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**Meeting:** ACADEMIC ASSEMBLY  
**Date and time:** Tuesday 7 May 2019 at 12.30 pm  
**Venue:** 3 East 2.1

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**Present:** Dr J White (Chair)  
and 59 members  
**Attending by invitation:** Ms L Humphreys, Mrs E Stuart Edwards and Ms H Rhodes  
**In attendance:** Dr C Harris, Secretary to Academic Assembly  
Mr M Nicholson, Director of Student Recruitment & Admissions

## ACTION

### 678 MINUTES

The Chair welcomed the new Vice-Chancellor to the meeting.

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 October 2018 (Paper AA18/19-005) were approved and signed by the Chair.

### 679 MATTERS ARISING

(1) Minute 672, Probationary Staff Project

The Chair reported that the ongoing review of probationary staff support had included focus groups to hone in on the important areas for review. A survey for current probationary staff and those who had completed probation up to two years previously was in process. The Learning and Organisational Development Manager would provide an update to the next meeting of the Assembly.

**CHAIR/SEC**

(2) Minute 674, Proposed Motion

The Chair advised that the proposed motion from Dr S Gamsu on Early-Career, Post-Doctoral Staff on Short-Term and Casualised Contracts was passed for consideration to the PVC (Research) and the Research Staff Working Group, which was developing the HR Excellence in Research Award action plan. Feedback on the issues raised in the proposed motion would be provided to a future meeting.

**CHAIR/SEC**

## 680 **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>

She drew attention to the following matters approved by Senate:

- (1) Curriculum Transformation
  - The outline for a new modular academic framework to accommodate and enable curriculum transformation and the timeline for work towards full formal proposals;
  - NFAAR-CPD Variant for Online PGT Course Delivery - the provisions to establish the core criteria for PGT progression and awards in online study (excluding permitting courses without a major research/ project component).
- (2) Revised role profiles of the Director of Teaching (DoT) and the Director of Studies, which had helped clarify the institutional role of senior tutors.
- (3) Awards
  - A revision to the Vice-Chancellor's Awards for Public Engagement with Research from 2019;
  - The terms and criteria for a new Teaching Award for Director of Studies, which had already been awarded to two winners;
  - Changes to amounts awarded for existing University Teaching Awards, to ensure the process remained sustainable.
- (4) Arrangements for promotion to professor to be incorporated within the remit of Academic Staff Committee, to increase transparency.
- (5) New Internationalisation Strategy 2019-21, subsequently approved by Council, to be found at <https://www.bath.ac.uk/corporate-information/internationalisation-strategy-2019-to-2021/>
- (6) A new Ede and Ravenscroft Prize for Research Staff.

## 681 **ELECTIONS**

The Chair advised of the results of the elections for Senate representatives to fill casual vacancies from 20 February 2019 as follows:

Dr Galadriel Ravelli, Department of Politics, Languages & International Studies, to 31 July 2021

Dr Jos Darling, Department of Mechanical Engineering, to 31 July 2020

Professor Marcelle McManus, Department of Mechanical Engineering, to 31 July 2019

Dr Rita Chawla-Duggan, Department of Education, to 31 July 2019

The Chair reminded members to vote in the forthcoming election for senators.

**682 AWARDS COMMITTEE**

The Chair thanked Dr Nigel Johnston, the Academic Assembly's representative on Awards Committee for his service over the past three years. She advised that she would send a message to all members shortly asking for expressions of interest.

**CHAIR**

**683 ACADEMIC ASSEMBLY ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY WORKING GROUP**

Professors Robert Kelsh and Sarah White presented the report of the Academic Assembly Accountability and Transparency Working Group (Paper AA18/190-006 refers) to the meeting. They gave a brief background to the group and its terms of reference, with more detail and the minutes available on <https://www.bath.ac.uk/teams/academic-assembly-accountability-and-transparency-working-group/>. They explained that progress had been slow but that they were raising queries and concerns where appropriate and had had a helpful meeting with the Vice-Chancellor. A workshop was being arranged for 7 June, open to all.

Members were encouraged to contact the group and comment on the main issues relating to transparency and accountability to prioritise the activities of the group. When asked how best the group can communicate with members it was suggested that an e-mail every three or four weeks would be acceptable.

The Chair thanked Professors Kelsh and White for presenting the report.

**684 WIDENING PARTICIPATION**

The Chair had invited the Director of Student Recruitment & Admissions to talk to the Assembly about widening participation following interest in the topic shown by members of staff at the monthly coffee mornings.

The Director of Student Recruitment & Admissions explained that widening participation work was driven by the Office for Students (OfS) and new regulations. In particular, there was a need for greater engagement with the widest and most diverse applicant pool by selective universities such as the University and Russell Group universities. Increased social mobility was a political imperative for all political parties and the government, with the assumption that

failure was the responsibility of the University and not a reflection on the students' previous 13 years of education.

He clarified that the University had good retention but did less well in attracting diverse applicants. The OfS guidance covered UK nationals only and asked for more diverse undergraduates despite the local community profile and the University's subject mix and entry grades. In five years' time should no changes be made it was possible that the University may not be allowed to charge any more than the minimum tuition fees of £6,000, which was a strong incentive to succeed.

He pointed out that the University was vulnerable with more students from the least deprived quintile (40%) than the national average (20%) and less from the lowest (5% with 20% nationally), using the English Index of Multiple Deprivation. In addition the number of students from an ethnically diverse background at 19% needed to be increased.

The Director of Student Recruitment & Admissions explained that the areas of work would be broadened from BaNES to cover the south east, Devon, Cornwall and Wales as well as London. An increase in summer schools and working with educational charities was planned. In addition more use would be made of contextual information in making recruitment decisions. He pointed out that accepting a diverse range of students was likely to impact on the need for support from the Students' Union, Student Services and academic services.

In response to questions the following points were made:

- The OfS was not interested in disability or gender, though the University maintained support for students with disabilities; the OfS is currently interested in white working class boys who are underrepresented in HE and have lower attainment;
- Degree outcomes were better for the more advantaged students regardless of ethnicity, OfS will be monitoring this;
- It was too late to affect choices by the time students reached the age of 17 years; educational charities worked with younger children from the age of 10 or 11 years, to seek to influence parents; digital techniques allowed the University to engage at a distance;
- It was important that the University was marketed well for all not just for diverse groups of students; more digital marketing could be undertaken;
- Identifying support needed by students and departments was key; there was concern that the new linear A levels may impact applicants negatively.

The Chair thanked the Director of Student Recruitment & Admissions for his presentation.

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

The Chair welcomed the Vice-Chancellor to the meeting and invited him to give his statutory address to members in accordance with Statute 22.3. The Vice-Chancellor spoke briefly before asking the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, who had been Acting Vice-Chancellor in the interregnum, to speak.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked everyone for the invitation to speak and for taking time to attend the meeting. He explained that he had worked at the University in the 1990s and that the University deserved huge credit for its success and increase in quality and number of students since that time. He congratulated the University for its 9<sup>th</sup> place in the Complete University Guide with 18 of 26 departments in the top ten and for its improvement in the QS World University rankings. He thanked everyone for their work.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor stated that it had been a pleasure and honour to be Acting Vice-Chancellor for seven months. He and the senior management team had been trying to make the University more transparent and inclusive and more rapidly responsive. The appointment of the new Vice-Chancellor had been supported by 21 focus groups, feeding into the job description. His café conversations had attracted up to 20 people every week.

He talked of the change to the decision making structure with the merging of the Vice-Chancellor's Group with the planning group and the Executive to form the University Executive Board, with its reports published. The Staff Vacancies Review Group had been abolished with responsibility given to budget holders. Additional support was being provided to probationers with a number of probation events as well as increased support around progression. The professorial progression process would in the future be within the remit of the Academic Staff Committee, in line with other universities.

He confirmed the importance of the staff experience, their wellbeing and health. The previous year he had chaired a group looking at the workload model, managing the process of using it. The Health and Wellbeing steering group had developed a health and wellbeing action plan, with a Staff Health & Wellbeing Manager appointed. More mental health awareness workshops were planned and it was hoped that the staff counselling service could be provided on campus in the future, as well as at the Royal United Hospital.

He thanked the senior management team and everyone present for their work.

The Vice-Chancellor responded with thanks and congratulations. He mentioned that 40% of staff had been at the University less than 5 years which created an interesting dynamic. He felt that the wellbeing changes mentioned were important. He expressed awareness of the current pressures and opportunities and stated that the University had done well during difficult recruitment times but that in 12 years' time there would be an increase of 50% in school leavers.

He was impressed with the University's research centres, not just the quality of the work but that they were different. They addressed the pressure on innovation and were vehicles of national competitive advantage with a capacity to change as the government focus changed. He commented on the challenges of REF/TEF/KEF and the student experience and stated that the key was to stay agile.

The Vice-Chancellor was keen to continue with engagement events, such as the café conversations and would spend this academic year learning and then reach out formally in the Autumn. He had found the consultation on his role helpful as it had highlighted areas of importance: the student experience, a greater international reputation, reaching out locally and staff wellbeing.

#### Questions from the floor

Questions were put to the Vice-Chancellor from members of Academic Assembly.

On being asked what the vision for the University was for the next five or ten years, the Vice-Chancellor responded that he did not believe that one person built a vision but that people needed to engage with it via consultation. He genuinely felt that the University was exceptionally successful as it was distinctive with the subject mix contributing to society, the high quality research, the prized undergraduate education and the village community feel of the campus.

The Vice-Chancellor was asked about building bridges with the City of Bath and he replied that he needed to learn about the issues. He had met local organisations at several events and was acutely aware of the difficulties but had also heard a lot of positive comments. He stated that the university needed to be part of the City and contribute to it. Local problems gave an opportunity for targeted contribution to the local community via knowledge exchange.

The Vice-Chancellor's comment about the distinctiveness of the University was welcomed as being uplifting. He confirmed that it was distinctive and that 'Education is for life not just for living'.

The Chair thanked both the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

#### **686**    **DATES OF MEETINGS 2019/20**

The dates of meetings in 2019/20 were noted as:

Wednesday 30 October 2019 at 1.15 pm  
Tuesday 5 May 2020 at 12.30 pm

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The meeting concluded at 1.50pm

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