. For the teams to develop fully, it would be necessary to involve ALs at all levels of the implementation process. Another associate lecturer member enquired whether the implementation would be left up to each individual faculty or whether there would be a University wide model. Mr Swann replied that the OU was moving as quickly as possible to increase the participation of ALs in the academic work of the University. ALs would be involved in the implementation as far as possible. Contingency plans had been drawn up for the structure of the implementation team. It would not be left to the faculties, but rather a University wide implementation team working closely with all the faculties to ensure a co-ordinated approach. Institutional level frameworks were vital as there would be some students who would move between teams and it was important that they did not find discontinuity in their experience.
- 9.36 Another associate lecturer said that he currently operated on a geographic basis, but also provided programme or subject guidance to students. This was unlikely to change, but the opportunity to work as a member of a team would be welcomed. Although the pilots may have involved 900 associate lecturers, this number had not been embedded in the pilot teams. If the proposals were to be made operational, then ALs must be fully engaged with the teams of the future and should have access to the tools and systems that were essential in order for support teams to work effectively. The recommendations regarding the use of technology and systems were now being passed on to IT or other areas of the University, but it was important that ALs continued to be involved in this further work. Mr Swann said that he would take this point on board and do his best to achieve it.

**Action: WS**

- 9.37 An associate lecturer member said that there was some concern that the emphasis on teams could weaken the named AL-student relationship, which was the organisational principle of the OU and the core relationship for the majority of students. If the University was to move away from this model, there might be some adverse consequences. Mr Swann replied that in the early days of the review a wide range of options had been considered, including a move away from the identification of a named associate lecturer for each student. However, this option had not been pursued and there would be no changes or lessening of commitment to the central role of the named associate lecturer, which was at the heart of the University's student support systems.

### Directions of travel

- 9.38 Referring to the first report of the Student Support Review in November 2006, a member recalled that the Senate had approved recommendations that had been based on three 'directions of travel'. The first had been a broad and systematic change leading to students being supported by an integrated subject/programme-based student support team, or the curriculum focused support under discussion at this meeting. The second had acknowledged the strategic role of ICT in student support; and the third that it should be an

enabling strategy, which re-invigorated the University's aim of being a learning community fostering the exchange of knowledge and the growth of effectiveness. Much had changed since 2006, but these recommendations were still the right way forward. The underpinning argument in the original report was that the University's support for students should be integrated both from a student point of view from module to module, and from a University point of view in drawing people out of their silos and into a learning team in which creativities would cooperate rather than compete. The possibility of reductions in resources had been envisaged in 2006, though not on the scale that had come to pass, and it had been argued that reductions in costs could be achieved first through discussions in the student support teams and second through higher level teams with the same inclusivity. This also was still the best way forward. In making a broad evaluation of student support in 2006, nothing had been regarded as off limits and the University should have the same boldness now. The review had been underway for four and a half years and the groups proposing changes at the first, second and third stages had been made up of people with a wealth of experience of teaching. However, the pace of change had left untouched crucial parts of the SSRs earlier ambitions. A broader and more rigorous adoption of the team approach would lead to changes that would benefit not just those students who depend on the OU's support systems, but would also enhance the experience of those who do not contact support services. Bolder adoption of the recommendations of the various Student Support Review teams would widen the experience of working directly with students and would also strip out some of the practices that ALs currently saw as either odd or obstructive to their support for students. The changes should not mean that ALs would be left in their silos.

### **Students' Perspectives**

- 9.39 The President, OUSA, Mrs Marianne Cantieri, said that the Student Support Review had involved a considerable number of students and OUSA had appreciated being consulted throughout. OUSA's involvement in the implementation process had not been mentioned, but it was hoped that this consultation would continue. The OUSA Senate Reference Group had been impressed with the effect on Widening Participation students, and also with idea of having pathway tutors. There was some concern about IT implementation and the availability of tools. It was important that the great enthusiasm expressed by the members of the pilot teams be transmitted to the wider community. On the whole, OUSA welcomed the recommendations in the paper.

### **Recommendations**

- 9.40 Another member said that it seemed inevitable that the University should move to team working and curriculum based support, but there were issues regarding geography, not only in relation to work based and vocational qualifications, but also with respect to scaleability. Recommendation 3 appeared to suggest that there would be one support team for each curriculum area, but if there were 20,000 students on a programme and 800 ALs, as on the BSc in Psychology, with one just one academic and one operational lead, one support team would be unworkable. It would be unable to respond to that number of students, or manage that number of ALs. It was more likely that there would be a team of teams, which would then lead back to a geographic distribution. Moreover, the support for smaller qualifications, in terms of numbers of students, of ALs and possibly of modules within a qualification, would be structured quite differently to that for larger qualifications. Consequently, recommendations 1 and 2 should be considered, but Recommendation 3 was not appropriate.
- 9.41 Another member observed that Mr Swann, with reference to the recommendations in paragraph 26 of the report, had said that there was one principle at stake, which was the change from a geographical student support structure to one based on subject or programme. However, the final bullet in recommendation 3 concerning the way in which Student Support Teams would 'work to key performance indicators designed to ensure a

high standard of service for all students' did not appear to be a matter of principle, but rather an operational issue. The teams would include members of CAUs and associate lecturers for whom teaching and support were often blended together and almost indistinguishable. Whilst it might be possible for Student Services staff in Learner Support to work to key performance indicators (KPIs), this was not appropriate for those who considered themselves primarily as teachers. Consideration should be given to removing the last bullet point in Recommendation 3, as it was not central to the key principles. Mr Swann agreed that the boundary between teaching and support were often difficult to distinguish: it had grown out of the institutional boundaries between faculties and Student Services and it would be to the University's advantage if in future the discussion was about learning and teaching. Mr Swann confirmed that none of the practices detailed in recommendation 3 were central to the key principles and that it could be removed altogether, with the Senate just being asked to vote on recommendations 1 and 2.

9.42 The Chair asked the Senate to vote on whether to accept recommendations 1 and 2, but said that recommendation 3 would be removed from the vote.

9.43 The Senate

- a) **approved** recommendations 1 and 2 set out in Section 2, paragraph 26;
- b) **noted** the learning points set out in Section 4 which would be allocated to other University units and projects for implementation.

## 10 STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY POLICY

S/2011/3/08

10.1 The Vice-Chancellor welcomed Dr Ann Pegg, Centre for Inclusion and Curriculum (CIC), one of the authors of the paper, to the meeting.

10.2 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Qualifications), Professor Alan Tait, introduced the paper, which was being put forward in conjunction with the Director, Students, Mr Will Swann. The work had been done in Student Services, as well as the Curriculum and Qualifications Office, in particular by Dr Ann Pegg and Mrs Clare Riding, Careers Advisory Service. It was another example of the way in which student support and teaching were being integrated. The paper had been supported by LTSSC and CVC, who had recommended some amendments. Employability had last been considered by the Senate in 2005, but there had been many changes since then. Employability was now higher on the HE agenda in all four nations of the UK. An increasing number of students said that career and occupation motivated their study, including growing numbers of under 25 year olds. It was important for the OU to better position its student employability policy as an integrated service across the University, both in terms of delivering services to students and by embedding it into the curriculum. In particular, the University wanted to build its careers advisory service and its curriculum offer. Currently, a range of modules offered team working skills and personal planning activities, but these were not adequately promoted to employers or the public at large as a serious objective for students. Appropriate measures of employability were essential, as was the transparency of data. The revised employability policy statement was outlined in paragraph 17, which included the revised understanding of employability (c). This was much broader than the previous statement, and took into account student aspirations, as well as their contribution to society. A detailed implementation plan was attached as Appendix A, which had had the support of unit heads.

10.3 Referring to point (c) of the proposed employability policy statement (paragraph 17), a member suggested that the definition of student employability ought to include a reference to 'skills'. It mentioned achievements, what students had done, and personal attributes, what students were, but nothing about what students could do. Another member suggested that 'achievements' should be replaced by capabilities, which also implied what

people could do rather than what they had done, but was broader than skills. Professor Tait said that he did not wish to redraft the paper during the Senate meeting, but agreed to reflect on the language used. It was important that the policy reflected sector needs, as well as those of the University.

**Action: AT**

- 10.4 The Dean, Faculty of Business and Law, Professor James Fleck, said that he had reservations about the narrow interpretation of employability. The OU had aspirations to address the whole person so as well as preparing people to be employed, the University enabled individuals to discover what they were capable of and to fulfil their own aspirations. He suggested that amending the definition of student employability to include 'raising and realising their aspirations' might help to celebrate what the OU meant to many students. Professor Tait said that he would take note of this suggestion.

**Action: AT**

- 10.5 A student member suggested that point (g) of the proposed employability policy statement might include the contribution that could be made by OUSA as students entered employment. As OUSA was a professional body, experience as an OUSA officer could be very useful in terms of gaining different experiences. With reference to section 5 of the implementation plan (Appendix A), there was also room for OUSA to contribute to the establishment of the E-portfolio. Professor Tait welcomed the suggestions and said that he would talk further with OUSA outside the meeting.

**Action: AT**

- 10.6 A member said that the reference to students being enabled to 'further their contribution to society' was welcomed as it provided more breadth, and that the value of 'autonomous and self-directed learning' (paragraph 17 (h)) was also a very important principle to establish. As the principles established through the Student Support Review were developed, the University's conception of the student should underpin those qualities.

- 10.7 A student member observed that many universities offered internships, placements and work experience, and asked whether the OU should consider this. It would, of course, be dependent on the local presence and knowledge referred to during the discussion of the previous paper. Professor Tait replied that he could not see how the University could offer internship experience in the same way, although the OU had an approach to work based learning that allowed students to undertake assignments and projects within the workplace and that would deliver similar outcomes. However, as employability became more embedded in the curriculum, the University would continue to look for innovative ways of delivering this experience.

- 10.8 An associate lecturer member said there were significant implications for the work of ALs in implementing this policy. ALs would be expected to advise and support students in learning to 'effectively articulate their skills' (Appendix B, paragraph 6). Students were also likely to ask ALs for advice on how to use their e-portfolios (Appendix A, section 5). It was essential, therefore, that the implementation plan around staff development (Appendix A, paragraph 6), included a specific reference to the development of ALs if the policy was to be implemented successfully.

- 10.9 The associate lecturer member asked what the OU would provide with regard to e-portfolios. Would the delivery mechanism for developing their e-portfolios be left to the students or would the University be recommending a Google App? Mr Swann replied that the design specifics of the e-portfolio had yet to be agreed, but it would become an increasingly significant part of the careers service offered to students. Further information would be provided in due course. Another associate lecturer member said that it was important to ensure that everybody understood the same thing about e-portfolios. The Associate Lecturers' Executive Learning Group had understood that the topic of e-portfolios was not to be pursued. Mr Swann said that the University would not allow a proliferation of

many different kinds of e-portfolios, but that there would be a single structure that would enable students to build up evidence to demonstrate how their studies have promoted their employability.

**Action: WS**

10.10 Another member commented that the implementation plan suggested that employability was something that affected programmes, but some of the work to develop business lines and qualifications targeted at students with particular qualification aims and backgrounds, suggested that there would be different employability concerns for different segments of future markets. The idea was already implicit in separation of the postgraduate models for employability from the undergraduate in the paper. It might therefore more effective to tie in the implementation of the employability policy to the development of the new qualifications framework.

10.11 The Senate **approved:**

- a) the overall approach to employability set out in the paper;
- b) the Policy Statement set out in paragraph 17.

subject to further discussion and agreement on points of detail.

**Action: AT**

## 11 THEMATIC RESEARCH NETWORKS

S/2011/3/09

11.1 The Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), Professor Alan Bassindale, introduced the paper. The broad concept for Thematic Research Networks (TRNs) had already been approved by the Senate and developed by the Research Committee. The version of the paper before the Senate had not been through the Research Committee due to the timing of meetings, but members of the Committee had seen it and had had the opportunity to comment. The TRN Working Group had been chaired by Professor John Allen, deputy chair of the Research Committee, who was the major author of the paper. The concept of TRNs had arisen from the changing national and international research landscape. Research in the OU had originally been based on individuals and small groups. In response to an earlier Research Assessment Exercise (RAE) and other drivers, the University had set up Research Centres, which were large clusters of groups and individuals. However, the OU had now moved to a position where it needed to be able to bid for large cross-disciplinary grants and to look at the larger picture by bringing together groups of academics with cognate interests. The Vice-Chancellor's Executive (VCE) had requested that the name, Thematic Research Networks, be reconsidered in the light of the scholarship agenda. However, it was proposed that 'research' would be retained initially, as it was understood externally, whereas the meaning of 'scholarship' was not so well developed in the outside world. Nevertheless, TRNs would embrace all types of scholarly activity.

11.2 Professor John Allen said that there was a clear relationship between teaching and research in the OU, but that it was poorly evidenced. In this context, OU research should be seen as a kitemark of quality that validated the awards offered by the University and enhanced its reputation. TRNs were an adaptive response to the changing external research environment. This environment, embodied by the main funding councils, was concerned with the big challenges of the day, which were seen to be best approached by cross-disciplinary collaborations and which required large funding grants. TRNs were one way of addressing this issue, by showcasing the University's research excellence and by providing an opportunity to scale up its research activity. The OU was not the only University addressing this challenge; others were scaling up their research abilities. Research-intensive universities were identifying clusters which would enable them to

demonstrate their strengths; the OU was not research intensive, but its research was significant. It had to consider what was distinctive about research at the OU, which would showcase its research excellence and enhance its awards. Much OU research reflected core aspects of its mission: it was innovative, particularly with regard to distance and digital technologies, but it was also empowering, being concerned with widening participation and social justice. The OU was probably the only university that brought these two things together in its teaching and its research, and the TRNs were intended to showcase this distinctiveness.

- 11.3 A number of criteria or critical success markers for TRNs had been identified through consultation with the faculties. These included distinctiveness and a strong intellectual storyline, but TRNs also had to demonstrate a critical mass in terms of a group of researchers with a pedigree of raising large funds in a particular area. In this context, the Working Group had recommended two TRNs: *Educational Futures* and *Digital Humanities*. These met the core criteria and were rooted in the OU's core mission in terms of innovation and empowerment. They encompassed cross-disciplinary themes and involved those with proven leadership and quality. The management and organisational structure of TRNs was different to that of the Research Centres and more formal structures, being more organic and intellectual, and would be led by existing researchers. The TRN Working Group and the Research School would have to monitor whether or not the critical success markers for TRNs were met and put into operation, and that there were success criteria. They would also form a view on the life span of any particular TRN. The TRNs would have to raise large amounts of funds and showcase research excellence at the OU.
- 11.4 Endorsing the paper, a member said that the proposed TRNs fitted well with the profile of the OU. The TRNs had the capability to link with other organisations, as well creating networks across the University. With reference to the issue of terminology regarding research and scholarship, the University needed to become more flexible about how it pulled together evidence around thematic areas to demonstrate that it could solve the big problems. Other universities used evidence of kite marked academic excellence from wherever it could be found, whether teaching, lecturing or publishing. Problems were often complex in solving: the issue of energy, which was a government priority and funded by the Research Councils, was one such example. The OU had unique strengths in articulating solutions in this area: not only did the University have research and scholarship in this area, but the academic area also engaged with industry and practitioners in the field and influenced policy. It was also able to build links with the nations with regard to renewable energy. This was not all research based. Through its teaching the University could show funders that it was possible to change behaviours at scale and contribute to solving problems wherever they were found. There was not much to be gained from the debate about the type of networks around which different activities were brought together.
- 11.5 Another member said that scholarship should probably have replaced research in the title for the networks, but accepted the argument that 'research' was better understood externally. The scholarship framework had been approved by the Senate in October 2010 and included paragraphs on the distinctiveness of the OU's offer in terms of scholarship. With regard to educational futures, the TRNs went to the core of what the OU could do differently from other institutions. In the future, the University should be as broad as possible and encompass all forms of scholarship.
- 11.6 A member said that the TRNs would allow the University to showcase its distinctive research excellence in relation to issues that were relevant to audiences both at home and internationally, and to reconfigure to meet the needs of a rapidly changing funding research landscape. The TRNs would also provide an opportunity for the University to narrate and profile its distinctive institutional strengths in a coherent manner, and this would form a strong basis for new research partnerships that would engage key users and stakeholders both within and beyond the University.

- 11.7 The Senate **approved** the first two thematic networks: *Educational Futures* and *Digital Humanities*.

## 12 CODE OF PRACTICE FOR STUDENT DISCIPLINE

S/2011/3/10

- 12.1 A student member said that the OUSA Senate Reference Group had identified some inconsistencies between the changes suggested in the body of the text and the way these were reflected in Appendix 5: Code of Practice, and offered a marked up copy of the paper indicating these anomalies. For example, the paper discussed a change to the time span within which the student should send the names of any witnesses, but this had not been changed in the Code of Practice.
- 12.2 With reference to SD 4.3 (page 24), the student member observed that under the present arrangements, an Academic Conduct Officer (ACO) could refer serious assessment cases to the Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC), but this option did not appear in the revised Code. SD 4.2.f of the revised Code stated that a University officer acting as a disciplinary authority in dealing with suspected misconduct could refer the matter to the CDC; SD 4.3 should include a similar clause in order that an ACO would have the option of referring serious cases and serial offenders to CDC if the he/she thought that the penalty he/she could impose was insufficient.
- 12.3 Referring to SD 2.1 (page 17) Disallowing or 'capping' of marks, and the paragraph commencing "for the avoidance of doubt", the student member requested that there be some clarification about who the academic decision makers were at this point, whether staff tutors, assistant directors or ACOs.
- 12.4 Overall, OUSA welcomed the paper, which clarified the disciplinary process. However, with reference to paragraph 6 (page 3), OUSA was particularly concerned about the recommended changes to the timescales, which had also been raised at LTSSC and which the Director, Students had agreed to reconsider before the paper was submitted to the Senate. Students were not necessarily accessing their computers regularly, so to expect them to provide the names of any witnesses within 5 working days of the confirmation of a disciplinary hearing being sent was unreasonable. There should be an effort to ensure that the students have received that notification. Moreover, whilst the new code had shortened the time in which the students had to respond, it had lengthened the time in which an appeal had to be heard. Students subject to disciplinary procedures would find the wait of 40 and 50 days to be a considerable burden. With respect to appeals, it was important that justice was not only done, but was seen to be done. Students should be given a reasonable time to respond and the processes should be quicker. There was a concern that the timings reflected current practice and that the policy was following that process. The University should agree what the policy should be and then adapt the processes accordingly. It should also be possible to schedule provisional appeal dates in advance.
- 12.5 The Director, Students, Mr Will Swann, said that these were complex and technical matters, but they were issues that had significant consequences for a small number of students and so it was important to make sure the Code was right. He suggested that the Senate be asked to approve the new Code subject to further discussion with the student members about their concerns outside of the meeting. If agreement on the detail could not be reached, then those particular parts of the paper would be brought back to the next meeting of the Senate.

**Action: WS**

- 12.6 Referring to the new offence equivalent SD 1.9 - Encouraging or enabling plagiarism (page 9), which made it more difficult for students to make their work available on the internet unless they had prior consent from the University, a member asked who in the University would provide that consent and whether it would be seen to be exceptional. In some areas



of the University, students were being encouraged to break down the walls between their formal study and other informal learning communities or employability prospects. The Learning Innovations Office (LIO) and Learning and Teaching Solutions (LTS) were currently working on guidelines under the Road Map Acceleration Programme to use Google Apps as an e-portfolio system commencing next year. The OU Google App would sit next to other Google Apps used in public and it would be a porous membrane for students to move through. Further clarification on this clause was required if it was not to bring different areas of the University into conflict with the offence. Mr Swann explained that the University had a problem with students offering assignments for sale, often on eBay with tutor comments and marks attached. This was a threat to the University's academic standards and needed to be managed. Whilst students should be encouraged to use the web as a tool for learning and development, and this included sharing learning outputs through student forums, for example, this offence was specifically tied to assessed work being offered for sale. The University recognised that there were legitimate reasons why students might wish to publish their assessment outputs and that this should be easy to do. For this reason, the mechanism for doing so was unspecified in the Code. It was for the University to choose how to assign University permission, but it would aim to protect the University's academic standards as well as the learning opportunities that sharing work on the web provided.

- 12.7 Another member was concerned about the restriction of the grounds for appeal. The right of appeal from CDC on the basis of the unreasonable harshness of the penalty had been removed, which meant that of all the disciplinary authorities, the CDC decision was the only one where a student could not appeal on these grounds. The reason given in the covering paper was that the Special Appeals Committee (SAC), which dealt with these appeals, did not have the full information available to enable it to determine whether a penalty was unreasonably harsh. However, this gave an air of infallibility to the CDC, which might not be justified. Mr Swann said that nothing CDC or SAC did was beyond scrutiny. Students were always informed of their right to appeal to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) and this imposed a considerable discipline on the University to ensure that the decisions taken were robust. The OU's record was very good in respect of students appealing against disciplinary matters to the OIA. It was extremely unlikely that CDC would use its authority in an inappropriate and capricious manner. In order for the SAC to make judgements about the appropriateness of the penalty it would require information that it did not have access to and that it was not currently practicable to provide. The member commented that students found it easier to appeal on the grounds of the unreasonable harshness of the penalty. A mechanism already existed in the Code for the Chair of the SAC to turn down the admission of an appeal when the student did not provide any evidence of unreasonable harshness, which meant it should not be necessary to remove this as grounds for appeal. Mr Swann suggested that this particular issue be reviewed and if an agreement could not be reached, then that part of the paper would be brought back to the next meeting of the Senate.

**Action: WS**

- 12.8 A member suggested that consideration should be given to the advice and guidance given to students as they came to CDC. A fuller submission to CDC in respect of any mitigating circumstances that might justify an appeal would be helpful.
- 12.9 The Senate **approved** the changes to the Code of Practice for Student Discipline and the constitutional changes to the Central Disciplinary Committee (CDC) and the Special Appeals Committee of the Senate (Appendices 6 and 7), subject to further discussion and agreement on points of detail.

**Action: WS**

**13 EMERITUS PROFESSORS**

S/2011/3/11

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

- d) Professor Richard Allen
- e) Professor Wendy Stainton-Rogers
- f) Professor Godfrey Boyle
- g) Professor Robin Roy
- h) Professor Susan Segal-Horn
- i) Professor John Muncie
- j) Professor Wendy Holloway
- k) Professor Margaret Wetherall
- l) Professor John Brennan

**14 STUDENT SERVICES OPERATING MODEL – CHANGES TO ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE**

S/2011/3/12

- 14.1 The University Secretary, Mr Fraser Woodburn, said that it would be necessary to withdraw Appendix 1 of the paper, as the proposed changes to the Senate membership were not in accordance with the statutes. The paper would be recast and brought back to the Senate in October 2011. This issue did not apply to Appendices 2, 3 and 4, where the proposed amendments were constitutional.
- 14.2 With reference to Appendix 1, a member was concerned at the proposed removal of 4 elected representatives from the regions and their replacement with 2 appointed members from the centre. This would be a significant change to the balance of membership between the centre and the regions and should be reconsidered.
- 14.3 A member of the Senate Membership Panel (SMP) enquired whether the 3 National Directors could be made *ex-officio* members of the Senate, as they were routinely appointed through the Co-opted Members category. Mr Woodburn replied that an *ex-officio* category could not be introduced without an amendment to the statutes. In the meantime, another device would have to be used to ensure that the National Directors were members of the Senate.
- 14.4 The Senate:
- a) **approved** changes to the membership categories of the following committees:
    - i) Learning, Teaching and Student Support Committee (attached as Appendix 1 to these Minutes);
    - ii) Curriculum Partnerships Committee (attached as Appendix 2 to these Minutes)
    - iii) Validation Committee (attached as Appendix 3 to these Minutes);
  - b) **noted** the matters for report set out in paragraphs 25 to 28.

**15 COMMITTEE MATTERS**

S/2011/3/13

The Senate:

- a) **approved** the constitutional changes for the Module Results Approval and Qualifications Classification Panel (attached as Appendix 4 to these Minutes);
- b) **noted** the matters for report set out in paragraphs 5 to 6.

**16 STRATEGIC RESPONSE UPDATE – UK MARKET STRATEGY**

S/2011/3/14

The Senate **noted** the report, which provided an overview of the objectives, methodology and timescales of the UK Market Strategy project, one of the three work streams within the University's Strategic Response programme.

**17 THE COUNCIL**

S/2011/3/15

The Senate **noted** the report on the meeting of the Council held on 10 May 2011.

**18 FUTURE ITEMS OF BUSINESS**

S/2011/3/16

The Senate **noted** the list of potential items for the agenda for the Senate meeting in October 2011.

**19 DATE OF NEXT MEETINGS**

Meetings would be held on the following dates:

Wednesday 19 October 2011  
 Wednesday 25 January 2012  
 Wednesday 18 April 2012  
 Wednesday 20 June 2012

**20 FAREWELL AND THANKS**

The Chair reported that Professor Alan Bassindale, Mrs Carol Baume, Mrs Celia Cohen, Professor Richard Allen, Dr Judy Ekins and Dr Bob Kelly were attending their final meeting of the Senate. On behalf of the Senate the Vice-Chancellor thanked them all for their contribution to The Open University and wished them well.

Julie Tayler  
 Assistant Secretary  
 Central Secretariat  
 j.d.tayler@open.ac.uk  
 June 2011

**Attachments:**

Appendix 1: Learning, Teaching and Student Support Committee

Appendix 2: Curriculum Partnerships Committee

Appendix 3: Validation Committee

Appendix 4: Module Results Approval and Qualifications Classification Panel

## LEARNING, TEACHING AND STUDENT SUPPORT COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTION – UPDATED ~~13.10.2010~~01.08.2011

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### **Purpose**

Learning, Teaching and Student Support Committee is responsible to the Senate for strategy, policy and standards relating to the student experience in the University, including learning, teaching, and student support. The Committee's remit covers enquirers, clients, sponsors and alumni as well as registered students. Its responsibility for teaching spans centrally-produced resources and regional/national activities including the work of associate lecturers.

### **Terms of Reference**

#### ***Legislation: setting policy and strategy frameworks, agreeing plans and priorities***

1. To promote the strategic objectives and priorities relating to learning teaching and student support.
2. To determine policies and guidelines within the agreed strategic objectives and priorities relating to learning teaching and student support.
3. To approve proposals for new methods and forms of teaching delivery and student support, having assessed their impact on all stakeholders.
4. To formulate and interpret contractual and other non-academic policies, regulations, and practices relating to the admission and progress of students, including the consideration of exceptions to policies.

#### ***Monitoring, and reviewing, actions and institutional performance***

5. To monitor the quality of students' experience of the University in comparison with the experiences offered by other providers, to identify areas of the student experience requiring attention or development, and to refer these to the appropriate officers and committees.
6. To contribute to the Senate's annual academic review of the University.

#### ***Assuring Quality and Standards, including approving regulations***

7. To monitor and advise on the mechanisms by which the experience of enquirers, students and clients is evaluated.

#### ***Advising other governance bodies or management***

8. To advise relevant areas of the University on the collection of evidence about the experiences of OU enquirers, students and alumni, about the student support potential of resources and networks beyond the University, and about the experiences offered by competitor institutions.
9. To advise the Senate and/or its other committees on new developments in the University, in particular assessment policy and strategy, and on developments in the external environment.

**Judicial: deciding individual cases**

10. The power to decide individual student exceptions to general policies has been delegated.

**Membership**

1. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Quality) and the Director, Students, *ex officio*. Joint Chairs: each shall take the Chair for a year, with the other as Deputy Chair.
2. The deans of faculties and schools or their nominees, and the Director of the Institute of Educational Technology or his/her nominee, *ex officio*.
3. The Chair of the Student Experience Advisory Group reporting to the Committee.
4. The Director of Learning and Teaching Solutions, *ex officio*.
5. The Director of Library Services, *ex officio*.
6. The Director, Learning Innovations Office, *ex officio*.
7. The Head of Teaching and Learner Support, *ex officio*.
8. The [Head-Director](#) of Assessment, Credit and Qualifications, *ex officio*.
9. [The Director, Associate Lecturer Services, ex officio.](#)
10. [The Director, Learner Support Services, ex officio.](#)
- ~~9. Two regional/national directors nominated by the regional/national directors.~~
- ~~10~~11. Four members of staff, elected by the Senate, of whom at least two shall be members of regional/national staff.
- ~~11~~12. Two associate lecturers appointed by the Associate Lecturers Executive.
- ~~12~~13. Two registered students appointed by the Open University Students' Association.
- ~~13~~14. Such others as the Committee may co-opt up to a maximum of three, to include members with expertise as necessary in HE issues in Scotland, Ireland and Wales if not otherwise elected or nominated.

Secretary

## Mode of Operation

1. The Committee shall meet in accordance with the University's Committee Timetable, not less than three times a year, and on such other occasions in the year as have been approved by the Senate. It shall report to each meeting of the Senate.
2. It shall be permitted to delegate tasks to a duly constituted executive committee or committees of itself; or to specific individuals; and may make rules relating to its own procedure, but should not further delegate powers delegated by the Senate without the Senate's agreement.
3. The Committee should designate a Deputy Chair. The Chair shall have executive authority to act on behalf of the Committee and any of its executive committees, in consultation with any body designated to assist in this capacity by the Committee.
4. The Committee shall review each year according to agreed University criteria how efficiently, effectively and economically it is working in respect of participation, the conduct of business and production of high quality decisions, the schedule of the review to allow for implementation of improvements from the beginning of the next committee year.
5. The Committee shall ensure that strategies, policies plans and priorities within its remit are compliant with relevant University-wide policies implemented or being developed, particularly those relating to equal opportunities, environmental management and health and safety.

Secretary

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## CURRICULUM PARTNERSHIPS COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTION – UPDATED ~~13.10.2010~~01.08.2011

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### **Purpose**

On behalf of the Curriculum and Validation Committee (CVC), to provide detailed scrutiny of proposals relating to curriculum partnerships, to approve amendments to existing partnership arrangements, to approve joint curriculum development partnerships and to make recommendations to the CVC on the approval of the introduction or closure of curriculum partnerships leading to an award of the University.

### **Terms of Reference**

#### ***Legislation: setting policy and strategy frameworks, agreeing plans and priorities***

1. To approve amendments and extensions to existing curriculum partnerships, where they lead to a direct award of the University.
2. To approve, in consultation as appropriate with the Qualifications Committee, the introduction and closure of collaborative credit agreements with other institutions.
3. To approve the introduction and closure of joint curriculum development partnerships.

#### ***Monitoring, and reviewing, actions and institutional performance***

4. To monitor and review established curriculum partnerships under regular review, particularly through the annual monitoring process, working in consultation as appropriate with the Open University Worldwide Board of Directors, Validation Committee, and referring any major issues arising from the reports to the CVC.
5. To monitor the use of Open University modules by other organisations, especially those involving 'licensing' arrangements, in programmes leading to the awards of other institutions, both in the United Kingdom and elsewhere.
6. To monitor the demand for collaborative credit schemes with other institutions and to receive an annual report on the number of awards of credit made under each arrangement.
7. To monitor and review the effective operation of credit rating arrangements.

#### ***Assuring quality and standards, including approving regulations***

8. To maintain and monitor the University's procedures and processes for curriculum partnerships, with reference to the current guidance from the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA).
9. To ensure, in consultation as appropriate with the Qualifications Committee and the Assessment Policy Committee, that the curriculum and qualifications-related aspects of collaborative provision satisfy the University's own quality assurance requirements and those of appropriate national and international agencies.
10. To ensure that proposals for new collaborative partnerships involving the use of the University's curriculum have been properly appraised, and that they carry the endorsement of

the relevant faculty or school boards and (in the case of international partnerships) of the OU Worldwide Board of Directors.

11. To determine the institutional policy guidelines and good practice within which areas of the University should operate when embarking upon new curriculum partnerships, managing existing partnerships, or terminating partnerships.

#### ***Advising other governance bodies or management***

12. To provide detailed scrutiny of proposals for the introduction of new curriculum partnerships leading to an award of the University, taking into account the QAA requirements relating to collaborative provision, and to make recommendations to the CVC on the approval of such partnerships and their quality and contractual frameworks.
13. To provide detailed scrutiny of proposals for the closure of a curriculum partnership leading to an award of the University, ensuring that commitments to continuing students are protected by the partners to the completion of their studies, and to make recommendations to CVC on the closure of the partnership.

#### ***Making governance arrangements e.g. appointing to other committees***

14. To nominate a member of the Committee to serve on the Validation Committee.

#### **Membership**

1. A Chair appointed by the Curriculum and Validation Committee.
2. One associate dean or equivalent with a relevant portfolio from each central academic unit (or the dean/director's nominee if no suitable portfolio exists).
3. The Director, OU Validation Services or nominee.
4. The Managing Director, OU Worldwide or nominee.
5. The Director of Curriculum and Qualifications Office or nominee.
- ~~6. The Head of Planning and Development, Student Services or nominee.~~
- ~~7.~~ The Head of Quality.
- ~~8.~~ The Head of Assessment, Credit and Qualifications, or nominee.
- ~~9.~~ One registered student appointed by the Open University Students' Association.
- ~~10.~~ One associate lecturer appointed by the Associate Lecturers Executive.
- ~~11.~~ One member of the Validation Committee, nominated by that Committee.
- ~~12.~~ One member of the Research Degrees Committee who is a members of the Affiliated Research Centre Management Group, nominated by the Research Degrees Committee.
- ~~13.~~ Up to two members co-opted by the Committee, to include external expertise in collaborative provision.

Secretary

### **Mode of Operation**

1. The Committee shall meet as and when required, and shall report at least annually to the Curriculum and Validation Committee.
  2. The Chair of the Committee shall have executive authority to act on its behalf in consultation with its Secretary to recommend proposals for approval by the Curriculum and Validation Committee, where a scheme fits identically with an existing model.
  3. The Chair of the Committee shall have executive authority to act on its behalf in consultation with a sub group of Committee members, to recommend new schemes of collaboration for approval by the Curriculum and Validation Committee.
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## VALIDATION COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTION – UPDATED ~~26.04~~01.08.2011

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### **Purpose**

On behalf of the Curriculum and Validation Committee (CVC), to recommend policy on the approval of institutions and the validation and review of programmes, to propose the terms for the approval and review of specific institutions, and to validate and re-validate specific awards offered by such institutions.

### **Terms of Reference**

#### ***Legislation: setting policy and strategy frameworks, agreeing plans and priorities***

1. To approve the validation and re-validation of awards offered by associated and partner institutions, taking into account the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) requirements relating to programme specifications, learning outcomes and subject benchmarking, and taking account of the University's taught awards.
2. To approve the imposition of sanctions on associated and partner institutions where the quality and standards of an award are at risk, including the approval of the close of entry to a validated award.

#### ***Monitoring, and reviewing, actions and institutional performance***

3. To monitor the appointment of external examiners at each meeting and to monitor the number of associated and partner institutions, the number of re-approvals, the number of validated awards and applications for re-validation, and student numbers on the University's validated awards and to receive an annual report on these items.
4. To monitor, in consultation with the Curriculum Partnerships Committee, the process for the annual review of validated awards, requiring evidence from associated and partner institutions of effective management of the quality of provision and of the academic standards, reporting to the CVC on the overall progression and completion statistics and referring any major issues arising from the reports to the CVC.
5. To monitor compliance with any conditions arising from the approval or re-approval of institutions, and the validation, re-validation or review of individual awards.

#### ***Assuring quality and standards, including approving regulations***

6. To maintain and monitor the University's procedures for the approval of institutions as suitable for the conduct of programmes leading to Open University awards by validation or other means of approval, ensuring that the quality of learning opportunities and student support provided by the institution meet the University's standards.
7. To maintain and monitor the University's procedures for the validation and review of programmes, with reference to the current guidance from the QAA.
8. To maintain and monitor the procedures for the external examination of validated awards.

9. To keep under review the handbook for the University's validated awards, having regard to the relationships between such awards, their comparability with the University's taught qualifications and the relevant national qualifications frameworks.
10. To make recommendations to the Curriculum and Validation Committee for new or revised regulations for the University's validated awards.

#### ***Advising other governance bodies or management***

11. To provide detailed scrutiny of proposals for the approval of institutions, their re-approval and the terms of their approved status and to make recommendations to the CVC on their approval.
12. To provide detailed scrutiny of proposals for the termination of the approval of an institution, ensuring that commitments to continuing students are protected to the completion of their studies, and to make recommendations to CVC on the termination of the approval.

#### ***Making governance arrangements e.g. appointing to other committees***

13. To appoint one member of VALC to serve as a member of Curriculum Partnerships Committee.

#### ***Matters of public record e.g. ratifying appointments of staff or external examiners***

14. To formally approve the appointment of external examiners at associated and partner institutions.

#### ***Judicial: deciding individual cases***

15. To delegate to the Director of OUVS the responsibility for resolving complaints and appeals, where a partner institution's own procedures have been exhausted, on matters relating to programmes of study, awards, and validation and review processes, in accordance with procedures approved by the Senate.

#### **Membership**

1. A Chair appointed by the Curriculum and Validation Committee.
2. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Awards).
3. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Quality) or nominee.
- [4. One nominee of the Director, Students.](#)
- [45.](#) The Director, Open University Validation Services.
- [56.](#) The Director, Open University Worldwide.
- [67.](#) The Head of Quality
- [78.](#) Two members having experience in appropriate branches of industry or commerce or in appropriate professions, including members with experience in the field of occupational standards.
- [89.](#) Three members from partner institutions of the Open University.

| 910. One representative of each of the central academic units of the University, normally at associate dean level.

| ~~10. At least one regional/national director.~~

11. Three members from other higher education establishments having suitable experience, for example of ensuring standards and quality assurance through peer validation.
12. One representative appointed by the Curriculum Partnerships Committee who is a member of that Committee.
13. Such other members as may be appointed by the Curriculum and Validation Committee up to a maximum of three.
14. Such others as the Committee may co-opt up to a maximum of three, to include members with expertise in HE issues including foundation degrees.

| Members in Categories 7-8 to 11 to be appointed by the Chair of the Curriculum and Validation Committee on the advice of officers.

Secretary

### **Mode of Operation**

1. The Committee shall meet as and when required, and shall report at least annually to the Curriculum and Validation Committee.
2. The Chair of the Committee shall have executive authority to act on its behalf in consultation with its Secretary.





**MODULE RESULTS APPROVAL AND QUALIFICATIONS CLASSIFICATION PANEL  
(MRAQCP)**

CONSTITUTION – UPDATED 01.09.2010 08.06.2011

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**Purpose**

The Panel is responsible for approving recommendations for module results and the award and classification of qualifications.

**ARTICLE I. TERMS OF REFERENCE**

***Assuring quality and standards, including approving regulations***

1. To act on behalf of the Senate to approve the award and classification of the BA and BSc Honours Degrees, the Advanced and Professional Diplomas and such other qualifications as may be approved by the Senate.
2. To approve on behalf of the Senate, the recommendations of Examination and Assessment Boards and Assessment Panels with regard to all module results with the exception of those relating to Higher Degrees by research.

***Monitoring, and reviewing, actions and institutional performance***

3. To be responsible, on behalf of the Senate, for monitoring the maintenance of standards in approved qualifications as in 1 above, in consultation with the Assessment Policy Committee.
4. To consider reports on the conduct of policy and procedures for the determination of module results from the Head, Director of Assessment, Credit and Qualifications.

***Judicial: deciding individual cases***

5. To approve on advice of the Assessment Policy Committee, the award of aegrotat credit to individual students under a Code of Practice approved by the Senate.

**Membership**

1. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Qualifications), Chair, *ex officio*.
2. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Quality) *ex officio*.
3. ~~Up to three members drawn from a panel of six~~ A panel of eight members of the academic staff of the University nominated by the Chair.
4. One external member, nominated by the Vice-Chancellor, for a four year period who shall be a member of the academic staff of a UK University.

Secretary

### **Mode of Operation**

1. The panel shall meet as and when required.
2. There shall be a quorum of four for business to be transacted.
3. In instances where the panel exercises its discretion to withhold ratification, it shall consult with the Chair/s of the appropriate Examination and Assessment Boards and Assessment Panels to determine the result/s to be awarded.
4. The panel shall satisfy itself that arrangements are made for advising Chairs of Examination and Assessment Boards and Assessment Panels on the application of Senate approved guidelines.
5. The panel shall report each year to the Assessment Policy Committee, such reports to include statistical information on module results, together with any recommendations for changes to policies, procedures or guidelines.
6. The Chair of the panel shall have executive authority to act on behalf of the panel in consultation with the panel's secretary.