THE SENATE

Minutes

This paper presents the Minutes of the last meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 17 October 2012 at 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

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THE SENATE

Minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on Wednesday 17 October 2012 at 2.00 pm
in the Hub Theatre, The Open University, Walton Hall.

Present:

1) Ex officio

Mr Martin Bean, Vice-Chancellor
Professor Tim Blackman, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Scholarship and Quality)
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 Kevin Hetherington, Faculty of Social Sciences
Professor Hazel Rymer, Dean, Faculty of Science
Professor Anne De Roeck, Dean, Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology
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, Learning and Teaching Solutions

Appointed

2) Central Academic Units

Faculty of Arts

Dr Ole Grell	Dr Lynda Prescott
Professor Suman Gupta	Dr Bob Wilkinson
Dr Graham Harvey	

Faculty of Business & Law

Dr Jacky Holloway	Mr Mike Phillips
Ms Carmel McMahon	Dr Sharon Slade

Faculty of Education and Language Studies

Dr Uwe Baumann	Dr Steven Hutchinson
Dr Jane Cullen	Professor Karen Littleton
Ms Felicity Harper	Dr Tim Lewis

Faculty of Health and Social Care

Mrs Sue Cole	Miss Christine Taylor
Professor Monica Dowling	Dr Mary Twomey

Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology

Dr David Bowers	Dr Nicholas Moss
Mr Derek Goldrei	Dr Tony Nixon
Ms Maggie Holland	Dr Toby O'Neil
Professor Andy Lane	Dr Mark Woodroffe

Faculty of Science

Dr John Baxter   Dr David Rothery
Professor Monica Grady   Dr Roberts Saunders
Dr Arlene Hunter   Dr Claire Turner
Dr Nick Rogers

Faculty of Social Sciences

Dr Troy Cooper   Dr Helen Kaye
Dr Anastasia Economou   Dr Hugh Mackay
Dr Richard Heffernan   Dr Raia Prokhovnik

Institute of Educational Technology

Dr Robin Goodfellow   Professor Eileen Scanlon

Other Central Units

Dr Liz Marr

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   Dr Barbara Tarling
Mr David Humble   Ms Jacqui Horsburgh (alternate)
Dr Sandra Summers   Mr Carey Shaw (alternate)

5) Academic-related Staff

Mrs Liz Armitage   Mr Billy Khokar
Ms Pat Atkins   Dr Christina Lloyd
Miss Karen Bradbury   Mr Tony O'Shea-Poon
Mr Mike Christensen   Ms Hilary Robertson
Mr Martin Ferns   Ms Gill Smith
Ms Sandi Guest   Mr Jake Yeo
Mr Martin Kenward

6) Co-opted members

Mrs Lynda Brady   Dr David Knight
Mr John D'Arcy   Dr James Miller
Mr Rob Humphreys

In attendance

Mr Andrew Law, Director of Open Media Unit
Dr Simon Bromley, Faculty of Social Sciences (for minute 12, S-2012-04-09)
Mr Martin Jackson, Assistant Director, Student Services (for minute 9, S-2012-04-06)
Ms Michelle Gander, Head of University Secretary's Office
Ms Lucie Hodgkinson, Executive Assistant to the Vice-Chancellor

Apologies:

1) Ex officio

Professor Alan Bassindale, Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)
Professor Alan Tait, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic)
Professor David Rowland, Dean, Faculty of Arts

Appointed

2) Central Academic Units

Faculty of Arts

Professor John Wolffe

Faculty of Business & Law

Mr Alessandro Saroli

Faculty of Education and Language Studies

Mr Pete Smith

Faculty of Health and Social Care

Professor Jan Draper

Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology

Dr Leonor Barroca   Dr Peter Robbins
Professor Joyce Fortune

Faculty of Social Sciences

Mr Matt Staples

Institute of Educational Technology

Professor Agnes Kukulska-Hulme

4) Students Appointed by Open University Students Association

Ms Pippa Doran

5) Academic-Related Staff

Ms Clare Riding

6) Co-opted members

Dr Peter Scott

1 WELCOME

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed everyone to the first Senate meeting of the new academic year, particularly the new Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences, Professor Kevin Hetherington, and all those who had recently been appointed as members to their first meeting of the Senate.

2 MINUTES   S-2012-03-M

The Senate **approved** the minutes of the meeting of the Senate held on 20 June 2012.

3 MATTERS ARISING   S-2012-04-01

3.1   With reference to the response to Minute 3.1 (paragraph 2), an associate lecturer (AL) member commented that, whilst acknowledging the validity of the Tripartite Group (Learning and Teaching Solutions, the OU Students Association and the Learning and Teaching Office) to resolve technical issues, it had been noted that at start of the new academic year technical issues were still being experienced, particularly with regard to the visibility of tutorials on the study calendar after the migration to VLE 2. The Vice-Chancellor said that the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) would be made aware of this issue.

Action: AB

3.2   Referring to the response to minute 10.2 from the last Senate meeting (paragraphs 13-14), the Dean of the Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Technology (MCT), Professor Anne de Roeck, said that the discussion at the Senate had concerned two separate points about the use of the Turnitin software, although the action had concerned the first point only. The response regarding the pilot project took a particular view about what Turnitin was used for, and indicated that the University was using it as a tool for policing rather than as a learning opportunity. The response did not take into account the second point related to the use of Turnitin, in particular the comment that the introduction of pathways would dramatically change the effort involving in training students in the use of Turnitin, as it would address the whole student experience rather than individual modules. Professor de Roeck requested that a response should come back through the Matters Arising paper to the next Senate that specifically addressed how Turnitin would be rolled out to students, and how the introduction of pathways would affect the cost base. The Vice-Chancellor said that a timeline for the pilot should also be provided.

Action: WS

3.3   Dr Arlene Hunter, who was leading the pilot, responded that Turnitin was not only being used as a policing tool, but also as an education tool. In this the OU differed from other universities, the vast majority of whom used it as a detection tool. From a formal perspective, the OU did use the software for policing, but Turnitin for Students was intended to be a formative tool for students to use. The pilot aimed to find out how students engaged with Turnitin, how they used it, how they interpreted the information and how that could enhance their learning. Subsequently, the intention was to embed it within the qualification framework and build it into the curriculum. So far, the software had been used by approximately 20% of the students who had had access to it on the pilot, which

had been carried out with the MSc in Science modules during the past year. Feedback on a paper presented to an international conference on plagiarism from other universities using Turnitin for Students in different contexts suggested that they were getting the same usage. The issue was how to get all students to engage with the software more effectively, not just the good students who were already using it.

3.4   The Director, Students, Will Swann, clarified the distinction between Turnitin for Students and Turnitin generally. The OU did appropriately use Turnitin as a policing tool to secure standards. However, the purpose of the pilot was to use it as a formative educational tool to support student learning. Feedback on the pilot, how this compared with the experience of other universities, and how the University could embed Turnitin into the new qualification structures, would be brought back to the Senate. In response to a student member's observation that minute 10.2 had stated that "The report was expected soon and feedback would be provided to the next meeting of the Senate.", in other words the current meeting, Mr Swann said that feedback had been provided in the summary of the current status, which included the fact that the report had not yet been completed. The final report on the Turnitin pilot would be provided to the Senate.

Action: WS

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

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

4.1   The Vice-Chancellor said that the OU was in good shape to meet the new challenges ahead. The OU's overall student numbers had held up well. The number of new and continuing registrations was in line with, and in some instances higher than, the University's assumptions. Plans for the years ahead had been based on two main factors: achieving a certain number of registrations and delivering on the University's programme to reduce costs and generate net new income of £75 million. By doing both – and only by doing both – would the University be able to ensure that the future of the OU was secure.

4.2   The University Secretary, Fraser Woodburn, provided further detail on the first student intake under the different fees and financial support arrangements in England and within the new qualification framework across the UK, and what it meant for the University. The information required some analysis, but as only one data point was available, it was important not to over-interpret it.

4.3   The Senate had held a workshop in September 2011 on the UK Market Strategy. The key findings of the research analysis had been that the Government loan in England would be attractive; that the OU should focus on three core groups, employed and unemployed adults without previous higher education (HE) experience, and older students; that the University should aim to grow its share of postgraduate students; that it should expect to lose students that had to pay their own way, such as those who already have an equivalent or lower qualification (ELQ) and those studying for modules only in England; that the University would not see a major shift towards traditional university entrants; and that the majority of students would be interested in qualifications and study for career-related reasons.

4.4   A direct comparison between October 2012 and 2011 was difficult for a number of reasons. There had been a substantial shift in the presentation pattern from February to October, which meant that October numbers, all other things being equal, would be larger than last year. Furthermore, 'new regime' was not the same as 'new' in England, as it included a substantial number (25%) of students who would previously have been classified as 'continuing', but who did not meet the transitional requirements.

4.5   There had been three student number planning assumptions, which differed only in respect of the numbers assumed for new regime England. Scenario 1 was that of the UK Market Strategy as seen by the Senate at the workshop in September 2011; scenario 2 was the challenging target set for Marketing, which had been to try to achieve the same number of new regime students in England as in 2011/12; and scenario 3, half way between, which had been the one used for operational planning purposes, particularly with regard to tutor-student assignment.

4.6   The outcome had been that new regime students for October 2012 in England were 96% of scenario 1. This was a good result, particularly in view of the unanticipated problems with the Student Loans Company (SLC), which had not opened for loans until the end of July 2012, instead of March as expected, and then had only provided an off-line application process for student loans, rather than on-line. The outcome in terms of segmentation had been very close to that which had been predicted in September 2011. The only major difference was that the number of younger (20-29), not-employed students (C1s) was greater, 20% instead of the anticipated 11-12%. Overall, the numbers were above scenario 3 at every level, including Level 1. This was because transitional student numbers were higher that expected and numbers in the Celtic nations were also strong The numbers in each faculty were close to scenario 1 or above scenario 3. Two faculties, the Faculty of Education and Language Studies (FELS) and the Faculty of Health and Social Care (HSC), were below scenario 1; all the others were above scenario 3.

4.7   The postgraduate numbers were about 80% of the planning assumptions. This was a better result than it appeared, because the target had been tough and the numbers looked to be higher than last year. The aim to maintain the widening participation (WP) proportions had been considered challenging, but in England they had increased from 14% to 16%, and they had been held in the other nations. The take up of loans in England had been higher than expected: 78% of the new regime England intake had taken out the Government loan and 5% had taken out an OUSBA loan. The rest of the students had paid their own way.

4.8   Mr Woodburn presented a series of graphs that showed the results in more detail for each of the nations, using percentages to compare the numbers against the intake over the past two years or against the scenario 1 expectations.

4.9   The twelve most popular qualifications demonstrated a spread across the curriculum. This spread was not narrowly vocational, even though most students were studying for career-related reasons.

4.10   There were a number of points that required further investigation, including the growth in younger, not-employed students, which applied primarily in England, but had also been demonstrated in the other nations. Although the absolute numbers were small, there had been a significant increase in the number of students that had registered for 120 credit points. It was clear that some of those students were not equipped to study at this rate, and Student Services were trying to contact them to provide advice. The University also needed to consider whether its guidance to enquirers could have prevented this from happening. Although the numbers in Scotland had been satisfactory overall, it was important to understand why the number of continuing undergraduates had been less than predicted. The University also needed to understand the reasons that the University had more than maintained its WP numbers.

4.11   Mr Woodburn said that a further presentation would be given to the Senate after the February intake, which would provide a better view of the results for the year overall.

Action: FW

4.12   A member commented that the general health of the numbers disguised some unusual positions in the faculties. In the Faculty of Science, there had been significant increases in the number of students registered for Level 1 courses, which had required AL services in the regions to work hard in order to ensure that students got the service that they deserved. Tutors had been flexible and had taken large or double groups.

4.13   The Vice-Chancellor observed that despite all the changes, the OU was still taking on thousands of students. Many individuals were setting out on the road to a life-changing qualification. The OU could be proud of this, especially in the light of the uncertainty and trepidation that had accompanied the arrival of the new funding regime.

4.14   Much of the credit for this success had to go to the 'Project Countdown' team who had worked so hard to get the University prepared for such unprecedented changes. Colleagues from across the University – from IT, Marketing, Communications and Student Services – had worked together and put in a tremendous effort to deliver a wide range of system developments, new processes, new outsourcing partners and new communications across multiple channels, online and off. This had been achieved despite the pressure of a clear deadline that had to be met if the University's efforts were to make a difference. The team's work had been a superb example of energy, motivation, passion and commitment, but it was typical of the dedication shown to OU students by the University's staff every day.

4.15   The unstinting support provided by University staff was one of the reasons that students were so satisfied with the OU. The National Student Survey (NSS), the biggest annual study of its kind, had named the OU as the UK's top university for overall student satisfaction, ahead of institutions such as of Oxford, Cambridge and the London School of Economics (LSE). The OU had been in the top three since the survey had started, but to make it to number one was an excellent achievement and everyone across the University should be congratulated.

4.16   Such progress was down to the hard work and continued innovation of OU staff. For example, Library Services had reviewed previous responses to the NSS, had identified areas where it could be doing better, and had worked with the faculties to design and implement an action plan. This had included providing students with a coherent and relevant library experience across their qualification and developing a series of promotional materials that informed students how the online library could support them in their studies. As a result, its NSS satisfaction score had improved by 8% over the past five years. This had not only helped the OU as a whole to climb the rankings, but it had also improved students' overall learning experience.

4.17   It was important for the OU to stay at the top of the NSS tree in future. Consequently, the Senate would be discussing the new version of the Student Charter later on the agenda. The OU had had a student charter in place since 1995, but in order for it to remain useful both to students and to the University, it had to remain up to date and reflect current realities. If the University's focus remained on the needs of its students, it would continue to do its best for them and the OU would then have every opportunity to stay at the top of the NSS rankings.

4.18   So, the OU had a good, strong, number of students, and they were very happy students. It was also satisfying to see that these students continued to come from a huge range of backgrounds. Social mobility and widening participation had always been at the heart of what the OU stood for, so it was gratifying to see the number of students from a "widening participation" background holding up well. Across the UK, 15.6% of OU students were from a WP background, and the University taught more than half of all the part-time WP students in the UK. Three-quarters of the University's WP students said they would not

have gone to university at all if the OU did not exist; and around half would have struggled to get accepted by any other institution as they did not have the qualifications required.

4.19   The OU's Widening Access and Success Strategy would also be discussed later on the agenda. It was important that the OU continued to serve students whose needs were not met by the rest of the higher education (HE) sector. This did not only benefit the individuals who studied with the University, but also their families, their communities and, crucially at a time of economic difficulty, their employers. This was the message the Vice-Chancellor had taken to all three of the major party conferences, where he had met with Ministers and Members of Parliament (MPs) to remind them of the power that education had to transform lives and drive economic growth. The Guardian website provided an account of the roundtable event attended by the Vice-Chancellor with Vince Cable, Secretary of State for Business, Education and Skills. Dr Cable, a former OU tutor, had been very receptive to the OU's call for sustained funding of WP programmes. His personal experience had had a great influence on his view of the OU. He had said: "In my day job I taught students at Glasgow University. Some of them were keen and some of them weren't, but it was pretty flat usually. But when you got over to the Open University there was a vitality and a hunger for learning that made it a completely different experience … and I will always remember that." A similar reaction had been received from all the other politicians that the University representatives had spoken to, including the newly promoted Justice Secretary, Chris Grayling, Education Minister, Liz Truss, and Shadow Education Minister, Shabana Mahmood.

4.20   However, it was not necessary to meet with political leaders to ensure that the OU made higher education open to as many students as possible. Raising the profile of the University and showing what an OU education could mean was also important. In Belfast, for example, the Northern Ireland office had organised a Culture Night featuring readings from creative writing students such as Leesa Harker, a single mother who has just had her first book published. More than 50 visitors had attended and seen how skills and talents can be nurtured by the OU and, perhaps, had considered that an OU education could help them too. In the Republic of Ireland, the new British Ambassador, Dominick Chilcott, had paid a visit to the Dublin Office for a lunchtime seminar, and had been very impressed with what he had seen. A partnership between The Open University in Wales, NHS employers and trades unions had been shortlisted in the prestigious Times Higher Education Annual Awards. The winner would be announced at the end of November 2012, so the Senate might have more to celebrate at its next meeting.

4.21   The University had a long-standing ambition to bring research and development investment into Milton Keynes, build the stock of knowledge jobs, and improve the wellbeing of local people and communities. Work was underway to raise the profile the University's local engagement, including a new brochure and a proposed concordat on research collaboration that the OU hoped to launch at a conference in 2013. The sort of work to be highlighted was typified by John Oates, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education and Language Studies, who was leading pioneering research on child development, and had nearly finished work on a new PC, smartphone and tablet app that would help parents track their children's' development from birth right through to school-leaving age. When it's launched the app would provide much-needed support and reassurance to busy parents everywhere.

4.22   The Vice-Chancellor observed that it had been a hectic period for the University, with everyone playing their part to ensure that the OU continued to deliver the best possible experience to the widest possible range of students. The University had met challenges and overcome them; set targets and exceeded them. As the end of 2012 approached, The Open University could be seen to be an institution that was not only as strong as at any point in its 40 year history, but one that was actively fighting to secure not just its own future, but that of the whole higher education sector. This was something about which

everyone could be very proud.

5   STRATEGIC PLANNING AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE   S-2012-04-02 A & B

The Senate **noted** the unconfirmed Minutes (SPRC-2012-03-M) and Confidential Minutes (SPRC-2012-03-CM) from the meeting held on 27 June 2012.

6   CURRICULUM AND VALIDATION COMMITTEE   S-2012-04-03

6.1   Referring to paragraph 8 under the heading New Access Models (page 2), an AL member asked for an update on the creation of an Access Programme Committee. Dr Liz Marr, Director of the Centre for Inclusion and Collaborative Partnerships (CICP), said that the issue of an Access Programme Committee had been urgently addressed following the meeting of the Curriculum and Validation Committee (CVC), as it was necessary to get the relevant approvals in order for work to be done on new modules. Discussions had been held with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching), Professor Alan Bassindale on this matter as, with the change of portfolios, the responsibility for making the decision fell back on the Qualifications Committee. Professor Bassindale had approved the establishment of an Access Programme Committee, which would cover both the access modules and the Openings modules.

6.2   The AL member also requested more detail about the dedicated outbound team. Mr Swann said that this would be the proto support team for the Access Programme and that some work in this area was currently getting underway.

6.3   The Senate **noted** the report from the meeting of the Curriculum and Validation Committee held on 3 July 2012.

7   SENATE MEMBERSHIP PANEL   S-2012-04-04

The Senate **noted** the report from the meeting of the Senate Membership Panel held on 27 July 2012.

8   WIDENING ACCESS AND SUCCESS STRATEGY   S-2012-04-05

8.1   The Director, Students, Mr Will Swann, said that the most important commitment made by the OU in the course of determining its UK Market Strategy was its commitment on widening access. The University had agreed that it would seek to ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds were as represented in the future student population as they had been in 2011. The primary target group was undergraduate students in the 25% most disadvantaged areas of the UK with no previous HE qualifications. In 2011/12, 18% of new undergraduates had been in the target group. So far, in 2012/13, 21% of new undergraduates were in the target group, 23% in England.

8.2   However, if the qualifications of new students in England were disregarded and only the socio-economic distribution was taken into consideration, 27% of students had been in the bottom quartile in 2011/12, but so far in 2012/13 the figure was 23%. Nevertheless, there had not been a dramatic change in the socio-economic mix of OU students and there had been no flight from OU study in the most disadvantaged communities in England.

8.3   This was a good beginning, but access was not enough, success counted for just as much. The Strategy's success would be judged not only according to how the University performed in recruiting students from disadvantaged groups, but also in how it supported

them to achieve their study goals, in how they perceived the University to have met their needs, and in the level of their achievement.

8.4   There was still much work to do on completion and achievement. The data in Tables 2 and 3 of the covering paper indicated some reduction in the gap in performance between disadvantaged and other students in the past three years. However, relative to the absolute size of the gap, progress had been modest and, at this rate, it would take another ten years to close the gap entirely. The University would need to do better, and the Strategy set out how it intended to achieve that by coordinating all the resources from faculties, the Centre for Inclusion and Curriculum Partnerships (CICP), Student Services and other units.

8.5   The context in which the University would be implementing the Strategy was changing. The University was entering a world in which governments and funding bodies would expect a clearer account, not only of how the OU was spending the resources that they provided to widen access and success, but also on the outcomes that it achieved. Activity would not be enough; it was results that would count. The new Strategy had been designed for this new environment of greater accountability for outcomes, and greater transparency in the use of widening access funding. This would encourage the University to reflect more closely on how it should use its resources to support this Strategy.

8.6   The OU was currently in an interim period, with a Strategy that had to be defined at this point in order that the University could respond at the end of the year to requirements from the Office for Fair Access (OFFA) for the next Access Agreement, from the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) for the next Widening Participation Strategic Assessment, and for parallel documents in the other UK nations. However, the University would not know until early next year what funding it would receive in 2013/14 for widening participation in England, where the majority of students were. The University would have to take account of this in implementing the Strategy and was acting vigorously to secure the best possible funding outcomes in all four nations.

8.7   The heart of the Strategy, and the commitments that it made, were set out on page 2 of the document:

- To create new opportunities for HE study, particularly for defined priority groups across the four nations of the UK

- To ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are represented in the future student population as they were in 2011

- To enable these students to be successful in their study

- To enhance the life chances and opportunities for these students

8.8   However, without action, these words would be meaningless. The Senate would have to commit itself to supporting the action required across the University, especially in faculties, in order to turn these aspirations into reality over the next three years.

8.9   Members welcomed the document and were supportive of the direction that the Strategy was taking. It was comprehensive and had some clear lessons for the faculties in terms of their priorities in supporting the WP agenda.

8.10   A student member said that the students were proud to belong to a university that was retaining its commitment to widening participation in difficult financial times. The University was to be congratulated for the work that it had done, and the OU Students' Association (OUSA) was committed to supporting the OU in securing its fair share of the funding income available. However, whilst it was acknowledged that this was an external

issue outside of the University's control, there were considerable concerns about the difficulties that students would face in the new regime, particularly with regard to the withdrawal of grants and assistance with study costs. Mr Swann responded that the design of the Access to Success programme allowed the University to offer students who met the financial conditions (ie an income of less than £21,000) a much reduced fee for their access module and then for their first 60 credits at Level 1. This programme had been undersubscribed in its first intake. Arrangements were, therefore, already in place for students embarking on a qualification. However, the University was concerned about those students who successfully completed their first 60 credits, but still continued to be concerned about taking out a loan. Through the Development Office, the University was developing a campaign to generate funds that would create a scholarship programme to help bring down the costs and manage the financial risk for some students.

8.11   The President of OUSA, Marianne Cantieri, said that whilst the students supported the University's approach to widening participation, they wanted more to be done. In the past, there had been grants for computers and other study requirements, but these had been removed. Was there anything else that the University could do to enable students from disadvantaged backgrounds to have access to their own computers, as well as other software or materials that they might need? Mr Swann replied that the University was investigating what it could do to raise funds. Now that the Government was taking a different position on grants and was essentially only providing loans, donors were much more likely to step in. The OU had to be active in attracting such funds, but also thoughtful about how best to deploy them in order to attract and retain students. If this was to buy computers for students, then this was what the University should do. This was not yet understood, but should be added to the action plans.

Action: WS

8.12   Referring to paragraph 5 (page 5), which said "we will widen access and success for priority student groups using the learning and teaching technologies designed for the student population as a whole", a member asked whether the University had data about the access of these priority student groups to those technologies compared to the student population as a whole. Mr Swann said that the data was available from IET Statistics and could be provided if required. The assumptions that could be made about students' access to broadband and whether they had the support to achieve the skills necessary to become a successful online learner had been debated in the Senate on previous occasions. The University had taken the decision to make the same assumptions for all students and to take responsibility for those students who, for whatever reason, struggled to gain access, and to proactively help them to find solutions. This corresponded with the OU's commitment to enhance the life chances of the students in the widening participation (WP) target groups. Successful participation in society and in the economy of the future depended on individuals having the skills that would enable them to be part of the online world. The OU would be doing a disservice to its students if it pretended it could protect them from that; it needed to support them in becoming part of it.

8.13   An AL member observed that the principles outlined on page 5 of the Strategy were mostly concerned with operational detail. The introduction to the numbered paragraphs, which said "we will do this by identifying and tackling barriers which can prevent students from studying successfully with us, where that is consistent with agreed priorities and budgets", might be refocused to put the emphasis on identifying the barriers and then thinking creatively about how the University might find the finance to reduce them, rather than suggesting that the OU had a specific budget and that action might not be possible. Mr Swann said that this comment could be taken account of in the final draft.

Action: WS

8.14 With reference to paragraph 5 (page 5), which said "we will work actively to overcome barriers", and the table on page 10 regarding *Black and minority ethnic (BME) students in low socio-economic groups*, which stated "tutors would be better informed and will have appropriate resources to support completion, progression and attainment", the AL member requested clarification on who would have responsibility for identifying barriers and the processes through which the University could overcome them. Mr Swann said that behind the Strategy there would be action plans for each group, which would be much more specific about responsibilities and timescales. These were currently being drafted and once developed would become public documents.

Action: WS

8.15 Referring to the final paragraph on page 6 regarding recruitment, the AL member suggested that the target should be more flexible. The target was to "maintain the proportions of new WP students", but elsewhere the paper acknowledged that the University did not know what the impact of the new fees regime would be on the retention and progression of students. The number of students recruited might need to be varied in order to retain the overall profile as at present. Mr Swann agreed that if the increased fees did bring down the level of student retention, then the University would have to look at the impact that had on the required size of the intake.

Action: WS

8.16 With reference to page 10, which stated that "our institutional understanding of the factors that lead to failure and success for these (BME) students will be enhanced", the Dean, Faculty of Health and Social Care, Jeremy Roche, enquired why there was not a corresponding statement for *Students from low socio-economic* groups (page 9). Issues of class were equally complicated and equally important for the University. Mr Swann said that he would incorporate this point in the final draft.

Action: WS

8.17 With reference to the priority group of *Disabled students* (page 11), the Director, Institute of Educational Technology (IET), Professor Josie Taylor, observed that the responsibility for the learning experience had been assigned to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) and enquired what role the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) would have in that learning experience. Mr Swann said that this would be discussed with the Vice-Chancellor at a later date.

Action: WS

8.18 An AL member said that the inclusion of *Students who are carers* (page 12) and *Offender learners* (page 13) was particularly appreciated, although it was acknowledged that there were external barriers with regard to prisoners. Another member enquired about the role of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) with respect to offender learners, a group which, in some areas, had increased by 25%. Modules had been developed in order to make them more practice-based and to ensure that students could demonstrate greater on-line skills upon graduation, but this made it more difficult for offender learners. Consequently, a significant amount of time was being spent on finding quick fixes in order to provide appropriate materials to students in prison. The University appeared to be pulling in different directions with its commitment to widening participation versus the development of more work-based, online study and learning, particularly when it wanted to be innovative and flexible. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) should have a role to play in this context. Mr Swann said that this was a pertinent point and the University was reviewing the situation. Partly as a result of the increasing use of technologies, which was problematic in prisons despite the University's work with the

National Offender Management Service on their Virtual Campus, it would not be possible for the University to continue with its current strategy of trying to make everything available to everyone. The faculties were currently being consulted on a proposal for a core curriculum for offender learners, defined in terms of those qualifications and modules that the OU would undertake to continue to make accessible within prisons, and taking account of the practicalities and issues raised. This would allow the University to focus its resources more effectively.

Action: WS

8.19   Referring to the section on *Working in partnership* (page 18), Mr Roche said that a large number of students joined the OU as a result of the University's work with employers, and were sponsored or supported on professional programmes. There were important lessons to be learned about how the University could better engage with corporate employers, and this issue should interface with the other actions to be taken under the Strategy. Mr Swann agreed that this should be incorporated in the final draft.

Action: WS

8.20   Referring to page 19, the Dean, Faculty of Education and Language Studies, Dr Sharon Ding welcomed the direct link of widening participation to *Research and scholarship*, as the OU was one of the best placed universities to have an impact in this area, and enquired whether this could be pulled into one of the Open Challenges. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Scholarship and Quality), Professor Tim Blackman, agreed it was an area where the OU should be prominent and the University had to consider how such a programme could be woven into its management of scholarship and research excellence, as well as advancing its position compared to the rest of the sector. This was on the agenda for the forthcoming year.

8.21   With reference to the section on *Evaluating Strategy* (page 20) and to the work that faculties had to do regarding quality enhancement cycles and their fit with the new academic year, a member requested that the monitoring and evaluation of the strategy from a unit perspective was aligned with the new academic year cycles. Professor Blackman agreed that this should be mainstreamed into the standard quality enhancement feedback loops.

Action: WS

8.22   Whilst recognising the primary audience for the document, the member asked whether it should include a statement that referred to students outside the UK. The University was following UK funding, but, particularly in light of Global Direct, the OU should be clear that it played to different markets in different ways around widening participation and access to success. Mr Swann said that it was important to recognise that the document represented a commitment to widening participation in the UK, but not to widening participation outside of the UK where the issues were quite separate. This would be clarified in the document.

Action: WS

8.23   The member also suggested some editorial changes. The introductory paragraph (page 2) should specifically mention England together with Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. The section on Curriculum (page 16), should not lose sight of the University's focus on qualifications. The paragraph on the improvement that the University was seeking referred to "modules and programmes", rather than qualifications. Mr Swann accepted these comments.

Action: WS

8.24   The Senate **approved** the University's draft Widening Access and Success Strategy 2012-2015.

9   THE OPEN UNIVERSITY STUDENT CHARTER   S-2012-04-06

9.1   The Director, Students, Mr Will Swann, said that the draft Charter was being submitted to the Senate on behalf of both the University and the OU Students Association (OUSA). He thanked OUSA for their active participation in its development and acknowledged the work of the group that had prepared the draft, in particular the Project Lead, Martin Jackson, and Project Manager, Rachel Fryer, and that had built it on a thorough understanding of the policy context in the four nations of the UK.

9.2   Student Charters, as they were developing in the UK HE sector, were not just a list of rights and responsibilities. They expressed the nature of the relationship that a university had with its students, and the relationship it aspired to have with them. This draft was set within the context of three different ways of expressing that relationship:

a)   a relationship between customers and a supplier of an educational service

b)   a relationship between learners and their teacher and assessor

c)   a relationship between partners in a joint enterprise.

All three were relevant to the University in the complex relationship that it had with its students over the lifespan of their engagement with the OU.

9.3   The value of the language of customer service was important in the context of student services. For example, when a student telephoned Student Services, the University should ensure that their call was answered within a reasonable time, and they received the best response possible, benchmarked against the best that any in the service sector of the economy could offer. However, the language of customer and supplier could not and should not govern the University's relationship with its students with respect to decisions about whether assessment standards have been met, or about what counts as an appropriate curriculum. In these contexts, the University's staff were placed in a position of authority and expertise.

9.4   However, this Charter also expressed a different aspect of the relationship: the notion of partners in a joint educational enterprise and community, of which both students and staff were members. It was an 'us' charter, not an 'us and them' charter. Consequently, it used the first person plural and sought to establish a symmetry between the responsibilities of students and staff. It did not say: 'this is what students should do and expect of staff, and this is what staff should do and expect of students'. It asserted, at the most general level, that students and staff should expect of each other the same values and standards of behaviour. This did not mean that there was no difference between the roles of students and staff. Every document that sat beneath the new Charter detailed a very large set of specific obligations and expectations that attached to staff, and an entirely different, but complementary, set of obligations and expectations that attached to students.

9.5   The central question for the Senate was whether, above all the duties and obligations that students had to staff, and staff had to students, which were detailed in the University's rules, regulations and codes of practice, there existed a common ground of principles and behaviours that everyone should share. The premise of the draft Charter was that this common ground did exist, and that it formed the basis for shared membership of the University community. Paragraph 22 outlined five more specific questions, that followed from this overarching question, to which the Senate was invited to respond. Some

comments had already been received from Senate members, and these would be taken into account as part of the full consultation.

9.6   The President, OU Students Association (OUSA), Marianne Cantieri, said that the draft Charter could be likened to an onion: the outer skin provided the basic concepts of what OU students should expect when they became members of the University and what was expected of them in return; the inner layers included the rules and regulations that lay within the University's and OUSA's policies. The group that had been convened to prepare the first draft of the Charter had proved a first in the history of the University: students and ALs had been involved from the outset, working with other members of the University. It was an excellent example of collaborative engagement, which it was hoped would be repeated in the future.

9.7   The group had followed the 13 principles of the Student Charter Group, from the first, which said that "Charters are a joint venture with the Student's Union and must involve students and student representatives from the outset", to the last, "the emphasis should be on partnership working between staff and students'. The group's work had been in line with the Government's white paper on Higher Education and was intended to be "a high level statement, to set out the mutual expectations of universities and students". The Charter would be a living document that would be reviewed regularly by members of the University. The group hoped the draft would be improved and polished by constructive ideas from all members of the University during the consultation. The OUSA Senate Reference Group had already had a positive discussion on the draft and had received comments to pass on to the working group.

9.8   Referring to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Quality Matters seminar, which had been attended by student union officers from universities throughout the UK, Mrs Cantieri observed that all of the students had spoken about 'my' university. Many members of the OU thought in terms of 'my' university and of its members collectively as 'we'. Students did not have the time or inclination to wade through long legal documents, but had to be able to find them quickly and easily if necessary. A charter that was easy to read, that clearly stated what was expected of all members of the University and which provided a link to the relevant legal documents, would simplify students lives and help to achieve the goal of all University members: for all students to achieve the qualification for which they aimed.

9.9   Referring to paragraph 2 (England), paragraph 4 (Wales) and paragraph 6 (Scotland) of the covering paper, a member observed that there was an expectation that students' unions would be involved in the development of student charters. The first principle of the Student Charter Group also mentioned students' unions. However, the OU had a students' association and it was not clear from the narrative whether OUSA should be considered to be the same as a students' union with regard to the expectations of the external bodies. The University Secretary, Fraser Woodburn, said that in terms of the 1994 Education Act and in respect of its relationship with the University, OUSA was a student union. In comparison with other students' unions, OUSA gave more emphasis to representation and less to providing on-campus services for students. However, the representative function was the same as in students' unions elsewhere. The Director, the OU in Wales, Rob Humphreys, commented that it was important to understand that this was not an OUSA or student union charter, but one intended for students. The Welsh Government wanted all institutions to have a formal relationship agreement with the representative student body, which would be a contractual arrangement, but this was a different type of document.

9.10   Mr Humphreys said that there was enough common ground to allow the OU community as a whole to adopt a charter of this kind. However, it was important to foreground the basis on which the community was coming together. The bullet points in the first principle of the

Charter, *We are a welcoming and inclusive community*, could be applied to any Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) or voluntary sector body. However, the key issue was that this community was coming together because this was a university. The principle *We are an innovative community that seeks out knowledge and ideas* was the one that should be up front, as it was the founding basis on which the community would be coming together as a whole. Another member suggested that this principle should be broadened to include "*and contributes to new knowledge and ideas*". Mr Humphreys added that a commitment to environmental sustainability and a sentence about the OU community's contribution to democratic citizenship would add value to the document and could be endorsed by all.

9.11   A member commented that the document did not appear to contain anything measurable by which the University could be held to account if it were to fail to meet its obligations. For example, with regard to the principle *We are a responsive community supporting students to achieve their study goals and fulfil their potential*, there was nothing to suggest that if a student registered for a qualification then the University would guarantee a specified period in which to complete it before it was withdrawn. Mr Swann said that this was a good illustration of the role of the Charter in relation to other documents. As part of the new academic framework, and the rules and regulations that applied within it, the University had been very definite about timescales and student requirements for qualification completion. The University had not promised to award a qualification to anyone who registered for one, nor should it. However, the type of support that the University would provide to students was detailed in a series of separate documents, including some new policies about the specific support students could expect in order to make progress. The University had to be specific and detailed about its promises to students, but it was not appropriate to put this information in the charter document itself. The draft was already longer than the national advice provided for.

9.12   The Dean, Faculty of Mathematics and Computing Technology, Professor Anne de Roeck, observed that the draft Charter did little to constrain academics with respect to what they put in the offer to students. For example, *We are a learning community in which students take responsibility for their own learning* could allow academics to duck their responsibility to ensure that the learning was attainable, and that qualifications, pathways and learning opportunities were put together in a way that made sense to students and that responded to their situation in the real world. *We are a responsive community supporting students to achieve their study goals and fulfil their potential'* was not enough. It should be clear that the academic community had an obligation as part of the covenant to be responsive in what the OU offered to students in respect of study experiences as a means of attaining relevant qualifications measured against external reference points.

9.13   Referring to page 2 of the Appendix, a member observed that under the heading *'We are a learning community…',* bullet 6 stated "students are provided with high quality study material in formats that ensure accessibility for all". This was a definitive statement that might set expectations at a high level. It might be more pragmatic to amend this to read '… in formats that facilitate/support accessibility for all'. Another member agreed that this could be an issue, particularly in the light of the Global Direct paper and the fact that the core student experience might not be so comprehensive.

9.14   With reference to bullet 4 of the section headed *'We are a responsive community…'* (page 3), which referred to the provision of "support that is appropriate for individual learners", a member commented that this statement might not go far enough in being transparent about the ways in which the University anticipated using profiling and tracking data to provide tailored support to students once the Student Support Teams had been implemented. There were a host of potential ethical issues that did not appear to have been addressed. It was not clear how the University should present this to students:

currently there was in the data protection policy a blanket statement which stated how the University might use data, but there were issues around imposing identities onto certain student groups. Professor de Roeck said that the nature of the OU meant that it had access to more electronic data about students than any other university. The Charter should include an indication that the University took the responsibilities associated with that information seriously, and that it collected the data to inform the nature of its relationship with its students and the OU offer.

9.15   The Director, IET, Professor Josie Taylor, observed that there was an opportunity for the language of the document to have a radical effect for the OU and, with that in mind, enquired why it was referred to as a Student Community Charter rather than an OU Community Charter, where students were one group of members alongside others. The document would then read more comfortably by always referring to 'we', which could be used for different functions and different roles. For example, under the heading *We are a welcoming and inclusive community*, bullet 4 stated "we recognise that people make mistakes and we give them the chance to put them right; we learn from each other's mistakes and improve what we do"". This was well intentioned, but condescending, and might be better expressed by saying "we all make mistakes and we need the opportunity to put them right; in this way we learn from each other and improve what we do". In this way, there was no sense of 'us' or 'them', but rather everyone in it together.

9.16   Several members agreed that the intention of the document was laudable, but that it was essential to ensure clarity through the value and ethos of the language and the use of pronouns. One member observed that the document was not in the first person plural throughout, but was often in the third person plural, with the student as the subject, and mixed the first person and third person statements throughout. It was important to know who the 'we' in the document referred to, and it should be one group of people only. If the language of customer/supplier was required in some instances, rather than that of membership or partnership, then it should be put somewhere else so that the document read coherently. Mr Swann said it was not the intention to reintroduce the language of customer/supplier into the document, where it was not appropriate, although it was relevant in other areas. Another member commented that it was a big step to move from the terminology of customer/supplier relationships to that of membership. Doing so redefined the institutional boundaries and put the student firmly inside the University, rather than outside it, and for that it was to be commended.

9.17   Mr Swann said that the comments about the language in the document, particularly that the first person plural should be used more, would be taken on board.

Action: WS

9.18   Another member said that the use of general statements was not helpful, and more work was needed on definitions and scope. For example, under the heading *We are a community which works together to create a world class university*, it said "we use the complaints and appeals procedures when things go wrong so that they can be put right". Did this mean that every time something went wrong academics would engage in the complaints and appeals procedures? Clarification was required as to who was meant by 'we' and whether this was the only way of dealing with things.

9.19   The Dean, Faculty of Social Sciences, Professor Kevin Hetherington, said that the document was a welcome and progressive one. However, there seemed to be a conflation of two different notions of community: a community of shared values, but also a community of shared practices. It was not clear, given the different roles and responsibilities across the different groups of staff and students, exactly how this would be delivered. Further clarity was needed around the practices, rather than the values.

9.20   Professor de Roeck, said that the deans had had an earlier opportunity to comment on the draft Charter and the document had developed significantly since then. The intention of an 'us' document, rather than 'us' and 'them' one, was supported, and the difficulty of articulating complex relationships, where the groups were not in opposition, was also appreciated. However, the notion of partnership was not enough on its own, as even partnerships had terms of engagement and common interests. The idea of a covenant might be preferable, as the basis of a covenant was that it laid down a shared set of values and therefore a shared set of practices. Mr Humphreys also welcomed the notion of a covenant.

9.21   A student member said that the charter was a helpful document that would help develop collaborative working and a sense of unity, but the purpose of the document had to be defined. If it was intended to demonstrate the inclusiveness of the community, then perhaps the 'we's and the 'students' should be replaced by 'members'. For example, under *We are a welcoming and inclusive community*, the bullet points should begin 'where members …' rather than 'we …', for instance "where members treat each other with dignity and respect".

9.22   An AL member said that some initial consultation with AL representatives had already been held regarding the five points in paragraph 22 and, in general, they supported the document. The AL community were in favour of the membership, rather than the partnership or customer/supplier approach. One of the main issues about the language was that it created uncertainty as to whether it was a student charter or a community charter. If it was a student charter, then it should be worded differently. A significant number of ALs had indicated a preference for indicative characteristics, such as 'we do' and 'you do', to be clearly expressed. Other comments suggested that the draft Charter was not quite visionary enough and should be braver, and that it could better express the distinctive characteristics of the OU in terms of its openness and its celebration of individual students.

9.23   The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Scholarship and Quality), Professor Tim Blackman, said it would be a pity to go down the 'we do' and 'you do' route. The Senate appeared to support the principle that the Charter was a covenant and was about coming together. Too often, staff and students talked about 'the University', as if it were something separate, rather than 'our University'. It would also be unfortunate if the Charter was burdened with measures, as it was a statement of principles. To the extent that there were measures, they were binary, either the principles were met or they were not met, and it was a useful test of the more detailed student regulations that sat beneath them. The University was not being particularly radical by making the Charter an 'us' document, rather than 'us' and 'them': the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education (QAA) expected this of the University. The *Student engagement* chapter in the new UK Quality Code for Higher Education expected student engagement to be taken forward on the basis of partnership working, which was defined as openness, trust and honesty, agreed shared goals and values, and regular communication between the partners. It was not based on the legal conception of equal responsibility and liability. Some useful drafting comments had been made, but the philosophy behind the Charter was the right one and the Senate appeared to be validating this.

9.24   The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that, following the consultation, the final revised Charter would be resubmitted to the Senate for formal approval in February 2013.

10   **ANNUAL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW: SENATE SUBSTRUCTURE   S-2012-04-07**

10.1   The Dean of the Faculty of Mathematics and Computer Technology, Professor Anne de Roeck, observed that the committees in the Senate substructure had not been asked to

respond in the same way to the Committee Annual Effectiveness Review (AER): in some instances they were asked to note and in others to approve. Where members discussed the AER in the committee meetings, it was not clear what happened to their comments. For example, a number of comments had been made about the AER at the Curriculum and Validation Committee (CVC) meeting, which had not been entirely captured in the CVC draft minutes or in the CVC report to the Senate (S-2012-04-03), and which had not been surfaced in this paper either. The comments had included concerns about the number of groups in the Senate substructure whose remit was not clear, but whose decisions had an impact within the committees in that substructure. Such comments were important if the AER was to be taken seriously and there should be a mechanism for surfacing them effectively so that the Senate could deal with them. The University Secretary, Fraser Woodburn, said that neither 'to note' or 'to approve' was quite correct. Each committee should be provided with a background paper on the way it had operated throughout the year, which was intended to inform a discussion on the members' views of the committee's effectiveness. Members should be able to challenge aspects of the committee's current operation, remit and membership. As a consequence, the committee might agree no changes were necessary or that some amendments should be made. Any comments made by members about the effectiveness of committees in the substructure should be seen by the Senate, so if comments had been made that had not been included in the paperwork, that was an omission. The guidance would be strengthened to ensure that any issues that are raised within the substructure about its effectiveness are made known to the Senate in the AER report.

Action: GT

10.2   Professor de Roeck said that the paper seemed to suggest that the Committee Matters(S-2012-04-08) paper had been arrived at as a consequence of comments made on the Senate substructure as a result of the AERs. This was true in some instances, but a substantial part of the Committee Matters paper was about changes to the Senate substructure resulting from a shift in the responsibilities of the Pro-Vice-Chancellors (PVCs). These changes would have an impact on the effectiveness of the Senate substructure, but there had been no opportunity for discussing them as part of the AER. How might any issues be surfaced going forward? Mr Woodburn said that Committee Matters might include proposals arising from the AERs, but it was not the only purpose of the paper. The changes to the Chair for some committees in the substructure reflected the changes to the PVC portfolios and responsibilities. For example, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Scholarship and Quality) now had responsibility for quality and consequently would now chair the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC). The issue of whether the substructure was appropriate at all in the light of the changes to the PVC portfolios, would have to be taken forward through the delayed Academic Governance Review. It was intended that proposals to launch the review of the Senate and its substructure would be brought to the Senate before the summer meeting in 2013.

Action: GT

10.3   An AL member said that concerns had been raised regarding meetings by correspondence. Whilst it was recognised that such meetings were sometimes necessary, they were not effective if the comments of individual members were not made visible to other members of the committee, as there was no opportunity for debate or dialogue, nor any means of checking that the minutes were accurate. It would be better that correspondence meetings took place in a forum that was visible to all members. Mr Woodburn said that simple binary decisions, for example to approve or not to approve, could be made by correspondence. In such circumstances, the minutes should still incorporate any arguments that were made by members. On more complicated issues, where there might be a range of views from members, meetings by correspondence did

not work so well. The issues would be reviewed and guidelines incorporated in the operational procedures for committees.

Action: GT

10.4   The Senate **noted** the effectiveness of the committees of the Senate for the period September 2011 until July 2012.

11   COMMITTEE MATTERS   **S-2012-04-08**

The Senate:

a)   **approved** the recommendations for the constitutional changes to the Research Degrees Committee arising from the annual effectiveness review (Appendix 1);

b)   **approved** the recommendations for the constitutional changes to:

    i)   Research Committee (Appendix 2)

    ii)   Validation Committee (Appendix 3)

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

12   UPDATE ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF GLOBAL DIRECT   **S-2012-04-09**

12.1   Referring to the second bullet point under "Study Experience", in *Figure 2: Core student experience* (page 6) a member said that the inclusion of "tuition from qualified UK tutors during UK working hours" was puzzling as, if tuition was intended to include all types of contact by whatever medium between students and tutors, and if UK working hours was taken to mean Monday to Friday 9.00am – 5.00pm, then the majority of tuition took place outside those hours. Several members echoed this concern. The Vice-Chancellor said that this point had been noted.

12.2   An AL member observed that the University must be absolutely clear on the core student experience that it would provide if students were to get an experience that met their expectations, particularly if the recruitment of students was to be outsourced to an external provider. Referring to the *Overarching proposition* (page 6), the member observed that global students were being offered an equivalent experience to UK students. In *Figure 2: Core student experience*, the study experience included "synchronous online tutorials and day schools, or recordings". However, whilst Global Direct students would be able to participate in Elluminate tutorials, face-to-face day schools would have to be replicated by further Elluminate sessions. This would require additional work by ALs, which would mean that the University would incur additional costs. Furthermore, whilst recorded Elluminate sessions might be useful, they did not provide the same experience as actually participating in an Elluminate tutorial.

12.3   Dr Simon Bromley, Senior Lecturer, Social Sciences and Global Direct, said that the document was that which had been presented to and approved by the Council: the language employed was internal and would not be used to describe the OU's commitment to the students themselves. A recorded synchronous tutorial was not an equivalent experience and there was further work to be done as the University began to operate in substantially different time zones. The University's commitment would be that those Global Direct students who were getting wholly online tuition and were unable to participate in face-to-face sessions would get an equivalent experience. It was not yet clear whether additional costs might have to be incurred in order to deliver this promise. It

might be possible, depending on student numbers, to have some tutor groups that had a wholly online experience, and others that received a blend of face-to-face and online, where the international students were allocated to the totally online group. There were already some modules where this was existing practice, and tutor-student allocation mechanisms, flagging both tutors and students, to ensure that this could be done without incurring additional cost. Careful consideration was required in this area and, as the curriculum offer for Global Direct was finalised, more work would be done with the faculties to ensure that the University could deliver on these commitments to an equivalent standard of tuition.

12.4   A student member thanked Dr Bromley for attending the OUSA Senate Reference Group meeting that morning, where he had received comments, answered a number of detailed questions and offered to take further questions by email.

12.5   A member said that, although this was an internal facing document, there were concerns that some of its content might appear elsewhere, and would then begin to be established as policy. For example, with reference to the 'Integrated UK and international student tutor groups' referred to in *Figure 2: Core student experience*, it was often a better use of resources to concentrate international students on one or two tutors who then became more familiar with the specific issues raised by such students. It would be inappropriate if it became policy that international students should be spread across all tutors.

12.6   The President of OUSA, Marianne Cantieri, asked whether there would be a dedicated support team for Global Direct students. Mr Swann replied that there would not be a dedicated team: international students would be part of the academic community in their subject area, and the front line support would be the same as for UK students. However, it might be necessary to develop some specialist back-up, as there were some general and subject specific issues that arose for non-UK students, and the University would need to find a way to accumulate and deploy such expertise in order that there was no duplication of effort.

12.7   A member said that there were concerns amongst colleagues about the potential lack of joined-up thinking, particularly with regard to the *Operational model* (page 8). There was no reference to academic roles, under either the OU functions or the Global Direct functions. Issues of contextualisation and sensitivities around international standards, particularly in markets where the OU Business School competed, were important, so the OU functions box should be explicit about the involvement of academics in designing modules.

12.8   The member observed that the University was competing with some very large US providers, who should be on the OU's radar. The Vice-Chancellor assured the Senate that the University was aware of these competitors.

12.9   An AL member said that when the Council had approved the paper in May 2012, there had been an assurance that the tuition strategy for Global Direct would be discussed at Senate. However, this paper did not offer that opportunity and there was no mention of another paper in Future Items of Business (S-2012-04-13). The Vice-Chancellor said that the Senate would be fully involved in discussions of the teaching and learning strategy both within and outside the UK and a paper would come to the Senate in due course.

Action: SH/SB

12.10   The Senate **noted** the contents of the progress report on the implementation of the Global Direct Business Plan.

13   STRATEGIC PLAN 2012-2015: ANNUAL REVIEW AND REFRESH PROCESS
                                                                    S-2012-04-10

The Senate **noted** the planned approach to the process for the annual review and refresh of the University's Strategic Plan.

14   THE COUNCIL   S-2012-04-11

14.1   A member commented that, although the Council had approved the strategic plans for Wales, Ireland, and Scotland, and had thereby aligned the strategies and priorities of the University with the funding councils in the devolved nations, there was no separate plan for England, even though it had its own funding council. The omission of England had been noted during the discussion of the Widening Access and Success Strategy (S-2012-04-05); and, in the Honorary Degrees Committee, the national directors were invited to nominate people for honorary degrees, but there was no one doing this on behalf of England. There was an assumed synonymy between England and the UK. Was it time to refresh the Four Nations Strategy to properly encompass England?

14.2   The Vice-Chancellor said that the overall OU strategy recognised England, and included the University's thinking in terms of the agendas of the English funding council, policy makers and other stakeholders. The overall strategy had then been nuanced to ensure that it was applicable to the other three nations, and the individual strategies were intended to address the policy makers in those areas. However, there was an issue about language and nuance, and this would be reviewed by the Vice-Chancellor and the University Secretary.   The point would be addressed, if not through a refresh of the Four Nations Strategy, then by the University continuing to keep pace with devolution, particularly with regard to higher education.

                                                          Action: MB/FW

14.3   The Senate **noted** the report on matters discussed at the meeting of the Council held on 17 July 2012.

15   CHAIR'S ACTION   S-2012-04-12

15.1   Referring to page 2, point 6 and 10, an AL member requested clarification as to whether there would be a cap on a resit/resubmission at Pass 3 or Pass 4, since the two statements appeared to be contradictory. In the absence of the former and the current Chair of Assessment Policy Committee (APC), the Director, Students, Will Swann, said that it was his understanding that the original proposal had been to cap resits at Pass 4, but that this had been subsequently liberalised by APC to Pass 3. The University had not previously capped for resits, but the proposal had been introduced following another change in policy. In the old academic framework, a student had to achieve a mark of at least 20% in the examination in order to be eligible for a resit. However, the increase in fees and the introduction of loans in England had meant that the financial stakes were higher, and failure had become a much more serious matter. In recognition of this issue, APC had decided that the threshold for the entitlement to resit should be lowered. However, in order to safeguard against the cynical use of resit examinations, capping had been introduced. The debate had then become about the appropriate level of capping.

Post-meeting note

Paragraph 6 of the paper on Chair's Action (S-2012-04-12) indicated that APC might review the level of capping at its meeting in October 2012. The meeting took place on 8

October and the Committee voted to approve a cap of a Grade 4 Pass or, in cases where results were not graded, a bare Pass for resits and resubmissions. It was noted that there would be exceptions (a) for instances where there were special circumstances; and (b) for students registered on qualifications where there is a progression threshold at a higher outcome.

15.2   Referring to regulation SA 6.2.3 (page 10) regarding capping, a student member said that the two sentences were not quite the same. The first said that the final grade would 'normally' be capped, whilst the second sentence said that a student would 'not be awarded more than the minimum pass grade'. Should there be another 'normally' in the second sentence? Mr Swann said that this would have to be referred back to APC.

Action: AB

15.3   Referring to page 7 of the Appendix, concerning the end of module assessment (EMA), an AL member observed that the deadline had been set at noon (GMT) on the cut off date, which could be an issue if students were not sure if the time was in GMT or BST. The grace period, which was given as a further 12 hours, was also confusing. The next section said that if a student submitted a further 24 hours later then they would be subjected to a penalty of "10%-points or to bare-pass level". Who made that deduction and decision? Was it the marker or was it done automatically. Mr Swann said that these were technical points that would need to be taken back to APC. The Code of Practice for Student Assessment was regularly amended and the Committee could consider whether it should be amended in the light of these comments when it was next reviewed, which would be within the year. The Chair said that this would be clarified in matters arising.

Action: AB

15.4   A student member said that the OUSA Senate Reference Group had discussed this matter at length during its meeting that morning. The communication of the new assessment policy was key. When students signed up for modules, they did not necessarily read every document, even though they may have ticked a box to indicate that they had done so. This was particularly relevant to continuing students, who may think that they had read such documents before. Would it be possible to warn students that such policies had been changed? Communications regarding these changes should also be followed through with the module teams and in the module guidance, in order to ensure that they were reflecting the new code of practice. The Group had also highlighted some detailed drafting issues, which would be emailed to the relevant parties. Mr Swann said that the University would do its utmost to ensure that students understood the rules under which they were working.

Action: WS

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

16   FUTURE ITEMS OF BUSINESS   **S-2012-04-13**

The Senate **noted** the list of potential items for the agenda for the Senate meeting in February 2013.

17   DATES OF NEXT MEETINGS

Meetings would be held on the following dates:

Wednesday 6 February 2013
Wednesday 17 April 2013 (to be confirmed)
Wednesday 5 June 2013

18   GOODBYES AND THANK YOUS

18.1   On behalf of the Senate, Vice-Chancellor thanked the Director, Students, Will Swann, who would be retiring from the University at the end of the year, for the work that he had undertaken at the University and for his contribution to the Senate.

18.2   The Vice-Chancellor also thanked the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic) formerly (Curriculum and Qualifications), Professor Alan Tait, for his role on the Senate. Professor Tait would be stepping down as a Pro-Vice-Chancellor and embarking on a new role within the University,

18.3   Dr Jacky Holloway, Faculty of Business and Law, who was leaving the University, was thanked for her work on the Senate and for the University. Dr Shirley Northover, Faculty of Mathematics, Computing and Technology, who was stepping down as a member, was also thanked for her input to the Senate.

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-2012-04-M-Appendix 1 Research Degrees Committee constitution

S-2012-04-M-Appendix 2 Research Committee constitution

S-2012-04-M-Appendix 3 Validation Committee constitution

Key:

AB   Professor Alan Bassindale
MB   Martin Bean
SB   Dr Simon Bromley
TB   Professor Tim Blackman
SH   Steve Hill
WS   Will Swann
FW   Fraser Woodburn
GT   Governance Team

RESEARCH DEGREES COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTION – UPDATED 01.08.17.10.2012

Purpose

To be responsible to the Research Committee for all policy, regulatory, and procedural matters relating to research degrees and higher doctorates.

Terms of Reference

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

1. To determine specific arrangements for the admission, registration, progress and examination of research degree students and higher doctorate candidates, including the recruitment of full-time and part-time research students, the appointment of supervisors and examiners, and the approval of research topics.

2. To decide matters of strategy and policy relating to research degrees and higher doctorates, referring them to the Research Committee where appropriate.

3. To make recommendations to the Research Committee for the approval of new Affiliated Research Centres.

Monitoring, and reviewing, actions and institutional performance

4. To monitor the implementation of agreed policy on research degrees and higher doctorates.

Assuring quality and standards, including approving regulations

5. To be responsible for the admission, registration, progress and examination of research degree students and higher doctorate candidates, including the interpretation and waiver of policy and regulations.

6. To delegate to the Research Degrees Examination Results Approval Committee the approval of recommendations of examiners for examination results, and the award of Open University research degrees and higher doctorates to individual students registered to such degrees.

7. To oversee the effectiveness of the Quality Assurance Framework for the Affiliated Research Centres Programme and the Sponsoring Establishments.

Advising other governance bodies or management

Making governance arrangements e.g. appointing to other committees

8. To appoint one or more External Examiners to the Master of Research (MRes) Award Board

9. To appoint the Chair of the Master of Research (MRes) Award Board.

10. To appoint the Chair of the Research Degrees Examination Result Approval Committee.

Matters of public record e,g, ratifying appointments of staff or external examiners

11. To appoint research degree supervisors and examiners.

Judicial: deciding individual cases

None

Membership

1.   A Chair and Deputy Chair appointed by the Research Committee.

2.   The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Scholarship and Quality), *ex officio*.

3.   The Research School Academic Co-ordinator, *ex officio*.

4.   The Chair of the Research Degrees Examination Result Approval Committee, *ex officio*.

5.   The Chair of the Master of Research (MRes) Award Board, *ex officio*.

6.   The Chair of the Affiliated Research Centre Management Group, *ex officio.*

7.   The Chair of the Life Sciences and Biomolecular Sciences Advisory Group, *ex officio*.

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

9.   The Chair of the Master of Research (MRes) Management Group, *ex officio*.

10.   The Chair of the Architectural Association Management Group, *ex officio*.

11.   The student members of the Research Committee.

12.   A representative from an Affiliated Research Centre.

13.   ~~One of the regionally/nationally-based Senate representatives on the Research Committee, appointed by the Research Committee.~~

14.   The Associate Dean, Research (or equivalent) or nominee, from each CAU.

15.   One member of the Knowledge Media Institute, nominated by the Director of the Institute.

16.   Up to two other members, co-opted by the Committee, chosen for their expertise in research degrees matters.

In Attendance

17.   The Director of Library Services or nominee

18.   The Head of Research Degrees office

Secretary

Mode of Operation

1.   The Committee shall meet as and when required, and shall report to the Research Committee at least annually.

2.   Its Chair or, by delegation, the Deputy Chair of the Committee shall have executive authority to act on its behalf in consultation with its secretary.

RESEARCH COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTION – UPDATED ~~01.08~~17.10.2012

Purpose

The Research Committee is responsible to the Senate for strategy, policy and standards relating to research, research degrees and higher doctorates in the University.

Terms of Reference

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

1. To maintain and promote the University's strategy on research, in consultation with central academic unit committees, and to recommend the strategy to the Senate for approval.

2. To determine policies and guidelines within the agreed strategy for research, making recommendations to the Senate in cases which fall outside these limits. Matters of strategy and policy relating to research degrees and higher doctorates are delegated to Research Degrees Committee.

3. To oversee the processes for preparation approval and review of the research aspects of central academic unit plans, encouraging collaboration between central academic units and sub-units in their research activities.

Monitoring, and reviewing, actions and institutional performance

4. To monitor the implementation and operation of policy in all matter within the Committee's remit.

5. To contribute to the Senate's annual academic review of the University.

Assuring Quality and Standards, including approving regulations

6. To ensure that standards are set for research activities within the context of external research quality monitoring.

7. Responsibility for the recruitment, admission, registration, supervision and progress of research students, and for research degree and higher doctorate examinations is delegated to the Research Degrees Committee.

8. The approval of recommendations of examiners for research degrees and higher doctorates and the award of research degrees and higher doctorates is delegated to the Research Degrees Examination Result Approval Committee.

9. To approve applications from organisations wishing to become affiliated research centres after guidance and recommendation from the Research Degrees Committee.

Advising other governance bodies or management

10. To advise the Senate, the Strategic Planning and Resources Committee and Central Academic Unit (CAU) Committees on all aspects of the development of research, and research degree activities in the University, including resources and priorities for strategic development.

Making governance arrangements e.g. appointing to other committees

11. To appoint the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Research Degrees Committee.

12. To appoint the Chair and Deputy Chair of the Human Research Ethics Committee.

13. To appoint the regionally/nationally-based Senate representative of the Research Committee to the Research Degrees Committee.

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

None

Judicial: deciding individual cases

None

Membership

1. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research, Scholarship and Quality), Chair, *ex officio*.

2. The relevant associate deans or equivalent of faculties, *ex officio*.

3. A representative of the Knowledge Media Institute (KMi), nominated by the Director of KMi.

4. The Directors of the Research Centres, *ex officio*.

5. The Chair of the Affiliated Research Centres Management Group, *ex officio*

6. The Chairs of any committees reporting to the Committee.

7. Four representatives of the Senate, elected by the Senate, of whom at least one shall be a member of regionally/nationally-based staff.

8. One registered full-time research student and one registered part-time external student, appointed by the Open University Students Association.

9. Two members of the research staff elected by and from such staff.

10. A representative from an affiliated research centre.

11. The Research School Academic Co-ordinator, *ex officio*.

12. A Dean or Director, to be nominated by the ~~Deans and Directors Group~~Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic).

13. Such others as the Committee may co-opt up to a maximum of four.

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.

VALIDATION COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTION – UPDATED ~~01.08~~17.10.2012

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.

14. To appoint two external members to serve as members of the Qualifications Committee.

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

None.

Judicial: deciding individual cases

15. To delegate to the Director of ~~OUVS~~ the Centre for Inclusion and Collaborative Partnerships 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 (Academic)

3. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) or nominee.

4. One nominee of the Director, Students

5. The Director, Centre for Inclusion and Collaborative Partnerships

6. The Director, Open University Worldwide or nominee

7. The Head of Quality

8. 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.

9.   Three members from partner institutions of The Open University.

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

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 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.