

Senate

Tuesday 2 November 2021

Minutes

Present: Professor Jenny Higham (Chair), Professor Rachel Allen, Chris Baker, Kate Bascombe, Professor Dot Bennett, Dr Florencia Cavodeassi, Dr Jane Cronin Davis, Sue David, Dr Kate Everett, Professor Jon Friedland, George Hadjiyiannakis, Sally Hayward, Sally Hargreaves, Julie Hendry, Dr Vanessa Ho, Dr Carwyn Hooper, Becky Kemp-Arnold, Professor Andrew Kent, Angela Kubacki, Professor Jodi Lindsay, Karen Lobb-Rossini, Georga Longhurst, Professor Julian Ma, Dr Rosie MacLachlan, Dr Aileen O'Brien, Dr Benjamin Taiwo, Professor Katalin Török, Professor Jane Saffell, Philip Sedgwick, Dean Semmens, Dr Ferran Valderrama, Dr Andrew Walley, Jeannie Watkins.

In attendance: Derek Baldwinson, Jenny Laws, Dr Julie Leeming [minute 6 only], Sian Marshall, Susan McPheat, Paul Ratcliffe, Emma Whitaker.

Apologies: Professor Iain Beith, Marcus Bhargava, Dr Mark Bodman-Smith Rob Churm, Professor Kathy Curtis, Dr Angela Donin, Dr Julia Gale, Professor Cilla Harries, Dr Marcus Jackson, Professor Jane Lindsay, Dr Carol Shiels, Georgina Sims, Dr Jennifer Stott.

1. Apologies for absence

Apologies were noted as listed above.

2. Minutes

Considered and approved:

- (i) The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 June 2021.

Senate/2021-22/Paper 1A

- (ii) The minutes of the joint meeting with Executive Board, held on 6 July 2021.

Agreed, with the following amendments:

'Dr Kate Bascombe' to be changed to 'Kate Bascombe'.

Senate/2021-22/Paper 1B

3. Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising that were not on the agenda for today's meeting.

4. Membership, powers and responsibilities of Senate

Considered and approved:

- (i) A paper on the membership, powers and responsibilities of Senate.

Reported:

Senate powers and responsibilities are set out in the university Statutes, and were included in this item for information only.

The membership list had been updated to take into account the change in structure of The Joint Faculty and the addition of some elected members. The process of recruiting to the vacant posts has begun, this included the PGT Student Representative and the Post-Doc Representative.

Discussed:

It was noted that the Academic Forum was not currently in operation and it was discussed as to whether this should be removed from the Statutes. It was noted that this had been discussed in previous Senate meetings, and it had been agreed to leave as it was set out within the Statutes for now. The Principal noted that it would not be right for her to approve the removal of a body that was set up to provide challenge to decisions made under her authority.

It was noted that the membership of Senate included Heads of Departments and Professional Leads from the Joint Faculty, but did not include the Heads of the centres within the Institute of Medical and Biomedical Education. It was agreed that the membership should be reviewed to ensure appropriate representation; however it was noted that the June 2021 Senate meeting had decided not to adjust the membership too much at the current time given the dissolution process, and the proposed merger may also lead to further membership changes.

It was agreed to review the Senate membership again next spring.

Action: Clerk to Senate

Senate/2021-22/ Paper 1C

- (i) The Senate schedule of business for the 2021-22 year.

Reported:

The schedule included indicative items for Senate approval, discussion and note over this academic year.

Senate/2021-22/ Paper 1D

Strategic Matters

5. Merger Update

Received and considered: A verbal update on the proposed merger, including the academic workstream.

Reported:

Merger discussions were ongoing. There were a number of decision-making criteria which have been agreed by both Councils; these would frame discussions. SGUL was currently undertaking legal and financial due diligence on RHUL, and RHUL was doing the same to SGUL.

Several workstreams are in train at SGUL, including people, academic, and finance and operations (IT and estates). There is also a professional services workstream, looking at the operational side, including what IT, infrastructure and virtual infrastructure would be required, and what capital investment in estates would be needed, if the merger took place. All workstreams are working towards contributing to a business case in December, which will be used as a basis on which to decide whether to continue merger discussions further.

There is also a risk register looking at the impact of current and future work around the merger, including the impact of the merger work on business as usual workstreams and how it affects other SGUL priorities.

It was noted that this is a project that will have many phases, if the decision is taken to merge. Many queries people may have would be addressed at the third phase, which would happen if a positive decision is made, and at this point there would be closer working between both institutions. As the legal status will be changed, SGUL will, alongside this, have to notify and modify its contracts with the OfS, funding bodies and professional and statutory regulatory bodies. There will be plenty of opportunity for staff and students to input into the phases as things progress.

Discussed:

It was discussed that there had been good engagement into the Education and Student Experience workstream, including lots of interest, input and questions from students and staff. This workstream includes representatives from the Student Union and is currently gathering information regarding facilities and teaching spaces to work out where the specialist needs are and what the needs for student support are. RHUL counterparts are doing the same work. It was reported that the aim is to get the workstreams across the two institutions to begin to work together. It is hoped this will come to fruition after two reciprocal visits that are taking place over the next fortnight.

It was discussed that there is an enthusiastic Joint Research Subgroup across both SGUL and RHUL, primarily looking at a global overview of structures and if there are any infrastructure requirements needed for research. They have put together research themes and synergies across both institutions and four exemplar areas are being picked out, including inequalities. The Deputy Principal (Research and Enterprise) had been meeting with research staff and students to answer questions and to seek input into the workstream.

It was discussed that Joint Faculty staff may be feeling particularly concerned owing to the dissolution and the potential merger. Senior Management do appreciate these concerns and uncertainties, and are trying to alleviate these where possible; for example, there are several meetings scheduled for impacted staff. It was acknowledged that the timing of the proposed merger was not ideal in light of the dissolution process, and for the challenge this meant for the Joint Faculty staff.

6. League Tables

Received and considered: A report on league table performance.

Reported:

The report showed the institution's performance in the league tables for 2022, published in 2021. It also compared the different league tables in terms of the data used from different years and different metrics and explained how the different league tables had different weightings. Each weighting had been divided into 'strengths' and 'weaknesses' for SGUL. SGUL had three areas which were consistent areas of weakness – NSS, research quality measures and spend. SGUL does well in the area of "I'm on track for my career in the subject I studied". There is a League Table working group that looks at the results and considers how SGUL can improve its position.

The Director of Planning would be happy to share the data behind the report; please e-mail her if this is of interest: jleeming@sgul.ac.uk

Discussed:

It was noted that the RHUL NSS scores are far higher than SGUL's scores; and a potential benefit from merger would be that SGUL could learn from them how they achieve their scores. It was discussed that RHUL may benefit from learning from SGUL's performance in the area of graduate prospects.

It was asked if there was a preferred league table used by applicants. It was noted that it was not clear if there was a preferred table; however, anecdotal feedback indicated that league tables were not widely used by applicants in deciding which institutions to apply for.

It was discussed that there are some great highlights from the NSS within some of SGUL's programmes and there was scope to share best practice across the organisation.

The committee thanked the Director of Planning and her team for the thorough analysis.

Senate/2021-22/ Paper 1E

7. Athena Swan

Received and considered: An update on the Athena Swan submission.

Reported:

The Athena Swan accreditation considers both the staff and student populations and discusses developing an inclusive education framework. The organisation's award has been extended to July 2023, due to a combination of the charter review and COVID-19. The project plan for the July 2023 submission will be brought to a future Senate, and will include a timeline of key milestones.

Previously members of Senate have asked how they can contribute to the Athena Swan work. They can engage in surveys and workshops. There is also work with self-assessment teams. All meetings invite observers – if anyone would like to attend a meeting, please get in touch with the Dean for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Discussed:

It was asked if Joint Faculty staff would be included within the staff population that is considered for Athena Swan. It was confirmed that it is only staff wholly employed by SGUL who are included, and following the dissolution those staff who come to SGUL will be taken into account. It was noted that the Athena Swan team will be looking at the EDI aspects of the dissolution. It was noted that the Joint Faculty have just established an EDI action group, chaired by Professor Kathy Curtis. It was suggested that this group link in with the Dean for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion.

Action: Dean for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Senate/2021-22/ Paper 1F

Quality and Partnerships

8. Partnerships Update

Received and considered: A report on partnerships activity.

Reported:

The University of Ulster has launched its MBBS and has recruited to target – it has 73 students in its first intake. The Senate thanked staff for their hard work in supporting the establishment of the Medical School.

The Kingston MPharm programme was re-accredited over the summer by the General Pharmaceutical Council. The programme has recruited to target in 2021. It was noted that the MPharm collaboration was outside of the Joint Faculty agreement and so SGUL will continue to teach the programme.

It was noted that the MPharm agreement is up for renegotiation in 2022, and that SGUL will be aiming to improve its financial settlement during the renegotiation discussions.

Senate/2021-22/ Paper 1G

9. University of Nicosia (UNIC): termination of franchise agreement

Received and considered: A report on the termination of the franchise agreement with UNIC.

Reported:

It was noted that the decision had been made by UNIC to delay informing students about the termination of franchise agreement until students admitted in the 2021-22 year had enrolled and were established; as a result the termination had not been discussed more widely until now. Students were informed this week and a message was sent out to staff on 2 November 2021.

Progress had been made in agreeing the teach out plan but a number of issues remained unresolved.

The Senate thanked the Director of Quality and Partnerships and his team for their hard work in reaching the agreement.

Senate/2021-22/ Paper 1H

10. Faculty Dissolution

Received and considered: A report on the dissolution of the FHSCE.

Reported:

A joint oversight group comprising representatives from Kingston University and SGUL had been established to oversee the dissolution process. Each side also had steering groups and some joint task and finish groups. There would be a Town Hall meeting on 10th November 2021, hosted by both organisations, to give staff as much information as possible as the process continued.

Discussed:

Staff has welcomed the Town Hall meeting. It was reported anecdotally that staff feel a lot is going on in the background but limited information seemed to be forthcoming to them, which had raised concerns about what was being discussed. It was felt that the Town Hall meeting would go some way to alleviating staff concerns.

Senate/2021-22/ Paper 1I

11. National Student Survey (NSS)/Student Experience update

Received and considered: A report to update on the NSS and Student Experience.

Reported:

The NSS results have had a hard reduction in scores in Biomedical Science and Medicine, and this has potentially serious consequences for the organisation. However, this is largely attributable to COVID-19 and it is expected that scores will increase for next year. It is also expected that the change in removing clinical transfer from Biomedical Science, and the expansion of the programme, will increase scores.

There are two key areas to work on to improve student satisfaction - infrastructure and wellbeing and student support. To keep high satisfaction scores, dialogue with students is key, as is building trust and sense checking plans with them. The Student Union is helping with this.

Discussed:

It was discussed to what extent the student survey predicts the NSS result. It was noted that it was considered a good indicator although this has not always been the case on every occasion.

It was noted that in the NSS that there had been high results for some of the newer programmes; Occupational Therapy had a 90% satisfaction result in only its second year of students participating in the NSS. Radiography also scored consistently highly.

It was asked if there would be a report on the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) as the presented report was predominantly focused on the NSS. It was noted that Council had specifically requested a report on the NSS as the NSS feeds into strategic measures including league tables. As a university, SGUL very much makes the point that all of our students matter and the organisation cares about and considers the postgraduate student experience in the same way as undergraduate students.

A report would be made to Senate on the PTES and PRES survey results in due course.

Action: Deputy Principal (Education)

Senate/2021-22/ Paper 1J

12. Access and Participation

Received and considered: A report on Access and Participation.

Reported:

In 2018 the OfS changed its approach from 'Widening Participation' to 'Access and Participation'. Access and Participation is more focused on outcomes for undergraduate students. It is not just about raising student aspirations, it is about raising intentions and ambitions to study with SGUL, and evidencing this. OfS want to follow the student journey, and ensure students are supported to succeed. They also want to focus on certain target student groups to ensure equity. There are regulatory sanctions for not meeting Access and Participation targets.

OfS wanted to see longer timeframes to SGUL's Access and Participation ambitions, so there is now a five-year Access and Participation plan. OfS wanted activity in Access and Participation to feed into national targets and improvements, so SGUL adjusted its practice to align with this. There is also an Access and Participation Steering Group to implement and oversee the five-year plan, and the Council has adopted a KPI for Access and Participation. Since creating the five-year plan, SGUL are no longer under enhanced monitoring by the OfS.

SGUL does not have access issues for most of the target student groups, and all of the groups do well with progression outcomes. There are some gaps in attainment and access in the last two groups: 'students from socioeconomically deprived areas' and 'students from 'low participation' areas (POLAR)'. There are targets to improve the outcomes for these two groups, including attainment at partner secondary schools. Good progress is being made with these targets and milestones are being exceeded. For example, there is now a contextual admissions scheme, which aims to understand and take into account where a student is at school, and what area they live in.

The next steps will depend on the outcome of merger discussions, as a merger will require the plan to be reviewed and re-written. Other pieces of work that are ongoing are scoping of the foundation year in health sciences and the roll out of an inclusive education framework.

Discussed:

It was asked if SGUL are adjusting criteria for students who are applying to come into the MMI process. It was discussed that SGUL have put in support to help students, especially those who have come from backgrounds that are flagged; this includes the MMI process. The plan is to have the contextual admissions process published on the SGUL public website and the organisation are working with UCAS on this; in order to give students the adjusted criteria offer from 2023 entry.

It was asked if any public engagement and widening participation activities that take place that are not related to health or biomedical science are considered as part of Access and Participation. It was noted that the OfS expect to see those activities that are linked to student recruitment; but this does not mean the other engagement activities should not take place.

It was noted that a similar level of analysis on postgraduate areas would be important to have, even if this is not required by the OfS.

Senate/2021-22/ Paper 1K

13. Student Welfare and Support

Received and considered: A report on student welfare and support.

Reported:

The report provided an overview of current student welfare provision and showed that feedback is that the service is excellent in parts, but that overall it is quite disparate and reactive. This is in part because the service has grown up organically and in response to external drivers.

It was reported that there had been a surge in counselling services referrals recently – 177 referrals so far in this academic year, compared to 400 total referrals received last year. There is currently a waiting list of four to six weeks. It was not clear what was driving the increase, but it was thought to be a combination of a new and improved data management system and improved satisfaction in the service. Students have reported that they appreciate the hybrid of in person and online sessions. The service has increased its counsellors in response to the higher demand.

Discussed:

It was discussed how there are issues with Occupational Health, such as some students getting onto programmes when it is not in the best interests of their health. These issues are being discussed and progressed by the student welfare team.

It was asked what the waiting list was for staff using the Counselling Service. This was not known at this time. Concerns were raised about the waiting list; which suggests, although the service is excellent, the provision is not meeting the need. It was acknowledged that the provision of counselling was excellent and that waiting times remained relatively short when compared to some parts of the sector.

It was noted that the Student Union had an increase in referrals over August and September 2021; the reason for the increase was not clear.

It was discussed that different courses have different approaches to welfare and this may need to be considered by the institution. It was suggested this is addressed via monitoring committees, in order to aim for consistency across programmes. It was noted that there are pockets of real excellence, such as Paramedic Science, which had embedded welfare into the curriculum. It was noted that the university has better NSS scores from courses that promote welfare in this way.

SGUL cares deeply about the mental health of its staff and students, however, concerns were raised about the national agenda of making universities responsible for students' mental health and mental health care. It was discussed that the statutory responsibility for student mental health sits within the NHS and how much should the university be spending student fees on welfare services. It was noted that the Dean for Students is currently doing a piece of work to try and improve links with the Trust psychiatry provision and is looking at what other things the Trust can provide and how this would work.

The Dean for Equality, Diversity and Inclusion highlighted that the Step Change tool kit – a light touch, self-assessment exercise – could be used to look at welfare provision holistically. It may flag concerns about staff and student wellbeing, and pressures on course committees in general.

The Senate thanked the Dean and Deputy for Students for their work in this area.

Agreed:

Programme Monitoring Committees to be asked to review pastoral support at programme level to share good practice and to work towards consistency in provision.

Action: Academic Lead for Quality and Partnerships, Director of Quality and Partnerships
Senate/2021-22/ Paper 1L

Research

14. **Research Update, including Research Excellence Framework (REF)**

Received and considered: A verbal update on Research, including an update on the REF.

Reported:

There had been some strong applications for a number of recent post-doctoral fellowship awards funded by the Rosetrees Trust and St George's Hospital charity.

Reorganisation of the research institutes into sections is ongoing; section heads are working to support researchers fulfil their potential and are undertaking some training in order to support this.

The REF return has been successfully submitted. There has been no feedback yet on the submission. The key date is likely to be early May 2022.

Matters for Approval

15. **External examiner appointments and extensions in 2021-22**

Received and approved: A list of external examiner appointments and extensions in 2021-22.

Senate/2021-22/ Paper 1M

16. Board of Examiner Membership and Dates

Received and approved: The Board of Examiner Membership and Dates.

Senate/2021-22/ Paper 1N

17. Approval of any changes to membership and terms of reference (TOR) for sub-committees of Senate

Considered and approved: Changes to membership and TOR for Research Committee.

Senate/2021-22/ Paper 1O

Matters for Report

18. Reports from the sub-committees of Senate

Received and considered:

- (i) A report from the Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee.

Senate/2021-22/ Paper 1P

- (ii) A report from the Research Committee.

Senate/2021-22/ Paper 1Q

19. Student recruitment update

Received and noted: An update on student recruitment.

Senate/2021-22/ Paper 1R

20. Office for Students (OfS) 'B-conditions' Consultation

Received and noted: A copy of the consultation response.

Senate/2021-22/ Paper 1S

21. Actions taken by the Chair

Received and noted: Decisions taken on behalf of Senate by the Chair since the last meeting of Senate.

Senate/2021-22/ Paper 1T

22. Student Cases

Reported:

- (i) A Fitness to Study or Practise Hearing Committee was convened to consider the case of a PhD student and determined that the student should be expelled.
- (ii) A Fitness to Study or Practise Hearing Committee was convened to consider the case of a Final Year MBBS student and determined that the student should receive a formal written warning.
- (iii) A Student Appeal Committee was convened to consider the case of a student enrolled on the BSc Biomedical Sciences programme and determined that the penalties applied for plagiarism should be upheld.

23. Minutes of Senate Sub-Committees

Noted that minutes of the following Senate sub-committees were available on request:

- a) Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee
- b) Research Degrees Committee (unreserved)
- c) Research Committee
- d) Student Support and Welfare Committee
- e) Taught Postgraduate Courses Committee
- f) Undergraduate Medicine and Bioscience Education Committee

24. Any other business

No other business was raised at the meeting.

25. Dates of meetings in 2021-22

Tuesday 7 December 2021 – Joint with Executive Board

Tuesday 1 March 2022

Tuesday 14 June 2022
Tuesday 5 July 2022 – Joint with Executive Board

All meetings commence at 2.00pm.

EW /8 November 2021

CONFIRMED