THE SENATE

Minutes

This paper presents the Minutes of the last meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 18 April 2012 at 2.00 pm in the Hub Theatre, The Open University, Walton Hall, Milton Keynes.

The Senate is asked to **approve** these Minutes as a correct record of the meeting.

Fraser Woodburn
Secretary to the Committee

Julie Tayler
Working Secretary to the Committee
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Attachments:

S-2012-02-M Appendix 1:   Honorary Degrees Committee constitution
S-2012-02-M Appendix 2:   Research Degrees Examination Result Approval Committee constitution

THE SENATE

Minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 18 April 2012 at 2.00 pm in the Hub Theatre, The Open University, Walton Hall.

Present:

1) Ex officio

Mr Martin Bean, Vice-Chancellor
Professor Alan Bassindale, Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Quality)
Professor Alan Tait, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Qualifications)
Professor Tim Blackman, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship)
Professor David Rowland, Dean, Faculty of Arts
Professor Rebecca Taylor, Dean, Faculty of Business and Law
Dr Sharon Ding, Dean, Faculty of Education and Language Studies
Mr Jeremy Roche, Dean, Faculty of Health and Social Care
Professor Hazel Rymer, Dean, Faculty of Science
Professor Josie Taylor, Director of the Institute of Educational Technology
Mrs Nicky Whitsed, Director, Library Services
Ms Anne Howells, Director of Learning & Teaching Solutions

Appointed

2) Central Academic Units

Faculty of Arts

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

Faculty of Business & Law

Mrs Keren Bright	Mr Mike Phillips
Dr Jacky Holloway	Mr Alessandra Saroli
Ms Carmel McMahon	

Faculty of Education and Language Studies

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

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 Leonor Barroca   Dr Nicolas Moss
Dr David Bowers   Dr Shirley Northover
Professor Joyce Fortune   Dr Sally Organ
Mr Derek Goldrei   Dr Gareth Williams
Professor Uwe Grimm   Dr Helen Yanacopulos

Faculty of Science

Dr John Baxter   Dr Robert Saunders
Dr Payam Rezaie   Dr Terry Whatson
Dr David Rothery

Faculty of Social Sciences

Dr Troy Cooper   Dr Raia Prokhovnik
Dr Anastasia Economou   Professor Michael Saward
Dr Hugh Mackay

Institute of Educational Technology

Professor Agnes Kukulska-Hulme

Other Central Units

Dr Liz Marr

Regional/National Centres

Dr Liz Manning

3) Associate Lecturers

Mr Paddy Alton   Dr Roma Oakes
Dr Isobel Falconer   Mr Stephen Pattinson
Mr Bruce Heil   Dr Walter Pisarski

4) Students Appointed by Open University Students Association

Mrs Marianne Cantieri   Mr David Reed
Ms Pippa Doran   Ms Laura Murphy (alternate)
Mr Sandy Garrity   Mr Carey Shaw

5) Academic-related Staff

Mrs Liz Armitage   Dr Christina Lloyd
Ms Pat Atkins   Mrs Bethan Norfor
Ms Fiona Carey   Ms Gill Smith
Mrs Lynda Juma   Mr Michael Street
Mr Martin Kenward   Ms Elaine Walker
Mr Billy Khokhar

6) Co-opted members

Mrs Lynda Brady   Dr James Miller
Mr John D'Arcy   Dr Peter Scott
Mr Rob Humphreys   Dr Petrina Stevens
Dr David Knight

In attendance

Dr Kate Clarke, Director, Open University Validation Services

Apologies:

1) Ex officio

>Mr Will Swann, Director, Students
>Professor Allan Cochrane, Interim Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences
>Professor Anne De Roeck, Dean, Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology

Appointed

2) Central Academic Units

>**Faculty of Arts**
>Professor Anne Laurence
>
>**Faculty of Education and Language Studies**
>Dr Jane Cullen
>
>**Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology**

Professor Andy Lane	Dr Toby O'Neil

>**Faculty of Science**

Dr Nick Rogers	Professor Ian Wright

>**Faculty of Social Sciences**

Dr Helen Kaye	Dr Jason Toynbee

>**Institute of Educational Technology**

Dr Robin Goodfellow	Professor Eileen Scanlon

4) Students Appointed by Open University Students Association

>Mrs Tania Rogers

5) Academic-Related Staff

Ms Hilary Robertson	Mr Tony O'Shea-Poon
Mr Ian Roddis	

In attendance

>Mr Andrew Law, Director, Open Media Unit

1   WELCOME

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed Professor Allan Cochrane to the Senate as interim Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences.

2   MINUTES   S-2012-01-M

The Senate **approved** the minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on 25 January 2012.

3   MATTERS ARISING   S-2012-02-01

3.1   Referring to paragraph 4, a member asked whether there was any more information about how the work of Associate Lecturers (ALs) and other remote workers would be taken into account in future University Briefings and Discussions. The Director of Communications, Lucian Hudson, said that further details were not available at present, but would be provided to a future meeting of the Senate.

Action: LH

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

4   REPORT FROM AND QUESTIONS TO THE CHAIR

Student Registration

4.1   The Vice-Chancellor said that the University had begun to take applications for undergraduate study in 2012/13 on 27 March 2012. At present it was too early to judge the effect that the new fee and financial support arrangements would have on new student recruitment in England.   Registrations for 2012/13 were currently running slightly ahead of the previous year, even though they were a fraction below the University's target of 1.4% growth. Enquiries for study in 2012/13 from new students were encouraging and the University would achieve the target of 500,000 later that month. Meaningful data on registrations would not be available for some time, but already more than 7000 students had registered for qualifications in the new regime and over 72,000 existing students had linked their previous study to a qualification. These were promising signs of student demand from both new regime and transitional students.

4.2   In the full-time sector the reality was somewhat different from the rhetoric. The press had announced that UK applications for entry to full-time undergraduate courses in 2012 had fallen by 8.6%, with a further 1% fall in England. These appeared to be worrying statistics, even taking into account the fact that some students in England had applied a year early in order to avoid the new fees regime. However, consideration of the application rates, which took account of annual changes in the population, provided a very different picture of demand. The application rate for young people showed a fall of just one percentage point in England, with little change across the rest of the UK. Moreover, the UCAS analysis showed that demand from those in disadvantaged groups was holding up rather better than demand from those in more advantaged groups. Therefore, the data did not support the claims of those who had argued that changes in higher education (HE) funding arrangements would deter significant numbers of young students, or have a disproportionate effect on more disadvantaged groups. Applications were down for mature applicants by approximately 10%, but this was in the context of some very substantial increases in recent years. It was possible that more mature applicants were

turning to part-time study because they did not want to take on the costs of maintenance loans in addition to fee loans. If so, the OU should ensure that it could provide the learning opportunities that they were looking for.

4.3   The Open University was in a good position to respond to student needs. The major market research exercise conducted in 2011 had provided a very clear profile of the University's key student groups and what they wanted from the OU. A new academic framework had been introduced, which offered students much clearer learning pathways to qualifications that were relevant to them. The access programme had been redesigned to provide extra help to students on low incomes who were new to HE. Improvements had been made to the learning systems, so that students would find additional help online. A new pricing framework had also been introduced, so that the OU's fees were easier to understand. This was the result of tremendous hard work by a large number of people over a relatively short period of time. The Vice-Chancellor thanked all concerned for their input.

Social Learn

4.4   SocialLearn, which provided informal learning on a social platform, had been made available to staff during the previous week and was being rolled out to students during the current week. It enabled learners to access online resources, to create personal learning journeys, to join learning communities, and to interact with other learners, academics and mentors. It was still being tested and developed, but it had great potential, not only to enrich the OU's formal teaching programmes, but also to open up the University's learning resources to a potentially enormous body of people who would not otherwise consider studying with the OU.

Research

4.5   At the same time, further steps were being taken to open up the University's research and scholarship to a wider audience. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship), Professor Tim Blackman, had just secured £300,000 from the Research Councils to create an 'open research university'. The money would be used over three years to create the conditions that would enable greater public engagement with research and researchers at the OU.

4.6   Even in these changing and challenging times, the OU continued to open up its teaching and research to as many people as possible. Openness had always been the University's hallmark. It was an enduring strength, to be safeguarded and celebrated, and together with flexibility, quality and value for money would guide the University successfully through the next few months and years.

5   **STRATEGIC PLANNING AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE**   S-2012-02-02

        The Senate **noted** the unconfirmed Minutes and Confidential Minutes from the meeting (SPRC-2012-01-M; SPRC-2012-01-CM).

6   **QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE**   S-2012-02-03

        The Senate **noted** the report from the meeting of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee held on 7 February 2012.

7   **RESEARCH COMMITTEE**   S-2012-02-04

7.1   With reference to paragraph 9, an associate lecturer member asked for clarification as to where details of the implementation of the Research and Scholarship mandate had been presented previously. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Scholarship), Professor Tim Blackman, responded that this priority mandate was part of the OU Strategic Plan and would have been included in any papers relating to that Plan.

7.2   Referring to paragraph 11, a member asked to what extent the University had missed its grant income targets, why it had done so, and what was being done to respond to this issue. Professor Blackman said that this year's target for research income had been £16.5 million, but that the University was likely to achieve just £15 million. The environment was becoming increasingly tough, but over the past few months the Research School had been working closely with the central academic units (CAUs) in order to understand their challenges and opportunities, and to benchmark their performance against other similar universities. Consequently, over the next three years, the University would now be aiming to achieve £20 million of research income per year. In order to achieve this result, improvements were being made to support the process of grant applications, to systems and training, and to the way in which intelligence about funding opportunities was shared. The Research School was gathering information about how the CAUs were planning to achieve their targets, and to translate these targets into the day-to-day practices of academic staff in order that everyone felt ownership of them. Whilst the targets were important, they were a means to an end: they provided a focus to support and enable improvements in the quality of the OU's research and its competitiveness as a teaching and research university.

7.3   The Senate **noted** the report from the meeting of the Research Committee held on 8 February 2012.

8   **LEARNING, TEACHING AND STUDENT SUPPORT COMMITTEE**   S-2012-02-05

The Senate **noted** the report form the meeting of the Learning, Teaching and Student Support Committee held on 27 February 2012.

9   **CURRICULUM AND VALIDATION COMMITTEE**   S-2012-02-06

The Senate **noted** the report from the meeting of the Curriculum and Validation Committee held on 6 March 2012.

10   **SENATE MEMBERSHIP PANEL**   S-2012-02-07

The Senate:

a)   approved the appointment of Dr James Miller, Director, The Open University in Scotland to the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee until 31 August 2016:

b)   **noted** the matters for report.

11   READY FOR 2012/13   PRESENTATION

11.1   The Director, Students, Will Swann, had been unable to attend the meeting of the Senate, but had produced a brief virtual presentation to illustrate the profound change that had taken place in the University during the previous 9 months to redefine the future relationship between the students and the University, and the remarkable work that had been done during the Ready for 2012/13 project.

11.2   The project had begun as soon as the Council had approved the UK Market Strategy on 19 July 2011 and had continued until the University had opened for registrations for 2012/13 on 27 March 2012: a period of just 35 weeks. The core project team had comprised some 40 people drawn from faculties, Student Services, Communications, IT, Learning and Teaching Solutions, Marketing, the Curriculum and Qualifications Office, Finance and the Business Development Unit. This team had worked with approximately 140 further people for whom the project had been a major part of their work during the 35 weeks. Mr Swann paid tribute to the commitment and achievement of this huge team. Slides 11 - 16 of the printed presentation provided a summary list of what had been done on a month-by-month basis between September 2011 and March 2012, and illustrated that the University could never again be accused of a lack of agility.

11.3   The project had had two central objectives: first, to ensure that the University was ready to open registrations for students entering the new academic framework in 2012/13, which had been dramatically altered as a result of the new fees and funding environment; and second, to ensure that continuing students, who would represent the great majority of OU students in 2012/13, understood how the changes would affect them and how they could best position themselves in order to achieve their study goals. These objectives had created equally demanding challenges in terms of building new policies, converting them into operational procedures, devising systems to support them, communicating them to students, and training staff to support students through new and complex decision making processes.

11.4   The Senate had played a significant, though intermittent, role in the project. In June 2011, the Senate had been presented with a foretaste of the UK Market Strategy. In October 2011, the Senate had approved the new academic framework, which was primarily the product of the new delivery models project that had been running since March 2011. Then in January 2012, the Senate had approved the formal regulations that gave effect to the principles approved in October 2011.

11.5   The University had created two new sets of policies, procedures and regulations that would govern how students gained access to and interacted with the University and achieved their study goals in the future. These covered a complex mix of academic and financial matters, and the University's success as an educator depended on getting both aspects right. One set of arrangements was for current OU students that would continue with the University in 2012/13. The most important change for continuing students was that those eligible for transitional fees would now have to select and declare the qualification for which they were aiming. Over 72,000 students had already done so in the five weeks since the qualification declaration process had been opened on-line. These students now had the next 5 years in which to complete their studies with the benefit of transitional fees. The other set of arrangements was for those students who would be new to the OU from 2012/13, and for continuing students who decided to opt in to the new framework. Modular delivery would continue in the new environment: it had not been replaced, but instead had adopted the framework based on the 23 principles approved by the Senate in October 2011. There would now be one uniform academic framework, but three distinctly different approaches to student finance. It would be some time before the University was able to understand how the differences in student finance across the UK nations would influence students' academic decisions.

11.6   Almost every output from the Ready for 2012/13 project had important implications for the nature of the University's teaching and for its relationships with its students. However, in essence, the project had been an emergency stop-gap programme and its outputs did not necessarily represent the final position.   Aspects of the project had now been handed over to the Enquirer Experience and Study Experience programmes, and to the day to day work of management teams across the University. However, it was useful to highlight one theme that had been central to the work of the project and that would continue to be central to the University's strategic thinking and development – Qualification Based Delivery. The University now had a set of some 120 degree programmes, each incorporating intermediate qualifications structured into pathways. The importance of pathways was that study was sequenced and the University controlled the order in which students progressed from module to module.

11.7   Degrees were now organised into stages of 120 credits and information about the content in stages and modules was progressively revealed to students. A key question now facing the University was whether or not it was revealing the right amount of information to students at any given time. The green button marked "Select this pathway" shown on the 'Stages and modules' page of the website (slide 8) provided the entrance to an entirely new phase in the student journey called 'Choosing with confidence'. In a world of high fees and with a recommitment to open entry, it was vital for the University to provide potential students with the means to take informed decisions. This was both to protect students and to protect the University against the risks of mis-selling and of early drop-out and low progression rates. 'Choosing with confidence' would enable enquirers to quickly and actively understand what OU study would demand of them and to assess their readiness. Senate members were encouraged to explore the open website.

11.8   Slide 10 highlighted the issues that were already being developed and elaborated within the Study Experience programme, and which were likely to feature in future debates in Senate meetings. The University was now operating in a world in which it must and would know the study goal of each student. This would become the baseline against which the University would judge its success as a teaching institution. Not all students would know their long-term goal when they started with the OU, and many would change over the course of their studies, but this was nevertheless a profound change in how the University related to its students. Long-term study goals would in turn have a deep impact on how the University thought about the identity of its students. For most practical purposes, the University's current understanding of students was driven by the module that they were studying, as were the resources and the services provided to them. This would change, and the consequences were yet to be fully understood. Qualification progression now had to be managed. Some new academic progression policies had been approved in the course of the Ready for 2012/13 project, but this was just the start of a major development for the academic design project in the Study Experience programme. The fundamental reason for managing qualification progression was to find ways to increase the proportion of OU students who achieved their study goals, which in most cases would be a qualification. Almost everything about the project had been driven by the imperative to push up qualification completion rates. The Study Experience programme would now take over that imperative and the Senate would maintain a close overview of the University's success in this venture.

11.9   A member asked whether stages and modules were part of a new vocabulary: was Stage 1 equivalent to Level 1? The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Qualifications), Professor Alan Tait, confirmed that Stages 1, 2 and 3 essentially represented years 1, 2 and 3 of conventional undergraduate study.

11.10   The Vice-Chancellor thanked members of the Senate for their comments on and support for the project.

**12   QUALITY ASSURANCE AGENCY FOR HIGHER EDUCATION
         COLLABORATIVE PROVISION AUDIT 2011   S-2012-02-08**

12.1   The Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Quality), Professor Alan
         Bassindale introduced the paper. The successful outcome of the Collaborative Provision
         Audit 2011, particularly the two judgements of confidence in the management of academic
         standards and the quality of learning opportunities, had been good news for the
         University. It was a reflection of the significant work that had gone into improving the
         OU's arrangements to provide taught and research degrees through collaboration over the
         past six years, and he gave thanks to all colleagues involved. The audit team had
         identified a number of areas of good practice and had also made a number of
         recommendations to prompt further development. The action plan (Appendix 1 of the
         paper) focussed on those actions required to respond to the formal recommendations.
         Two recommendations in the 'advisable' category were of particular significance, as they
         related to arrangements for assessment and other regulations in validated provision.
         These were being addressed as part of a review of validation methodology. Work was
         also being done to respond to other comments in the full report that encouraged further
         reflection or change. The full action plan would be presented to the Quality Assurance
         and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) in May 2012.

12.2   Referring to paragraph 2 b), a student member requested clarification on the phrase
         'direct teaching' in the context of collaborative provision. There was an ongoing
         uncertainty about which students the OU Students' Association (OUSA) represented;
         those students taught as part of collaborative provision were not directly registered with
         the OU and therefore were not members of OUSA. Professor Bassindale said that 'direct
         teaching' had a specific meaning in this context: there were various models within
         collaborative provision where the University selected the tutors to teach students in other
         institutions who were registered on OU modules and qualifications. The Pro-Vice-
         Chancellor (Curriculum and Qualifications), Professor Alan Tait, added that validated
         provision, in the sense of the curriculum, was entirely within the province of the partner
         institution. Such an institution would teach qualifications not provided by the University,
         but the OU would validate the quality of that provision to lead to an OU degree. Direct
         teaching referred to the teaching of OU qualifications in partnership with other institutions.
         It was not possible to provide an immediate response regarding the implications for OUSA
         membership, but it was a question that required further consideration, particularly as the
         future of such partnerships raised questions about who should be considered to be an OU
         student. The student member said that it also raised issues about who should sit on
         programme committees. Professor Bassindale agreed to give the matter further
         consideration.

Action: AB

12.3   With reference to point 4 f) and g) of the action plan, which concerned the arrangements
         for regular meetings of academic reviewers in institutions where multiple curriculum areas
         were validated, a member said that she had been involved, as an academic reviewer, in
         such a meeting and had found it extremely useful. Subsequently, however, the Principal
         of the validated institution had expressed concern that no-one from that institution had
         been included. Whilst private meetings were valuable, there was also a case for more
         open, collective discussions that actively involved staff from across the validated
         institution, particularly where issues of change and development were concerned.
         However, unless guidelines were provided, it was likely that different practices would
         develop across different institutions. Professor Tait said that the University had worked
         with its partners to design its original validation systems. As these systems were
         reviewed and developed, then the University might wish to involve its partners again,
         whilst still retaining its responsibility. A review of the University's validation methodology,
         led by Professor Trevor Herbert, would be presented to the Senate once it had been

through the expert committees in the Senate substructure. This was likely to make far-reaching recommendations about the way in which the University approached validation, including the role of the academic reviewer. Partners would have to be involved in the outcomes and plans arising from this review.

Action: AT

12.4   The Vice-Chancellor thanked members of the Senate for their comments.

**13   ACADEMIC QUALITY AND STANDARDS: THE SENATE AND
         THE QUALITY ASSURANCE AND ENHANCEMENT COMMITTEE   S-2012-02-09**

13.1   The Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Quality), Professor Alan Bassindale, introduced the paper. The role of the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) was to ensure that the Senate was properly briefed on quality assurance and enhancement processes in the University. Therefore, in addition to the three meeting reports that were submitted to the Senate each year, it was proposed that an annual evaluative report should also be presented that would provide something more tangible for the Senate to comment on.

13.2   The President of the OU Students' Association (OUSA), Marianne Cantieri, said that OUSA supported this proposal. At the time of the last academic governance review, OUSA had not pressed for a place on QAEC. However, in the light of current developments, it would be advantageous to both the University and to OUSA to have a student member nominated by OUSA on the committee, particularly in view of the importance placed on student engagement by the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA). Professor Bassindale said that this was a positive suggestion; the OUSA Vice-President (Education) had attended the last meeting of QAEC, which had been very useful. However, it was a constitutional matter, which he would explore with the appropriate governance authorities.

Action: AB

13.3   A member observed that the Pro-Vice-Chancellor portfolios would be changing and that the responsibility for quality would move to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Scholarship and Quality). Consequently, other changes to the Committee membership may also be useful, such as representation from staff tutors, associate lecturers and others. Professor Bassindale said that the Committee currently had quite broad representation and it worked well. The membership could be reviewed, but once again it was a constitutional matter.

Action: AB

13.4   The Vice-Chancellor thanked members of the Senate for their comments.

14   HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE – HONORARY DEGREES 2013   S-2012-02-10

The Senate **approved** the recommended list of nominations for the award of honorary degrees of Doctor of the University (DUniv) and Master of the University (MUniv) to be conferred in 2013.

| 15 | **COMMITTEE MATTERS** | S-2012-02-11 |

The Senate:

a) **approved** the recommendations for constitutional changes for the following committees:

   i)   Honorary Degrees Committee (Appendix 1 to these Minutes)

   ii) Research Degrees Examination Result Approval Committee (Appendix 2 to these Minutes)

b) **noted** the matters for report.

| 16 | **STUDENT SUPPORT REVIEW – PHASE 4:**
 CURRICULUM SUPPORT TEAM IMPLEMENTATION | S-2012-02-12 |

16.1   Referring to Table A, a member observed that the decision had been taken to create a Curriculum Support Team (CST) specifically for the Openings/Access to Success programme. Whilst the elements within this programme might feed into different faculties, separating them from the organisation of individual programmes of study might not be appropriate in every case. For example, an Access to Success programme aimed at Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) subjects might be better managed if integrated with those CSTs supporting students through the study of the relevant curriculum for mathematics, technology and science. The Director of the Centre for Inclusion and Curriculum (CIC), Dr Liz Marr, said that the University was aware of the need to ensure that there was clear articulation between the support that students received within the Access to Success CST and the other CSTs. It was an issue that had been raised within the Study Experience programme and the team would be focussing on it at the forthcoming Away Days, which aimed to generate ideas to ensure that this arrangement worked effectively. The Vice-Chancellor said that the team would be asked to take into account the member's specific comments.

Action: LM

16.2   A member said that whilst specific resource had been set aside to support the pilots, the transitional plan did not mention the provision of any resource to assist with the implementation of CSTs, although it would require considerable support to ensure that they were successful. The Director, Teaching and Learner Support, Dr Christina Lloyd, replied that the implementation group was currently putting together a plan for transition and the resources required was one of the issues under consideration. However, the allocation of CSTs had been made on the basis of the best possible match to the capacity of each location and assumed that, beyond the transition phase, no additional resource would be required.

16.3   A member asked how subject expertise would be preserved as the centres were being changed. Dr Lloyd said that a set of blueprints was being developed, and the blueprint concerned with roles and responsibilities would address this issue. It was likely that a person with particular academic expertise in location A would become a virtual member of the relevant CST at location B, thus preserving that expertise. The member responded that the issue was also relevant to non-academic staff in the regions who had built up expertise in supporting particular programmes. Dr Lloyd said that such issues would be considered when the blueprints were made more public: currently they were being developed within the Curriculum Support Implementation Group and would not be finalised for some time, so there was plenty of opportunity for feedback. To date, the

feedback that had been received by the working group since the last cascade had come mainly from regions and nations, so feedback from faculties would be welcome.

16.4   Referring to Phase 3: Design of the transitional plan, which indicated that the roles and responsibilities of staff within the CSTs had yet to be identified, an associate lecturer member said it was important to ensure that this did not just cover staff from Student Services and the central academic units (CAUs), but also included associate lecturers (ALs). The issue of how virtual teams worked effectively also had to be resolved during this phase, and an important aspect of this was to ensure that all staff working within CSTs had common access to student data and that the technology was in place to enable this, despite the short timeframe.

16.5   With regard to Phases 4 and 5: Implementation, the member said that there was a danger, because the CSTs were potentially very large, that the core team of 10 staff would work together from the beginning, but that the hundreds of ALs on the periphery would be brought in later and be excluded from the team culture. It was important to ensure that the whole team worked together from the outset. A member agreed that the paper gave the impression that there was a disjunction between the CSTs, the academic leadership and the participation of ALs, and this should be addressed.

16.6   Another member commented that although the broad framework of CSTs was being set centrally by the University, the faculties would have a great deal of influence in how they were organised to suit their specific programmes of study and the pathways within those programmes. It would be at this level that staff tutors and ALs would get involved, although the extent of this involvement might vary from faculty to faculty.

16.7   A member observed that the idea of early adopters had been raised at the last meeting of the Senate, but was not referred to in the paper. An explicit statement clarifying the reason that the University had taken the decision not to use early adopters would be welcomed.

16.8   Another member, who had been involved with the Student Support Review since Phase 1 and was currently working on two of the CST blueprinting teams in the implementation phase, commented that some faculties did not understand the issues around the implementation of CSTs. It was important to emphasise that this would be a fundamental reorganisation of the teaching and learning support for students in the University, which would have wide ranging effects. The paper scheduled for the June 2012 meeting of the Senate should make members aware of the academic implications of the reorganisation in much more detail, particularly for faculty staff. The key issues identified in Phase 3: Design were incomplete. One missing issue that had to be addressed was how the University would deal with the national dimension within CSTs. Another was whether the role description for a pathway tutor should be adopted as a policy in terms of pastoral support. Although the Senate had agreed that the University should develop a curriculum-based system of academic and pastoral care for students (Recommendation 1 - paragraph 2a), pastoral care was not something that the University had provided in the past. The role of ALs in terms of qualification based study for students, their involvement in CSTs, and how virtual teams would work were all issues that had yet to be resolved. The table of implementation illustrated a very compressed and demanding schedule and there was little time to address all the key issues and to ensure that people, systems and processes were aligned and in place. The presentation on what had been accomplished in the Ready for 2012/13 project had been heartening, but it was not clear whether the University would be able to adopt CSTs, operating to an appropriate standard, within the timetable outlined in the paper. Was there a strategy for risk identification and management, and contingency planning if the University could not meet these deadlines?

If qualification based students were not provided with an excellent student experience, particularly when they were paying such high fees, it would affect the University's reputation in a way that would take years to remediate.

16.9　　The Vice-Chancellor said that there had been no early adopters because there were many issues still to work through. This decision would be noted for the report in June 2012.   A full time team was engaged on the project, under the direct supervision of the Director, Students, Will Swann, and also reporting into the Extended Leadership Team (ELT). The Vice-Chancellor gave his commitment that a risk register would be produced and that the University would not go live with the CSTs unless all the outstanding issues had been resolved. The University had imposed the deadlines in the schedule on itself, so the implementation would be carried out properly. In response to a further enquiry, the Vice-Chancellor said that the implementation would be monitored by the Senate as appropriate.

Action: WS

16.10　　The Vice-Chancellor thanked members of the Senate for their comments, which would be fed into the report that would come to the Senate in June.

Action: CL

16.11　　The Senate **noted** the update on the implementation of Curriculum Support Teams, and that a further update would be provided in June 2012 as part of the Study Experience Programme.

17　　POSTGRADUATE STRATEGY: AN UPDATE FROM THE POSTGRADUATE ADVISORY GROUP　　S-2012-02-13

17.1　　The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Qualifications) said that the paper was an interim report: the outcomes from the work of the Postgraduate Advisory Group (PAG) would be presented in-depth to the Senate in June 2012. However, he had received some further information as a result of the market research since the paper had been written. A major outcome of this research, which had considered many variants, was that the University might offer one baseline model with virtual student and tutor interaction. There would be no change to study speed and intensity, and students would select modules during study rather than at the beginning of a qualification. It was possible that additional face-to-face (F2F) support might be required by some students and consideration was being given to providing this as an add-on function.

17.2　　A student member said that OUSA considered postgraduate provision to be a key issue for the University. Had it not been for the Browne Review and the consequent need for action to get ready for 2012/13, the postgraduate strategy should have been at the top of the University's agenda. It was an issue that affected many existing, as well as potential students, who could not see a future for the OU's postgraduate offer and looked elsewhere. Such lost opportunities meant that the University would be unable to recover the situation unless action was taken soon.

17.3　　A member said the University's lack of success in moving its own students through from undergraduate to postgraduate study over a period of many years was a matter for concern. The vast majority of postgraduate students came from elsewhere and were not OU graduates. Another member commented that some non-vocational areas had been successful, such as Mathematics. More could be done in the other areas of interest highlighted in the Monitor research, such as Arts and Humanities.

17.4   Referring to paragraph 8, which identified particular areas for growth, such as Primary Education and Environmental Studies, and suggested that there was some prospect for exploring other subject areas such as Further Education, Economics and Mechanical Engineering subject to further investigation, a member asked whether such investigation was being actively planned or whether it was simply being considered as a possibility for the future. Dr Sharon Ding, Dean of the Faculty of Education and Language Studies, who was leading the project, responded that these subjects were likely to have quite small markets, but might have the potential to offer the OU student numbers in an area of interest. They were being explored at faculty level with Marketing, rather than being taken forward at an institutional level.

17.5   A member said that it was not clear from the paper what the final cut off point might be for the PAG to consider new areas of curriculum and whether the cut-off might relate to financial feasibility and/or reputation. Dr Ding said that the current view of the PAG was that, at an institutional level, it would not propose those areas that the OU should or should not enter, but that this should remain the decision of the faculty and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Curriculum and Qualifications), soon to become Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic). New curriculum areas would emerge as the University moved forward in the new market. Faculties would need to have balanced portfolios across their income generating activities, so it might be appropriate for some to have different cut-off points to others with respect to financial or other targets within their postgraduate offer.

17.6   Another member suggested that the OU's cost and quality structures and its production methods, which were geared up for much larger scale provision, might mean that it would always be too expensive for the University to be able to capitalise on opportunities in relatively small markets with small but significant numbers of students. This should be kept under review.

17.7   An associate lecturer member observed that there were a number of ambiguities in the interim report that should be clarified in the final report. Paragraph 18 suggested that it was difficult in terms of market evaluation to see 'what' new offer the University might make in the postgraduate area and it therefore made sense to focus on the 'how'. However, it would be difficult to focus on the 'how' unless there was a coherent idea of the 'what' or the type and extent of subjects that might be under consideration. The member also enquired about the status of the two different types of postgraduate offer: the vocational, which the paper suggested was the only area that the OU should continue to expand or offer new areas of postgraduate curriculum; and the academic subject. Dr Ding said that the extensive work on the UK Market Strategy, supported by the work previously mentioned by Professor Tait, had made clear that the OU's postgraduate provision was not as attractive as it might be. The research had indicated that there was a perception that the University did not provide sufficiently high quality lectures or student support, and that its offer was not up to date. Consequently, the focus would be on improving the 'how', in order to ensure that the OU's delivery models were fit for purpose and appropriate to the needs of current and future students.

17.8   A member requested clarification of the status of modules at postgraduate level. Dr Ding said that the market research had indicated that that vast majority of postgraduate students wanted to study for a Masters qualification. However, the PAG would be proposing that options should be available for certificates and diplomas.

17.9   An associate lecturer member asked about the degree to which the University had looked at what the market leaders in postgraduate provision were offering that the OU was not, and whether the scope of what was being considered had been broadened beyond the actual curriculum offer and tuition model to encompass wider cultural aspects. Conversations with postgraduates in other higher education institutions (HEIs) as to why they studied with a particular institution had indicated that students wanted the opportunity

to network with academics with high research profiles. The culture of the OU made this problematic, as the University had always taken a team teaching approach and tended not to name individuals. Some ALs had recently appeared on programmes such as *Today* and *Woman's Hour*, but had not mentioned their affiliation. However, the University might wish to reconsider its approach, if it helped to attract students to OU courses. Dr Ding said that the cultural aspects were being considered and some ideas were being explored. For example, the University was looking at ways in which AL interaction with students might be varied: as well as using an AL's time to deal with tutor groups in the conventional way, some time might also be used by ALs to interact virtually with much larger groups of students or even a whole cohort on a module. In this way the University would be better able to capitalise on an AL's expertise and status. The University was also considering how this might be done with central and regional academic colleagues. Moreover, subject to contractual arrangements, the OU might use experts from other institutions to engage virtually with OU students, which would provide the University with a unique selling point (USP). The UK Market Research had shown that students wanted to know and interact with the academics who were teaching them. Current technologies now provided the OU with an opportunity to move students closer to these academics through podcasts, electronic conferences and so on. A member commented that the importance of an AL's academic profile would vary between faculties and according to the nature of the material: in some areas ALs were very highly regarded, but did not necessarily have a high academic profile. Whilst a command of what they were teaching was required, a strong ethos of support and guidance was also important: it would not be appropriate for the University just to seek out 'stars'.

17.10 Referring to the models mentioned in paragraph 22, the Dean of Science, Professor Hazel Rymer, enquired whether the consideration of a professional alumni network, available post award, was still on the agenda, as this might offer another USP. Dr Ding said that such a network was still being considered, although the market research referred to by Professor Tait had indicated that it was not particularly highly valued by students. The University would therefore have to consider what it could provide at a reasonably low cost. A meeting with the Director of Communications, Lucian Hudson, was scheduled later that week to consider alumni relationships, which would include the postgraduate offer, and it was hoped that the PAG would be able to link to that work. Another member commented that even if students did not value such a network, it was extremely important for the University to have a relationship with its alumni, particularly with regard to marketing. Dr Ding said that Mr Hudson would be taking this forward.

Action: LH

17.11 A member asked whether the models in paragraph 22, particularly b) tuition and assessment, implied that a single uniform model of assessment would be imposed on every postgraduate offer throughout the University. Dr Ding said that it was not the remit of the PAG to specify in detail any one model of assessment. Different curriculum areas required different pedagogic strategies in order to engage appropriately with their students. However, the Group would be producing costed models so that the University and the faculties could better understand the relationship between students and costs. The PAG would be recommending that it should be for the faculties, in consultation with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic), to decide whether or not it was appropriate to operate outside of the model. Those faculties with large numbers of students at postgraduate level might be in a position to increase their costs, whereas those with fewer postgraduates would not. A member said that it was important to consider the wider picture when costing. For example, it had been difficult to achieve the move to end of module assessments in her own area because of the costs involved. However, despite the assessment being more challenging and difficult, the pass rate had increased significantly and the costs had been repaid through retention and progression.

17.12   A member observed that the paper was entirely focussed on teaching. However, the grey area between teaching and research offered an opportunity to use student's postgraduate projects as papers that might provide outputs for the Research Excellence Framework (REF). There was much greater demand from students finishing their Masters and wishing to study a PhD, than the University was able to meet because of the conventional model.

17.13   A member commented that there were some tough issues to be resolved around the OU's postgraduate provision and the University appeared to be some way from having firm guidelines available for the meeting of the Senate in June 2012. The paper and the previous discussion had not provided any real understanding of why the OU's share of the postgraduate market was so poor. An organisation with the OU's particular assets, such as the ability to reach students wherever they lived and the design for part-time study, should be able to attract great numbers of postgraduate students. Why was the University not succeeding in this area, when it was proving its competence in others, such as MBAs? Employability was one of the principle motives for postgraduate study; should the University have more detailed conversations with employers and sponsors, as well a students? Dr Ding responded that the results from some market research in this area were expected during the following week and would provide further information on the views of employers.

17.14   Another member observed that the OU had good products that were available to students internationally, as well as in the UK, and asked if the University had considered the institutional problems with marketing postgraduate provision. The segmentation approach that had been taken with regard to undergraduate provision did not necessarily translate to postgraduate. Niche marketing might be a more appropriate approach in areas other than the MBA and PGCE. There was a considerable amount of market research being undertaken to identify what should be offered, but the promotion of what the University actually offered needed further consideration. Dr Ding confirmed that this was being under review.

17.15   The Vice-Chancellor thanked members of the Senate for their comments, which would be taken into consideration as the project evolved.

Action: SD

17.16   The Senate noted the interim report on the review of postgraduate study.

18   THE COUNCIL   **S-2012-02-14A&B**

18.1   Referring to paragraph 8 of the non-confidential paper (S-2012-02-14A), which noted student concerns about being unable to access their study calendar or details of tutor marked assignments as a result of the move to on-line delivery, a member observed that the interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Quality), Professor Alan Bassindale had said that he would investigate the matter and enquired whether there was any further information. The Director of Learning and Teaching Solutions (LTS), Ann Howells, said that although some decisions had been made because of the University's need to make savings and efficiencies in recent years, the decisions in this area were dependent on the curriculum and module teams, which often continued to make changes to course details until the last minute in order that students received the most up to date information. An associate lecturer member said that concern had also been expressed by associate lecturers (ALs) with regard to the availability of material or the opening of forums before the start. It was a matter that needed to be kept on the agenda, whether or not it was faculty specific.

18.2 -   CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE - recorded separately as S-2012-02-CM.
18.4

18.5   The Senate **noted** the report from the meeting of the Council held on 28 February 2012.

19   ACTION BY THE CHAIR   **S-2012-02-15**

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

20   FUTURE ITEMS OF BUSINESS   **S-2012-02-16**

The Senate **noted** the list of potential items for the agenda for the Senate meeting in April 2012.

21   DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Meetings would be held on the following dates:

Wednesday 20 June 2012
Wednesday 17 October 2012
Wednesday 6 February 2013

Fraser Woodburn
Secretary to the Committee

Julie Tayler
Working Secretary to the Committee
Email: j.d.tayler@open.ac.uk
Tel: 01908 332729

Attachments:

S-2012-02-M Appendix 1: Honorary Degrees Committee constitution
S-2012-02-M Appendix 2: Research Degrees Examination Result Approval Committee constitution

Key:

AB   Professor Alan Bassindale
SD   Dr Sharon Ding
LH   Lucian Hudson
CL   Dr Christina Lloyd
LM   Dr Liz Marr
WS   Will Swann
AT   Professor Alan Tait

HONORARY DEGREES COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTION – UPDATED 20.06.200718.04.2012

Terms of Reference

Advising other governance bodies or management

To receive from members of the University and from accredited institutions nominations of persons thought worthy of the award of an Honorary Degree and, after scrutiny of such nominations, to recommend a shortlist for the consideration of the Senate.

Membership

1.   The Vice-Chancellor, Chair, *ex officio*.

2.   Five members of the Senate elected by the Senate, of whom at least one shall be a member of the professorial staff.

3.   One member of the Validation Committee nominated by the Vice-Chancellor.

4.   One other member, as from time to time the Vice-Chancellor may wish to appoint.

Mode of Operation

1.   The Committee shall meet as and when required in accordance with the procedures agreed by the Senate for the award of Honorary Degrees.

2.   The Chair shall have executive authority to act on its behalf in consultation with its Secretary.

3.   The Committee should act and be perceived to act impartially, and not be influenced in its role by members' social or business relationships.

Secretary

RESEARCH DEGREES EXAMINATION RESULT APPROVAL COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTION – UPDATED 01.11.201118.04.2012

Purpose

On behalf of the Research Degrees Committee to approve research degree examination results and the award of Open University research degrees and to make recommendations to Research Degrees Committee on matters of policy relating to examination policy.

Terms of Reference

Legislation, setting policy and strategy frameworks, agreeing plans and priorities

1. To make recommendations to the Research Degrees Committee about changes to research degree examination policy in response to external changes or good practice requirements.

Assuring quality and standards, including approving regulations

2. To approve the recommendations of examiners for examination results, and the award of Open University research degrees to individual students registered for such degrees.

Monitoring and reviewing actions and institutional performance

3. To monitor the implementation of institutional research degree examination policy on behalf of the Research Degrees Committee.

4. To monitor the maintenance of standards in the award of Open University research degrees.

Membership

1. A Chair appointed by the Research Degrees Committee.

2. A Deputy Chair appointed by the Research Degrees Committee.

3. The Chair of the Life and Biomolecular Sciences Management Group, *ex officio.*

4. The Chair of the Theology and Religious Studies Management Group, *ex officio.*

5. The Chair of the Architecture and Urbanism Management Group, *ex officio.*

6. The associate dean (research) nominee from each central academic unit, *ex officio.*

7. One member, co-opted by the Committee, to advise on the result approval of the examination candidates registered in the Chair's subject area, should the Chair be drawn from existing Committee membership.

Secretary, Head of Research Degrees Team

Mode of Operation

1. The Committee shall report to the Research Degrees Committee.

2. It shall normally meet twice a year.

3. The Chair, and by delegation the Deputy Chair, shall have executive authority to act on its behalf, in consultation with other nominated members, to approve examination results and the award of degrees in between meetings, to enable the timely issue of results.