

Unconfirmed minutes

The University of Manchester

SENATE

Wednesday, 30 April 2008

Present:

Professor Gilbert (in the Chair)

Professors Addison, Bailey, Dr Berk, Professors Boaden, Brown, Dr Browning, Professors Case, Coombs, Dr Eccles, Professors Esmail, Farrell, Garrod, Gaskell, Drs Kimber, Lane-Serff, Lyte, Mellor, Merriman, McBride, McGovern, Miss Medforth, Professors North, O'Brien, Perkins, Dr Qualtrough, Professors Reece, Snook, Stirling, Thompson, Dr Timmerman, Professors Ulph and Vincent (33).

For unreserved business: Mr Jenkinson and Mr Meddemmen, Students' Union.

Invited: Professor Agnew (School of Environment and Development) and Professor Durrell (School of Physics and Astronomy).

In attendance: The Registrar and Secretary and the Head of the Student Services Centre.

1. Minutes

Confirmed: the minutes of the meeting held on 6 February 2008.

2. Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda.

3. Statement by the President and Vice-Chancellor

The President and Vice-Chancellor provided an oral supplement to his written statement as follows:

(a) Extending the *Towards Manchester 2015* agenda

At its annual Planning and Accountability Conference in March the Board of Governors had reviewed the progress of the University over the three years since its establishment in October 2004 and whether it would be appropriate to review the entire *Manchester 2015 Agenda*. Feedback from the Faculties and Schools conferences in February had confirmed strong, consistent and continuing support throughout the University for the *Manchester 2015* vision so that it was concluded that the vision and mission shaping the idea of *Manchester 2015* were essentially correct and needed no significant reappraisal at this time. He considered that if the progress that had been achieved to date was to be continued then *Manchester 2015* would be achieved in most aspects albeit that some immediate attention and reappraisal was needed in the areas of discretionary revenue generation and PGR student numbers. The latter was of real significance to the University's ambitions as a research institution, especially as PGR numbers will be a major funding driver in the future. There was also an urgent and unqualified need to improve the quality of undergraduate learning in the University.

It was recognised that since 2015 was only seven years away it would be important to begin looking beyond that date and, without abandoning the *2015 Agenda* or buying more time to achieve current targets, to begin to re-focus thinking in order to define the University's overall strategic agenda for the decade ahead. This imperative might be captured in a 'blueprint' headed *Towards Manchester 2020 – Extending the Manchester 2015 Agenda* and the primary tasks would be:

- To modify and/or adopt a number of *core goals*, and to distinguish these from *key enabling strategies*, as the basis for pursuing the Vision of Manchester as one of the great universities of the world;
- To develop implementation strategies and priorities in relation to each of the above together, where appropriate, with annual operational targets consistent with the achievement of the overall objectives; and
- To construct a small number of key performance indicators against which to measure and, where possible, to quantify progress in implementing the *Manchester 2020 Agenda*.

During the ensuing discussion it was acknowledged that the timing of this re-focusing would be important to minimise any potential for negative impact on staff across the University who might either interpret the move as a lack of confidence in the *2015 Agenda* or be disinclined to engage with the issues because the horizon had extended too far into the future and beyond the time when they will have retired. Notwithstanding this it was recognised that there would need to be some continuity so that before 2015 the point at which the re-focusing would need to take place would have to be agreed.

(b) International College – Arrangements between the University and INTO - Manchester

A summary of the key principles and obligations associated with the proposed new Agreement between the University and INTO–Manchester had been considered by the Board of Governors and noting that no key academic issues were any longer at stake had approved the signing of the Agreement between the University and INTO–Manchester, provided that appropriate legal advice to proceed is obtained and that the proposed Agreement is endorsed by me, as President, in consultation with the Chairs of Finance, Risk and Audit Committees. His expectation was that this will have been concluded by the end of June 2008.

(c) STFC Programmatic Review, 2007-08

Following the announcement in early March 2008 of the initial results of the programmatic review it had conducted the STFC had initiated a three week period of consultation (ending 21 March 2008) prior to making final decisions regarding future funding. It was clear at this initial stage that a significant number of projects that were under review involved activities at the University of Manchester or were undertaken by University staff. Furthermore, some of these had been ranked in the lowest two priority categories applied by the STFC, including the e-MERLIN astronomy project based at Jodrell Bank. The potential effect on the University of the resulting proposed cuts in funding, if confirmed, would therefore be considerable, not least the threat to the Jodrell Bank Observatory, so that it was disappointing that it had been only relatively recently that the University had been approached for a meeting with Professor Keith Mason, Chief Executive of the STFC. While it was not clear what propositions would be advanced at the meeting, which had been scheduled for 2 May, it was anticipated that

there would be some suggestion that the University provide alternative funding, either wholly or in part to meet any shortfall that might result. This would put immense pressure on the University's research budget and would be resisted firmly. It was notable that the meeting would take place against a backdrop of severe criticism by the House of Commons Innovation, Universities, Science and Skills Committee which had highlighted concerns about the peer review process by which the STFC had assessed and prioritised projects as well as the role and the performance of the Chief Executive. While he was hopeful that the worse case scenario might be avoided it was possible that a proportion of funding would be lost and thereby place some projects at risk.

(d) The Manchester National Institute of Health Research Biomedical Research Centre

It was most pleasing to be able to announce that the University and Central Manchester & Manchester Children's University Hospital Trust (CMMCUHT) re-submission to the Department of Health's official BRC Review Group had been successful resulting in the award of £7.5 million over 5 years.

(e) The Greater Manchester Health Research Partnership

Proposals from the Greater Manchester Health Research Partnership (GMHRP) for the creation of a *Manchester Academic Health Science Centre*, together with the appointment of Director who would be mandated to exercise authority over all clinical / transitional health research (University and NHS) were under consideration with a view to forwarding them for agreement in principle to the Boards of the partner organisations within the next two months.

At the conclusion of this item the President and Vice-Chancellor was asked for his reactions to the student demonstration that had taken place on Tuesday 22 April 2008. In response he observed that while he appreciated and, in some senses, welcomed the focus of the demonstration on issues related to teaching and learning he was concerned about the extent to which the manner and tone of the demonstration had compromised the trust that needed to exist if the University and the student body were to address matters in a constructive way. Furthermore, he was concerned at the portrayal of the learning experience at The University of Manchester as worse than at other similar peer institutions. This was not the case. The reality was that the fundamental issues involved applied across the higher education sector as a whole and affected all universities. It was The University of Manchester, under the auspices of the *Review of undergraduate education*, which uniquely was seeking to address the urgent need to improve the quality of undergraduate learning. However, he was not convinced by the arguments that had been advanced regarding tuition fees and emphasised that the only way the continued under-funding of universities would be addressed and the quality of teaching and research be maintained or improved was to increase revenue.

4. Vice-President (Research)

Reported:

- (a) That the HEFCE consultation on the assessment and funding of higher education research post 2008 - the Research Excellence Framework (REF) had been completed. There had been two changes to the preliminary proposals that had originally been considered i.e., the dropping of the distinction between stem and non-stem disciplines and the adoption of agreement that all disciplines would be assessed by the same metrics and process of review. This latter point was a crucial change in principle that was to be welcomed. There had also been recognition that the timescales that had originally been envisaged were unrealistic so that they had now been extended by 12 months to allow for a number of pilot studies to be completed.

- (b) That in response to the introduction of requirements from the Research Councils and several charities for the number of applications for funding from individual institutions to be restricted measures had been implemented internally to ensure the role of the University Research Group (URG) as university-wide co-ordinating authority. To date this arrangement that involves representation from across the University was working well.
- (c) That the success of the Manchester National Institute of Health Research Biomedical Research Centre was a tribute to the hard work of a consortium of staff from across the University and was truly worthy of celebration.
- (d) That the Sustainable Consumption Institute (SCI) was making good progress and that plans were in hand not only to attract more partners beyond Tesco but also to develop a new model for working in partnership with industrial sponsors which will help define the research questions to be asked and the specific research projects to be undertaken. At the same time the governance arrangements for the Institute are also advancing.

During the ensuing discussion a concern was expressed about the extent to which the process for co-ordinating the submission of bids as referred to in (b) above was perceived by colleagues across the University to be fair and open. It was, therefore, agreed that summary headlines of the bids that had been supported would be reported to Senate on a periodic basis. Notwithstanding this it was noted that under current arrangements it was standard practice for unsuccessful applicants to receive feedback on their bid together with suggestions of alternative sources of funding and / or guidance and advice on how their bid might be reworked. (*Action: Vice-President (Research)*)

5. Vice-President (Teaching and Learning)

By way of introduction, the President and Vice-Chancellor explained his view that the need to improve the quality of undergraduate learning was the most challenging agenda in the University over the next few years and that the article that he had written for the May edition of *UniLife*, copies of which had been circulated at the meeting, outlined clearly the priorities involved and their importance in this regard. He also drew attention to the consideration that had been given to the desirability of a change to the title of Vice-President (Teaching and Learning) to reflect the primacy of learning over teaching as well as the role of students in the important transformation that had to be achieved. Thereafter, the Vice-President (Teaching and Learning) introduced the following business.

- (a) Review of undergraduate education

Reported:

That following their consideration by Senate earlier in the year it would now be important to achieve an integration and co-ordination of the key recommendations to emerge from the *Review of undergraduate education* and that to this end work was ongoing in various quarters e.g., the HR Committee so that his expectation was that he would be in a position to report on progress at the next meeting of Senate. Nevertheless, it was worth noting at this stage that some of the most fundamental issues to be addressed related to the ways in which students are taught and how they learn and includes the design and delivery of the curriculum as well as the primacy of personalised learning. These issues would be core considerations for a Curriculum Strategy Group that was made up of several members from the different task forces of the original review. In parallel, an e-Learning Strategy Group would guide and direct the use of technology in teaching and learning as a key characteristic of the student

experience in Manchester. Both Groups were developing plans and proposed timescales for consideration by Senate at a future meeting. (*Action Vice-President (Teaching and Learning)*)

During the ensuing discussion the following points were made.

- (i) The broadening diversity of students admitted to the University had meant that paid work had increasingly become a feature of their experience. This would in part be addressed by the personalisation of learning in so far as it was about making learning available at times convenient to the individual student and not exclusively about increasing contact time.
- (ii) While it was acknowledged that the non-academic support available to students impacted on the overall quality of their experience it was not felt that there was a need for universal radical reform, albeit that it was recognised that arrangements should be reviewed periodically to ensure that they remain effective and efficient.
- (iii) Effective communication would be critical to the operationalization of the outcomes of the *Review of undergraduate education* since much of this would be conducted by colleagues in Faculties and Schools. To this end it was suggested that the School Board would be the appropriate forum for discussion and that the process of dissemination and discussion would be greatly facilitated by easy access to a summary of the recommendations that had been approved by Senate earlier in the year. In the meantime, it was reported that an implementation plan and accompanying documents had been circulated to all Schools in the Faculty of Humanities.

(*Secretary's note: Documents relating to the Review of undergraduate education are available at <http://www.campus.manchester.ac.uk/tlso/reviewteachinglearning/>*)

- (b) e-Learning

Reported:

That in response to a query from a member of Senate the possibility of enabling students to browse the content of Blackboard courses prior to selecting their optional units had been examined so that it could now be confirmed that this facility could be provided in the form of generic logon credentials. However, it would be for individual Faculties / Schools / Programmes to determine whether or not to employ this facility and how the relevant credentials should be disseminated.

- (c) Policy on the submission of work for summative assessment on taught programmes

Noted:

That the current Policy states:

For students on postgraduate taught programmes Schools will normally use the zero tolerance option unless their Faculty gives special permission to do otherwise.

but that when read in conjunction with the Regulations for Taught Postgraduate Programmes, paragraph 6c:

At the recommendation of the Board of Examiners, students will normally be allowed one resubmission of a failed dissertation (or equivalent), project or extended essay and this will normally be within four months of the date of the publication of the result.

Resubmission will not be allowed if the mark is below 40% (where the pass mark is 50%), or 30% (where the pass mark is 40%).

this resulted in an unintended consequence that late submission of the dissertation (or equivalent) would mean an automatic failure of the programme as a mark of zero would not allow resubmission.

Agreed

That paragraph 7 of the Policy be amended as follows:

For students on postgraduate taught programmes Schools will normally use the zero tolerance option, unless their Faculty gives special permission to do otherwise, save for the case of late submission of the final dissertation (or equivalent). Where the final dissertation (or equivalent) is submitted after the deadline, at the discretion of the Board of Examiners it may be treated in the same manner as a resubmission following failure with the mark capped at 50% (or (40% for programmes with a pass mark of 40%) with no further opportunity for resubmission.

6 Nominations for the award of an honorary degree

Agreed: to endorse for onward transmission to the Board of Governors the recommendations for the award of honorary degrees that had been tabled for consideration at the meeting.

7. Guardian League Tables

Received: the final report from the Guardian League Tables Working Group.

Reported:

- (a) That the Guardian League Tables Working Group had completed its work in reviewing the University data returns used in compiling newspaper league tables and had identified a number of issues where actions could be taken to improve the University's performance in future league tables albeit that the actions identified would not make an immediate impact on the University's standing in The Guardian or other newspaper league tables.
- (b) That the fundamental issues underpinning the University's poor performance in league tables reflected the University's relatively poor performance in two key areas – student satisfaction and graduate employment. The Group had therefore made recommendations for further investigation, analysis and action to address these substantive areas of under-performance. It had noted that relatively modest improvements in the University's performance in the National Student Survey, for example, would have a disproportionate impact on its overall performance in the league tables.

During the ensuing discussion the following points were made.

- (a) There was a real imperative for the University to ensure a co-ordinated challenge to the most recently published Guardian League Table. An analysis of the results for Geography and Environmental Studies had revealed some clear errors about which the Head of the School of Environment and Development had complained to the Guardian.
- (b) To date the emphasis within the University had tended to be on the technical aspects of data collection or the methodology used by the Guardian to construct its league tables

but there were some key substantive issues that needed to be explored including the quality and understanding of academic feedback as well as the changing pattern of assessment. While it was acknowledged that for the future these were matters for the ongoing review of undergraduate education it was important that there was some action more immediately.

- (c) With regard to student satisfaction it was important that students submitted an honest appraisal when completing the National Student Survey (NSS) and that colleagues should not be tempted to urge their students to reply positively as this could expose the University to allegations of coercion.
- (d) It should be appreciated that while newspaper league tables might influence the choices of a relatively small proportion of undergraduate applicants it was the case that a number of international sponsors rely on league tables and the ranking of particular institutions therein to determine where to allocate their funding on an annual basis.

Agreed:

To endorse the following recommendations and to receive a report on their progress at a future meeting of Senate:

- (a) To review the provision and take-up of careers advice currently given to second and third year undergraduates and to review the relationship between traditional careers advice and the embedding of employability and other key skills within the curriculum.
- (b) To run focus groups with second and third year undergraduates to understand in more detail the factors impacting on the post-graduation 'gap year' trend.
- (c) To review the NSS results by School and to identify poor performers and strong performers, where possible, in each of the above categories in order to report back and exchange best practice.
- (d) To understand more fully, perhaps through focus groups, students' expectations of assessment and feedback.

(Action: Head of the Planning Support Office)

8. Annual Report of Appeals, Complaints and Student Discipline Cases for the academic year 2006-07

Received: the annual Report of Appeals, Complaints and Student Discipline Cases for the academic year 2006-07, prepared by the Head of Student Support and Services.

Reported:

- (a) That this was the third annual report on student appeals, complaints and disciplines and had been presented in seven sections: Student Complaints, Academic Appeals, Fitness to Practice, Conduct and Discipline, Cases dealt with by Faculties, Conduct and Discipline cases dealt with by the Student Discipline Committee and Cases submitted by Students to the Office of the Independent Adjudicators (OIA) after the completion of internal procedures together with a summary section that details several key concerns that emerge from the statistics as a whole, namely, equality and diversity, mitigating circumstances, taught postgraduate students and workload.
- (b) That there were two areas where matters relating to equality and diversity were of particular concern.

- (i) *The experience of home ethnic minority students in relation to appeals on the grounds of mitigating circumstances.* Home ethnic minority students formed around 22% of the University's population, but accounted for approximately 35% of appeals submitted. The majority of these appeals cited mitigating circumstances. Furthermore, over 40% of the claims of home ethnic minority students were found to have no substance compared with about 12% of claims of home white students. Conversely, 30% of home ethnic minority students' cases were referred back to their School to be reconsidered, compared to 65% for home white students.
- (ii) *The over-representation of international students in conduct and discipline cases.* International students formed 24% of the student population, but were involved in 48% of conduct and disciplines cases, the majority of which concerned plagiarism.
- (c) That the significantly increasing number of academic appeals being made on the grounds of mitigating circumstances remained a concern, and suggests that the systems and processes operated by the University in respect of mitigating circumstances should be reviewed. The extent to which the regulations were being applied consistently was questionable and raised the possibility of students being treated differently in different parts of the University. Furthermore, a substantial proportion of appeals brought on grounds of mitigating circumstances had no substance, suggesting that students do not have a good understanding of what constitutes mitigating circumstances. Further investigation of the way in which mitigating circumstance procedures are explained to students, and the extent to which the regulations are adhered to, is needed, with the possibility that a radically different approach is necessary in the interests of those with genuine mitigating circumstances.
- (d) That in addition to the concern about the number of international students being accused of plagiarism the statistics showed that the majority of students being accused of plagiarism were taught postgraduates.
- (e) That the number of academic appeals and conduct and discipline cases were increasing year on year which placed a significant burden on staff charged with handling them. The concern was that the University's ability to handle these cases fairly and promptly may be at risk of being compromised by the volume.
- (f) That the Vice-President (Teaching and Learning), the Associate Vice-President (Equality and Diversity) and the Associate Vice-President (Graduate Education) would need to consider the ways in which the issues identified should be explored further within their respect constituencies. (*Action:* Vice-President (Teaching and Learning), the Associate Vice-President (Equality and Diversity) and the Associate Vice-President (Graduate Education))

9. Matters for report to Senate

- (a) Report on exercise of delegations on behalf of Senate and the Board of Governors.

Professorial appointments

The following appointment has been approved on behalf of Senate and the Board of Governors:

Ad Personam Promotional Chair in Nursing

Kinta Beaver, BA, PhD (Liverpool), RGN, DPSN, MRes, previously Senior Lecturer in Nursing at this University in the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work, as Professor of Nursing in the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Social Work from 1 January 2008.

Ad Personam Promotional Chair in Particle Physics

Brian Cox, BSc, PhD (Manchester), presently Royal Society University Research Fellow in the School of Physics of Astronomy at this University, as Professor of Particle Physics in the School of Physics and Astronomy from 1 April 2008.

Grant of the title of Professor Emeritus

Acting on behalf of Senate and the Board of Governors, the President and Vice-Chancellor has approved the conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus on the following:

Professor Andrew G Lyne, FRS, Langworthy Professor of Physics (in the School of Physics and Astronomy) (*from 1 January 2008*)

Professor George C King, Professor of Physics (in the School of Physics and Astronomy) (*from 1 January 2008*)

Professor Anthony I Ogus, Professor of Law (in the School of Law) (*from 1 October 2008*).

Professor Alan Pedlar, Professor of Radio Astronomy (in the School of Physics and Astronomy) (*from 1 August 2008*)

Professor Richard Snook, Professor of Analytical Science (in the School of Chemical Engineering and Analytical Science) (*from 1 August 2008*).

Acting on behalf of Senate, the President and Vice-Chancellor has approved the following change to General Regulation XI (*Titles of Degrees and Other Distinctions*) under section (e) (*Validated Programmes*) such that the award of MB,ChB be added to the list.

- (b) Report on exercise of delegations on behalf of Senate.

The Paul Sinclare Scholarships

The Paul Sinclare Scholarships are supported by an endowment fund, established with a bequest by Mrs Elaine Sinclare in memory of her husband, Paul H. Sinclare who graduated from the University of Manchester with a Master of Science in 1959. The income from the endowment fund is to be used to award scholarships according to the regulations below.

REGULATIONS

- (i) An award or awards of a value to be determined by the Vice-President for Teaching & Learning (or equivalent), will be offered to students for study at the University of Manchester.

- (ii) The scholarship(s) will be available to pupils of Manchester High School for Girls wishing to study an undergraduate course at the University of Manchester.
 - (iii) Preference will be given to student applying to study in the Faculty of Engineering & Physical Sciences.
 - (iv) The scholarship(s) will normally be tenable for the duration of the students' programme subject to satisfactory academic progress and the receipt of an annual written update from the student.
 - (v) The Scholarship(s) will be awarded on recommendation of the Vice-President for Teaching & Learning in consultation with the Dean of Engineering & Physical Sciences and staff working in the area of recruitment & admissions.
 - (vi) Any accumulation of funds resulting from non-award or otherwise may be used to increase the value of the scholarship(s), to award additional scholarships, or to make additions to the capital sum.
 - (vii) Should circumstances change to the extent that the University is unable to make an award according to the above regulations, the University will review the scholarship regulations to ensure that awards can be made and that the spirit of Mrs Sinclare's original benefaction is maintained.
- (c) New undergraduate and taught programmes

The following new and amended undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes have been approved by Faculties, and ratified by the Associate Vice-President (e-Learning), during the 2007-08 session. Unless otherwise shown, the programmes will start in the 2008-09 session.

Faculty of Engineering and Physical Sciences

Postgraduate

MSc Photon Science, new pathway in Laser Photonics, full-time, retrospective approval for entry September 2007.

Faculty of Humanities

Undergraduate

BA Honours Hebrew and Jewish Studies, full-time, change of length of programme from three years to four years, to include compulsory year of study abroad

BA Honours Modern Middle Eastern History, full-time, addition of four year pathway combining compulsory study of Arabic with Modern Middle Eastern History, with new programme title BA Honours Modern Middle Eastern History and Arabic

BA Honours Visual Cultures, full-time or part-time, for entry in September 2009.

Postgraduate

Business Administration Global MBA; Business Administration Global MBA (Sports and Major Events); part-time, retrospective approval for entry from September 2007

MSc Financial and Business Economics, full-time

MSc International Human Resource Management and Comparative Industrial Relations, full-time

Postgraduate Certificate Managing Projects, full-time (closed programme for employees of British Petroleum); extension of period of study from twelve months to eighteen months, retrospective approval for entry from October 2007

Master of Laws (LLM), full-time or part-time, new pathway in International Trade Transactions; introduction of Postgraduate Diploma as entry route for the Intellectual Property stream; removal of the dissertation as an option in exceptional circumstances for the research element of the LLM programme; retrospective approval for entry from September 2007.

Faculty of Life Sciences

Postgraduate
MSc Evolutionary Genetics and Genomics, full-time.

Faculty of Medical and Human Sciences

Postgraduate
Postgraduate Diploma Applied Mental Health (leading to Post Qualifying Specialist Social Work Award in Mental Health, incorporating Approved Social Worker training,) change of title to: Post-graduate Diploma Applied Mental Health (leading to Post Qualifying Specialist Award in Mental Health, incorporating Approved Mental Health Practitioner (AMHP).
Postgraduate Certificate Research Methods for Translational Medicine, full-time or part-time; retrospective approval for entry in September 2007.

10. Dates of meetings in 2007-2008

Noted: that meetings of Senate in 2008-2009 will be held on the following dates:

Wednesday 29 October 2008
Wednesday 4 February 2009
Wednesday 29 April 2009
Wednesday 24 June 2009

All meetings will be at 3.00pm and will be held in the Council Chamber on the first floor of the Whitworth Building (at the entrance to the University, Oxford Road).

11. Any other business

There was no other business.