Queen Mary
University of London

Senate

Paper Title	Minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 12 March 2015.
Outcome requested	Senate is asked to **approve** the minutes of the last meeting
Points for Senate members to note and further information	n/a
Questions for Senate to consider	n/a
Regulatory/statutory reference points	n/a
Strategy and risk	n/a
Reporting/ consideration route for the paper	Senate to approve.
Authors	Jane Pallant, Deputy Academic Registrar
Sponsor	Professor Simon Gaskell, President and Principal

Senate

Minutes of 12 March 2015 (unconfirmed)

Present:

Professor Simon Gaskell (Chair)	Professor Adrian Armstrong	Dr Adrian Bevan
Professor Alison Blunt	Professor James Busfield	Dr Melania Capasso
Professor Susan Dilly	Dr Matthias Dittmar	Dr Steve Dunn
Professor Matthew Evans	Dr Henri Huijberts	Dr Robert Janes
Professor Boris Khoruzhenko	Professor Martin Laffin	Carolina Mantzalos
Professor Seán McConville	Dola Osilaja	Professor Mauro Perretti
Dr Chris Phillips	Dr Thomas Prellberg	Dr Katy Price
Professor Nicholas Ridout	Professor Morag Shiach	Professor David Sadler
Professor William Spence	Professor Christopher Tyson	Professor Olwyn Westwood

In attendance:

Professor Richard Ashcroft	Dr Esther de Leeuw	Jonathan Morgan
Jane Pallant (Secretary)		

Apologies:

Professor Adrian Armstrong	Dr Aylin Basan	Dr Adrian Bevan
Professor James Busfield	Professor Mike Curtis	Professor Jack Cuzick
Professor Adam Fagan	Professor Graham Hitman	Professor Jeremy Kilburn
Professor Nicholas Lemoine	Professor Steve Lloyd	Professor Thomas MacDonald
Professor Peter McOwan	Professor Valsamis Mitsilegas	Dr Sandra Nicholson
Professor Barbara Petrongolo	Professor Richard Pickersgill	Ms Jane Reid
Professor Adrian Smith	Dr Anwar Tappuni	Professor Anthony Warrens
Professor Ferranti Wong		

Part 1: Preliminary items

Minutes of the previous meeting (SE2014.31)

2014.80   Senate **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 4th December 2014, subject to the removal of a duplicate name in the attendance list and the insertion of the full title of the University of London Institute in Paris (ULIP, minute 2014.44 iii).

President and Principal's report

2014.81   The President and Principal **reported** that:

(i)   The future sustainability of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) was currently under review. Universities UK and the University and College Union had considered potential solutions to the funding challenges within the scheme and a formal consultation was now underway.

(ii)   The Labour Party's policy to reduce tuition fees to £6,000 could cause

significant financial deficits for universities if the difference in income was not addressed through an increased allocation from HEFCE. For QMUL, that deficit would be approximately £30 million.

(iii) It was anticipated that there was unlikely to be a significant change in Quality-related Research (QR) funding following the outcome of the Research Excellence Framework. Changes to the allocation methodology, particularly in terms of the weighting between 4 and 3 star rated research, could result in a small reduction of the allocated QR funds for 2015-16.

Vice-Principals' reports

2014.82   The Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning) **reported** that:

(i) QMUL would offer £10k scholarships for postgraduate students commencing their studies in 2015. These scholarships would be funded through a contribution from HEFCE's Postgraduate Support Scheme, and were available for 2015-16 only. QMUL had 110 scholarships which were split between the three faculties. In order to be eligible to apply, students would need to be graduating from QMUL in 2015 on the higher fee regime.

(ii) The 2016 Teaching and Learning Conference would take place on Wednesday 20 January 2016. QMUL was pleased to announce that Baroness Tessa Blackstone would present the Drapers' Lecture following the conference.

(iii) A paper on the proposed scheme for interdisciplinary modules was planned for presentation to the June meeting of Senate. This would be confirmed once the Planning and Accountability Review had completed. Further enhancements to the language strategy would also be included for discussion with the aim of increasing the uptake of provision in this area.

2014.83   The Vice-Principal (Research) **reported** that:

(i) It was anticipated that QMUL would receive Higher Education Innovation Funds (HEIF) of approximately £3 million for 2015-16. This was the last year of funding under the current scheme and changes might be expected for future years;

(ii) The Research Capital Investment Fund had been announced as totalling £194 million. QMUL expected to receive an appropriate allocation from this fund;

(iii) The Research Data Access and Management task and finish group had completed its work. Thanks were extended to the Chair and members of the group for their contributions.

2014.84   The Vice-Principal (Public Engagement and Student Enterprise) and acting Vice-Principal and Executive Dean (Science and Engineering) **reported** that:

(i) Professor Tim Hunt, Nobel Prize laureate, would deliver a lecture as part of the Institute of Bioengineering seminar series on 18 March 2015;

(ii) The Faculty had received an award of over €2 million in Marie Curie Fellowship income;

(iii) QMUL had received £5 million from HEFCE to support the upgrade of facilities in the Engineering block;

(iv) Careers and Enterprise had held a celebration event for student enterprise and employability. Students and employers had attended the event, and it was pleasing to note the increase in opportunities for students to engage in this type of scheme. Thanks were extended to colleagues in the Careers Centre for their work in this area.

(v) The recent Wellcome trust strategic award placed an emphasis on public engagement, an area where QMUL is regarded as a leader in the field;

(vi) The Centre for Public Engagement had developed some public engagement courses which were available to staff as part of the training offered by the Centre for Academic and Professional Development and the Doctoral College.

2014.85 The Vice-Principal and Executive Dean (Humanities and Social Sciences) **reported** that the Faculty was currently engaged in developing its strategy. The strategy would be discussed at the next staff away day and would be aligned to support the QMUL Strategy while recognising the Faculty's distinctive character.

Students' Union President's report

2014.86 The Students' Union President **reported** that:

(i) The visit from Beijing University of Posts and Telecommunications students had been successful. A seven day programme of events had been organised and some students had indicated that they would like to undertake the fourth year of their programme in London;

(ii) The library survey had attracted over 2,000 responses and QMSU had discussed the outcome with the Director of Student Services. Further information relating to the next steps would be available following the conclusion of the Planning and Accountability Review;

(iii) QMSU's 2015 student experience seminar had focussed on postgraduate study. Students had been surveyed with regard to their views on postgraduate study, including barriers to study and financial support. QMSE would do further analysis on the results of this survey;

(iv) The unexpected power outage in the Queens' Building on 9 March 2015 had affected students using IT facilities. The Students' Union requested a 24 hour extension for coursework that had been required to be submitted by 13 March. This extension had been agreed and implemented in discussion with schools and institutes.

Part 2: Matters for information

Academic Governance Review

2014.87   Senate **received** an oral report on progress with the desk-based review of academic governance.

2014.88   Members **noted** that the review sought to compare QMUL's current governance arrangements with the principles set out in the Academic Governance Framework introduced in 2010. The second strand of the review would evaluate how the governance arrangements were working in practice by exploring cross-cutting processes and themes, including: curriculum planning, development and review; creation and monitoring of collaborative partnerships; professional development of teaching staff and sharing good practice in teaching, learning and assessment; postgraduate research; student engagement and feedback; allocation of resources to support teaching, learning and research.

2014.89   Senate **recommended** that the operation of examination scrutiny committees should be incorporated into the review since this was a recurrent issue raised by external examiners.

2014.90   Schools and institutes were thanked for providing sets of documentation for the review. Members **noted** that the report and recommendations would be considered by Senate at the meeting in June 2015.

Senate members' handbook (SE2014.32)

2014.91   Senate **received** a list of suggested draft headings for the development of a Senate members' handbook.

2014.92   Members were asked to submit further suggestions for inclusion in the handbook to the Academic Registrar and Council Secretary.

Part 3: Matters for consideration

Assessment governance review 2014-15 (SE2014.33)

2014.93   Senate **received** a paper detailing the outcome of a consultation exercise conducted in the early part of 2015 on the following issues: the quorum for Subject Examination Board meetings; the Degree Examination Board structure; the maximum duration of study; penalties for the late submission of work; penalties for assessments that exceed specified word counts; scaling and standard setting; mock assessments; a minor amendment to the borderline classification policy.

2014.94   Members **noted** the paper summarised the feedback from the consultation process, together with recommendations for Senate's consideration.

2014.95   Senate **approved** revisions to the quorum for Subject Examination Boards with effect from 2015-16. In summary, the quorum for a Subject Examination Board would be at least 50 per cent of the total membership, or five members, whichever is fewer. The full text of this revision would be formally presented to the June meeting of Senate in the Academic Regulations 2015-16.

2014.96   Senate **approved** the recommendation to align the Degree Examination Boards

with the faculty system for 2015-16 and beyond.

2014.97 Senate **considered** the proposal regarding the maximum duration of study, noting that the current regulations permit registration for twice the normal duration of study (i.e. six years for a standard bachelors degree, eight for an integrated masters, and two for most postgraduate programmes). The introduction of late summer resits provided students with two attempts at progression in each year of a programme, negating the need for students to take a resit year out of attendance, so it was timely to consider a reduction of the maximum registration period. Senate **approved** the maximum registration period for a programme of study as one year longer than the specified duration of the programme, this change would be implemented from 2015-16.

2014.98 Senate **considered** the issue of penalties for the late submission of coursework. The consultation process had revealed divided opinion on both the nature of the penalty that could be applied and whether a common policy was desirable. Senate **agreed** that a further consultation would be undertaken on this issue in time for Senate's consideration at its June meeting.

2014.99 Senate members discussed the proposal relating to word count policies and penalties for exceeding specified word counts. Feedback from the consultation process had been mixed, and Senate **agreed** that variation in practice could be justified by the learning outcomes of particular programmes, modules and assignments. Where a school/institute chose to apply a penalty, the details of the penalty would be included in the module handbook. A statement would be added to assignment submission cover sheets to enable students to confirm that they were aware of any penalties that could be applied for exceeding the word limit.

2014.100 Senate **approved** a revised policy for scaling and standard setting for inclusion in the Assessment Handbook from 2015-16. The full text of the policy would be submitted to the June meeting of Senate.

2014.101 The proposal relating to the use of formative examinations for all semester one/full year modules had generated a number of detailed responses as part of the consultation process. The majority of schools and institutes were supportive of the proposal to support students in preparation for their assessments, but it had been noted that the practical implementation of this proposal would be difficult, and was not necessarily required in all cases. Senate **agreed** that a policy statement should be introduced to ensure that practice in assessment techniques was built into each programme. A draft policy statement for inclusion in the Assessment Handbook would be developed and circulated to schools and institutes for further consultation. Senate would consider the outcome of this additional consultation exercise at its June meeting.

2014.102 Senate **approved** an amendment to the borderline classification policy for immediate implementation. Members **noted** that this change entailed a technical clarification for students studying on a part-time basis, where all modules comprising the full-time equivalent final year would be used in the borderline policy.

Engagement, Retention and Success strategy (SE2014.34)

2014.103 Senate **considered** and **approved** the Student Engagement, Retention and Success Strategy. Members **noted** that the strategy had been developed by the Engagement, Retention and Success Group; thanks were extended to the Chair and members of the Group for their work in this connection.

Establishing a Confucius Institute at QMUL (SE2014.35)

2014.104   Senate **received** a paper which detailed steps taken towards the establishment of a Confucius Institute (CI) in partnership with the Shanghai University of Finance and Economics (SUFE).

2014.105   Members **noted** the focus and operation of the proposed CI, together with contextual information regarding its position within QMUL's broader activity and strategy in China. There was potential for the CI to enhance existing collaborations and provide a platform for new ones, including the diversification of activity in China, both in terms of region and subject area.

2014.106   Senate endorsed the proposal but asked for assurance, in light of the practice in China of mutual surveillance and monitoring lectures, that explicit controls would be put in place to protect academic freedom and to monitor compliance with EU human rights legislation.

Policy on the naming of buildings and physical spaces (SE2014.36)

2014.107   Senate **considered** and **approved** a policy on the naming of buildings and physical spaces for recommendation to Council. Senate requested an amendment to section 5.2 of the policy to reflect the fact that there would be provision in exceptional circumstances for external logos/word marks of charities to be permitted on QMUL signage.

External examiners' summary report 2013/14 (SE2014.37)

2014.108   Senate **considered** the report on key themes raised by external examiners during the 2013-14 academic year.

2014.109   Members **noted** the issues raised by external examiners in relation to student performance. A number of external examiners had commented on the fact that fewer first and upper second class degrees were being awarded than would have been expected, given QMUL's entry criteria. It was hoped that the revisions to the award regulations for 2015-16 and beyond would address this issue, and Senate would monitor closely the effects of the new progression and award requirements.

2014.110   External examiners had also commented on the reluctance of markers to use the full range of marks, particularly those over 70%. This issue had arisen in previous years and Senate members were reminded of the need for Subject Examination Boards to reiterate the importance of using the full range of marks, and for schools and institutes to continue to monitor the issue.

2014.111   Senate **considered** the point made by some externals regarding the link between the volume of assessment and the amount of credit awarded. Members **noted** that some schools had explored this issue, further noting that there would always be variability between the disciplines so no further action was planned at this stage.

Annual reports on student casework 2013/14 (SE2014.38a-38d)

2014.112   Senate **considered** the annual reports on academic appeals, QMUL appeal regulations, assessment offences, complaints, student discipline and fitness to practise for 2013 -14.

2014.113   Members **noted** that there was an increase in the number of academic appeals upheld during 2013-14 and this increase was in line with sector norms for student cases of this type. The QMUL academic appeal regulations state that as an appeal is *upheld* when a case is referred back to the decision making body for reconsideration, the original decision would not necessarily vary in all cases as a result of the referral.

2014.114   Members **noted** that there would be some minor revisions to the appeal regulations for 2015-16 to align QMUL's practice with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator's Good Practice Framework. The recommended changes would be submitted to Senate for consideration in June 2015.

Suspension of regulations report (SE2014.39)

2014.115   Senate **received** a report on requests for suspensions of regulations submitted between December 2014 and February 2015. Members **noted** that a number of these requests related to changes in assessment patterns, an issue which had occurred in previous years.

2014.116   Senate **considered** a notable case in detail since the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning) had been concerned about the procedures within the School of Politics and International Relations that had led to the request, and felt that Senate should review the report from the Head of the School in relation to the problem.

2014.117   Members **noted** that this specific request related to the School's deviation from an approved assessment scheme, an issue that could easily have been avoided with appropriate consultation and planning.

2014.118   Senate **approved** the request for the suspension of regulations since failure to do so would have disadvantaged the students. The School of Politics and International Relations was asked to develop proposals in order to ensure that this type of issue did not arise in future.

Annual report from the Centre for Academic and Professional Development (SE2014.40)

2014.119   Senate **noted** the 2013-14 annual report from the Centre for Academic and Professional Development.

Academic structure of the Blizard Institute (SE2014.41)

2014.120   Senate **considered** and **approved** a proposal for the reorganisation of the Blizard Institute. The reorganisation involved the creation of five centres from the previous eight as follows: Centre for Cell Biology and Cutaneous Research; Centre for Genomics and Child Health; Centre for Immunology; Centre for Neuroscience and Trauma; Centre for Primary care and Public Health.

2014.121   Members **noted** that the structure provided a strategic framework with greater clarity for the delivery of research and the expansion of taught provision.

Part 4: Reports from sub-boards of Senate

Taught Programmes Board (SE2014.42)

2014.122   Senate **noted** the summary of proposals considered by the Taught Programmes Board between November 2014 and February 2015.

Partnerships Board (SE2014.43)

2014.123   Senate **noted** the executive summary of meetings of the Partnerships Board held between November 2014 and March 2015.

Education Quality Board (SE2014.44)

2014.124   Senate **noted** the executive summary of the meeting of the Education Quality Board held on 29 January 2015.

Part 5: Other matters

Future meetings of Senate

2014.125   Senate members felt that it would be useful to capitalise on the information sharing opportunity provided by the assembly of colleagues at meetings of Senate. Members **agreed** that a brief presentation on a matter of general interest would be trialled at the June meeting of Senate.

Dates of meetings in 2014-15

2014.126   Senate **noted** that the next meeting of Senate would be held as follows:
- Thursday 11 June 2015