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**Meeting:** ACADEMIC ASSEMBLY  
**Date and time:** Tuesday 10<sup>th</sup> May 2016 at 12.30 pm  
**Venue:** 5 West 2.4

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**Present:** Dr A Salo (Chair)  
and 51 members  
**Attending by invitation:** Ms L Humphreys and Ms K Jordan  
**In attendance:** Dr C Harris, Secretary to Academic Assembly  
Dr N Kemp, Director of Policy and Planning

## ACTION

### 614 MINUTES

The approval of the minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> May 2015 (Paper AA15/16-3) was confirmed.

The minutes of the meeting held on 7<sup>th</sup> October 2015 (Paper AA15/16-4) were approved and signed by the Chair.

### 615 MATTERS ARISING

#### Minute 612, Any Other Business

The Chair confirmed that he had entered the date of the meeting in the Outlook calendar of all members of Academic Assembly. Further promotion of the meeting was via Twitter.

### 616 RELEVANT DECISIONS OF SENATE

The Chair reminded members of Academic Assembly that reports of the meetings of Senate could be found at: <http://www.bath.ac.uk/statutory-bodies-committees/bodies-and-committees-senate/Senate/minutes/index.html>

He drew attention to:

- (1) Senate approved the shape of the academic year 2017/18 based on the current format and there was ongoing discussion for future years.

- (2) Senate recommended to Council approval of revision to the Career Progression in the Education and Research Job Family document to take effect from 1 July 2016. The thresholds for translation/promotion to Reader and promotion to Professor were slightly increased.

**617 ELECTIONS TO SENATE**

The Chair advised of the results of the recent election with the following members of Academic Assembly elected to Senate for three years from 1 August 2016:

Dr Marcelle McManus, Dept. of Mechanical Engineering  
Dr Danielle Wain, Dept. of Architecture and Civil Engineering  
Dr Sandrine Alegre, Dept. of Politics, Languages & International Studies  
Dr Ellen Murphy, Dept. of Mathematical Sciences  
Dr John Troyer, Dept. of Social and Policy Sciences  
Dr Marion Harney, Dept. of Architecture and Civil Engineering.

An election will be held towards the end of May for an Academic Assembly representative on Council.

**618 AWARDS COMMITTEE**

The Chair thanked Dr Vasanta Subramanian for serving as Academic Assembly representative on the Awards Committee for the past six years. He asked for anyone interested in taking the role to contact him or the Secretary.

**ALL**

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching), Chair of the Awards Committee, expressed his gratitude to Dr Subramanian and urged members to consider this rewarding role. The Awards Committee considers nominations for awards which recognise significant contributions by staff to the University in learning and teaching and public engagement of research.

**619 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S STATUTORY ADDRESS**

The Chair welcomed the Vice-Chancellor to the meeting and invited her to give her statutory address to members in accordance with Statute 22.3. The Vice-Chancellor's address is attached to the minutes as an appendix.

**Questions from the floor**

A number of questions were put to the Vice-Chancellor from members of Academic Assembly.

**Postgraduate Taught (PGT) courses**

In response to a question on possible conflict between teaching postgraduates and research the Vice-Chancellor explained that an innovative approach to organising PGT courses was needed. This may involve working more with business or working collaboratively on

research in departments and faculties and was likely to develop over time.

One member expressed excitement about the increased opportunities for PGT provision and queried whether there would be the opportunity to increase capacity (staff) in time for the increased provision, as current processes were slow. The Vice-Chancellor stated that departments would be the focus and that realistic development plans encompassing staff needs would be considered, with a balance between priorities and likely success. Investing before an investment stream was secured would require trust, and trust was more likely in areas with a proven track record. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost clarified that initial approaches should be made to the Dean and himself before substantial development work, but that a detailed business proposition would need to be taken to the planning team.

### PhD funding

It was asked whether there would be an increase in the number of University funded PhD studentships as the University is growing. The Vice-Chancellor explained that there was a finite amount of money, but the University was actively finding resources and scholarships for students. In 2008 there were 8 philanthropically supported undergraduate students and now there were more than 500. Recently a major donation had been received for PhD studentships over the next 5 years and more would be sought.

### Local area

The Vice-Chancellor was asked how the University planned to reach out from Bath to the local area. She detailed involvement with the Local Enterprise Partnership in which all universities and further education colleges worked together on the skills base and increasing research for industry. The Vice-Chancellor explained that the University was involved in the economic development of the region and was an international university rather than for Bath and North East Somerset.

Concern was expressed about the growing resentment towards students in Bath, seen on social media. The Vice-Chancellor replied that local communication was important and the University does a great deal but could probably do more. The SU and students did an enormous amount of good; volunteering, charity work and engaging with the community. However, sometimes local people were irritated. The Vice-Chancellor clarified that the Director of Marketing & Communications was currently considering more aggressive local marketing and that it was important to make clear that the planned colonising of parts of the city with students was not the University's students.

### Incentive

In response to a comment from a new member of staff on the pressure rather than incentive to improve research, the Vice-

Chancellor noted that corporate incentive within a group or department would give areas doing well the opportunity to expand staff and student numbers and individual incentive was promotion linked. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) clarified that research promoted the University and everyone shared the common good, feeling as though the University was theirs. He acknowledged that the REF was pressurising but noted that it was a chance to judge the quality of research.

### The University

The Vice-Chancellor was asked what 'the University' is, referring to the statement 'The University supports the 1% pay offer from employers'. The response was that it is an academic community, a student community, a professional services community and also an employer, an organisation that pays salaries. As part of the national bargaining process the negotiators consulted all universities across the country and all universities have made the offer to the unions, as a compromise. The University of Bath had promised the University's unions that it would take part in the national bargaining process and not act individually.

The Chair thanked the Vice-Chancellor for her address and for taking questions.

## **620 ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

- (1) The Chair stated that some inappropriate student feedback had been received in online unit evaluations and on social media, which could influence the welfare of staff members.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching) explained that he was working with the Chair and the Students' Union, who were campaigning strongly on responsibility and appropriateness to students. He acknowledged the need for support for staff suffering such harassment.

- (2) The Chair noted that at the recent learning and teaching conference the motion "This house believes all lectures should be Panopto recorded" had been debated and defeated.

## **621 DATES OF MEETINGS 2015/16**

Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> November 2016 at 1.15 pm  
Tuesday 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2017 at 12.30 pm

These meetings will be inserted in members' Outlook calendars once rooms are confirmed.

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The meeting concluded at 1.35pm

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### Vice-Chancellor's Address

#### Introduction

When I stood before Academic Assembly last year, I talked about the uncertainties that were surrounding universities and of the problems that we, at Bath, faced.

- I spoke of our strong performance in REF 2014, but also of the need to become more competitive in terms of our research power (i.e. the volume of our research).
- I spoke of the need to match increases in student numbers with increases in staffing and considered whether – despite our strong applications rates – it would be sensible to continue to grow our UG numbers.
- I spoke of the challenges associated with increasing our PGT and PGR numbers.

What a difference a year makes.

We have responded robustly to our external challenges and have developed a clear strategy for the next five years – a strategy that will support our vision to become an international leader in graduate education.

Throughout this academic year, we have shared the emerging strategy with you. You will be aware of the five key aspects which are to:

- strengthen the research base and extend our industrial/commercial partnerships;
- stabilise undergraduate numbers and maintain the quality of the undergraduate experience;
- grow graduate student numbers (both Masters and Doctoral) and improve the postgraduate experience;
- invest in infrastructure on and off campus – sometimes outside of B&NES;
- enhance our international profile and reputation.

At our last Let's Talk meeting, which many of you attended or watched online, Professor Jonathan Knight and Diane Aderyn gave presentations on two aspects of the strategy. Today, I will provide an update on all areas and identify ways in which you can help to take things forward.

#### Undergraduate Provision

We have stabilised our UG intakes for 2016/17. Application rates have remained strong and conversion rates (offer acceptances) have been consistent with those of the past two years. More offers have been made earlier in the cycle meaning that we have secured good applicants and increased the number of firm acceptances. The number of insurance offer holders has decreased this year as a result of raised entry requirements; this will help to reduce uncertainty in terms of our expected student numbers.

We have been taking positive steps to meet the accommodation needs of our UG students, in light of continuing growth at Bath Spa and the capacity constraints within the city. The Deputy VC – Bernie Morley – has been leading on the response to this issue. Actions taken include:

- Converting Eastwood flats 20 and 21 into study bedrooms;
- Securing 354 additional bed spaces in the city through nominations agreements (with a further 31 to follow);
- Encouraging students to start their search for accommodation as early in the year as possible;
- Funding 3 new posts in the Accommodation Office.

### Postgraduate Taught Provision

You will be aware of the increased PGT targets for the 2016/17 intake. Having undertaken an analysis of the postgraduate student market, there is clearly scope for us to increase our market share. In order to do this we need to think carefully about what we offer, how we deliver it and the implications for the campus infrastructure. We need to concentrate on those areas where we have competitive advantage and can attract strong cohort numbers, ideally developing courses with international appeal. To date the following actions have been taken:

- We have started discussions with the faculties to identify areas in which we can grow.
- We have started to consider ways in which we can improve the coordination of our PGT recruitment (e.g. through process fix workshops) and regular meetings have been taking place with the Graduate Schools.

### Postgraduate Research

Improved coordination is a theme which is also being explored in relation to our PGR provision. Professor Jonathan Knight, in his Let's Talk presentation, outlined the current project which is investigating how a doctoral college - or similar entity - might improve our provision for doctoral students. Professor Knight is meeting regularly with Graduate School Associate Deans and Managers to take this forward and you have an opportunity to link into discussions via these contacts in your own faculty.

It is clear that we need to ensure that Bath is as attractive as possible for doctoral students. Several steps have already been taken to ensure that the doctoral experience is enhanced from this Autumn. These include improvements to PGR induction, information flows, the implementation of departmental action plans and the new space for PG students in 10 West.

### Research

PGR students will, of course, contribute to our research output. Further enhancements will be achieved by increasing the academic staffing base. We are delighted that the latest round of prize fellow recruitment has attracted high calibre candidates. We are looking to recruit a total of 20 – 7 in Science, 7 in Engineering, 4 in H&SS and 2 in the School of Management. This, along with the outputs of the internal research strength audits, will put us in a strong position to increase our critical mass in an increasingly competitive market, increase our research power and enhance our research quality.

On a regional level, we led a successful expression of interest to conduct a science and innovation audit. The audit - involving a consortium of universities, local authorities, LEPs and businesses – is now moving ahead and will identify regional strengths and potential areas for growth in order to unlock investment. This, along with our other work as part of the GW4 alliance, demonstrates the benefits of regional collaboration.

### International

Continuing the theme of collaboration, we are forging ahead with plans to increase our international student numbers, and establish teaching and research programmes in partnership with non-UK universities.

Within the last week we have seen the publication of the World Reputation Rankings 2016 by *The Times Higher Education* (which lists the 100 most powerful global university brands). Going Global – the British Council annual international conference which attracts over 1,000 senior delegates, policy-makers and ministers from all corners of the world - has taken place in South Africa. Both have reinforced the message that HE is changing; it is becoming increasingly competitive on a global scale.

Over the last few months we have invested considerable energy in developing our relationships with Stellenbosch University, the Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Zhejiang University and the University of Campinas to name but a few. We have also demonstrated our international credentials by hosting a highly successful Turkish-British Tatlidil on campus – a forum attended by the Foreign Secretary, the Deputy Prime Minister of Turkey and the Turkish Minister of Foreign Affairs.

We will continue to explore international partnerships with a view to increasing our student numbers (with off-site delivery where appropriate), engaging in more collaborative research projects and enhancing our international profile and reputation.

### Infrastructure

I have already referenced the work being done to secure further residential accommodation, to explore innovative methods of delivery and to increase our international presence. All of these will alleviate pressures on our infrastructure.

As you will have heard from Diane Aderyn at Let's Talk, the new and refurbished buildings on and off campus are adding significantly to our existing space. The figures are really impressive. I would ask you to reflect on their significance.

- In terms of our Education and Research infrastructure, the new buildings - 10 West and 4 East South - represent a 9.75% increase in the non-residential floor area of the campus.
- In terms of learning space, the top two floors of 10 West will provide 1,000m<sup>2</sup> and Manvers Street will provide 1,080 m<sup>2</sup>. Together this represents a total of 2,000 m<sup>2</sup>, adding over 20% to University learning space.

Of equal significance is the establishment of a new presence at 83 Pall Mall in central London. This 400m<sup>2</sup> facility will provide a base for seminars and programmes from our School of Management, Institute for Policy Research and other departments. Its location will

enable us to develop even closer links with national and international policymakers, partners and collaborators.

### Concluding Comments

We have travelled a significant distance since this time last year. From contemplating the changing nature of the Higher Education environment, we have moved into a phase of intense action in order to maximise the opportunities available to us. We are forging ahead with our plans.

As academics, you have played – and will continue to play – a significant role in the development and achievement of the new strategy. I urge you to engage, at faculty level, to ensure that we identify the best ideas for new PGT programmes, provide the possible support for our UG, PGT and PGR students and continue to develop local, regional and international partnerships which will extend our influence.