Queen Mary
University of London

Senate

Minutes of 4 March 2021 (draft)

Present:

Professor Colin Bailey (Chair)	Shamima Akter	Professor Adrian Armstrong
Dr Mark Baxendale	Dr Jason Berry	Professor Adrian Bevan
Professor Ginestra Bianconi	Professor Victoria Bird	Dr Edo Boek
Professor Warren Boutcher	Dr Rafa Castrejon-Pita	Professor Alex Clark
Dr Dianne Cooper	Dr Joseph Cronin	Dr Madeleine Davis
Professor Panos Deloukas	Dr Debbie De Girolamo	Professor Colin Grant
Professor Penny Green	Dr Richard Grose	Sheila Gupta MBE
Professor Yang Hao	Professor Matthew Hilton	Professor Peter Hobson
Professor Henri Huijberts	Dr Judith Jones	Dr Jessica Jacobs
Professor Dr Steffi Krause	Aphrodite Liddington	Professor Andrew Livingston
Dr Philippa Lloyd	Professor Stephanie Marshall	Professor Anthony Michael
Professor Parvati Nair	Dr Ali Nankali	Professor Sandra Nicholson
Professor Mike Noon	Professor Phoebe Okowa	Professor Alastair Owens
Dr Eranjan Padumadasa	Dr Michael Page	Professor Mauro Perretti
Christina Perry	Professor Thomas Prellberg	Dr Amitha Ranauta
Mat Robathan	Professor Hazel Screen	Dr Prakash Shah
Cameron Storey	Professor Jason Sturgess	Professor Anwar Tappuni
Professor Steve Thornton	Professor Dan Todman	Dr Christopher Tyson
Professor Steve Uhlig	Professor Wen Wang	Professor Tim Warner
Dr David Williams		

In attendance:

Hannah Bentley	Professor Stefan Krummaker	Dr Nadine Lewycky
Professor Jo Martin	Jonathan Morgan	Jane Pallant
Sarah Scott (Minutes)		

Apologies:

Professor Jack Cuzick	Professor Paul Coulthard	Dr Sadhvi Dar
Dr Paula Fonseca	Dr Robert Janes	Dr Theo Kreouzis
Professor Nicholas Lemoine	Professor Simon Lucas	Professor Seán McConville
Dr Jason Niggli	Professor Richard Pickersgill	Jane Reid
Professor Ian Walden	Professor Anthony Warrens	

Part 1: Preliminary items

Minutes of the previous meeting (SE2020.32)

2020.120	Senate **confirmed** the minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2020.

Chair's action (SE2020.33)

2020.121   Senate **noted** the approval by Chair's action of the appointment of student casework deputy chairs.

2020.122   Senate **noted** the approval by Chair's action of the Covid Mitigating Measures Policy 2021. The policy had been approved by the Education Quality and Standards Board (EQSB). Proposals for unfunded extensions for PhD students in light of the pandemic would be discussed under item 8.

President and Principal's report (SE2020.34)

2020.123   Senate **received** a report from the President and Principal.

2020.124   Members **noted** that the USS Trustee was due to issue their valuation report to the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) shortly which would outline the range of contribution rates necessary for the current rate of benefits to continue. It was expected that the proposed rates would be unaffordable. Queen Mary had maintained its position that the benefits side of the scheme required reform. Given the current deficit of the scheme, valued between £9.8bn and £17.9bn, the sector was becoming increasingly supportive of benefit reform.

2020.125   Members **noted** that 30% of vaccines distributed in the borough of Tower Hamlets had been given on Queen Mary's campuses. Despite the easing of Covid restrictions, the possibility of a travel ban in September remained a risk to the recruitment of international students. Discussions were ongoing between the sector and government in relation to international recruitment.

Vice-Principals' Reports (SE2020.35a-h)

2020.126   Senate **received** a report from the Vice-Principal (Health), (SE2020.35a).

2020.127   Members **noted** the report from the Vice-Principal (Health).

2020.128   Senate **received** a report from the Vice-Principal and Executive Dean (Humanities and Social Sciences), (SE2020.35b).

2020.129   Members **noted** the report from the Vice-Principal and Executive Dean (Humanities and Social Sciences).

2020.130   Senate **received** a report from the Vice-Principal and Executive Dean (Science and Engineering), (SE2020.35c).

2020.131	Members **noted** the report from the Vice-Principal and Executive Dean (Science and Engineering).
2020.132	Senate **received** a report from the Vice-Principal (Education) (SE2020.35d).
2020.133	Members **noted** that the Education Excellence and President and Principal's Prizes had been presented in an online ceremony in December 2020. The awards recognised excellence in teaching and learning support. The quality of work demonstrated that Queen Mary had some of the most creative innovators in the online space. More work would be done to develop a community of practice and provide links to excellence globally.
2020.134	Members **noted** that universities had been asked by the Office for Students (OfS) to conduct a review of consumer protection during the pandemic. A review group, chaired by the Chief Governance Officer and University Secretary, had prepared a report that would be submitted to the Audit and Risk Committee and Council for consideration. The report would be circulated to Senate once finalised.
2020.135	Members **noted** that the Group had reviewed student communications from the Faculties, Schools, Institutes and the centre. The review showed that Queen Mary's communications had been clear and consistent. Students said that they would have appreciated greater clarity early on, but this had not always been possible. The review highlighted the importance of student engagement and Schools and Institutes responded to student feedback throughout the year. Students said that they had appreciated the town hall meetings organised by the Heads of Schools.
2020.136	Senate **received** a report from the Vice-Principal (Policy and Strategic Partnerships), (SE2020.35e).
2020.137	Members **noted** that the development of the Institute of Technology was progressing and that a Heads of Terms had been agreed on a strong commercial proposition. The building required a change in planning permission but it was expected that courses would start from 2022.
2020.138	Senate **received** a report from the Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation), (SE2020.35f).
2020.139	Members **noted** the graphs on research funding and income in the report but questioned whether the data provided an accurate portrayal of investment in research facilities. Members said that the figures for research income per m^2 could be skewed by the use of labs for both teaching and research, and labs shared between departments. The Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation) said that the data had been obtained from the Estates and Finance departments and that he would follow up with departments individually. The President and Principal said that the principle of targeting resources strategically was important.

2020.140   Senate **received** a report from the Vice-Principal (People, Culture and Inclusion), (SE2020.35g).

2020.141   Members **noted** the report from the Vice-Principal (People, Culture and Inclusion).

2020.142   Senate **received** a report from the Vice-Principal (International), (SE2020.35h).

2020.143   Members **noted** that the figures for January admissions had risen to 890 since the report had been written.

2020.144   Members **noted** that a representative from QMSU would be invited to join the Paris Strategy Group.

Students' Union President's report (SE2020.36)

2020.145   Senate **received** a report from the President of the Students' Union.

2020.146   Members **noted** that the Covid mitigation policy had been approved by Chair's action. The policy would support students who had experienced difficulties throughout the pandemic whilst respecting the integrity of degrees.

2020.147   Members **noted** that the Covid Mitigation Task and Finish Group would continue for the duration of the pandemic. The Group would monitor implementation through the development of an action tracker.

2020.148   Members **noted** that the next step was to communicate the policy to students. QMSU was working with the Head of Marketing and Communications and IT Services to create a FAQs webpage.

Part 2: Matters for Discussion

Presentation from the Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation)

2020.149   Senate **received** a presentation from the Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation) on progress against the three pillars of the research strategy.

2020.150   Members **noted** that an institution-wide review of culture and support for PhD students had been instigated and would report to the Vice-Principal (Research) Advisory Group. Growing PhD student numbers was vital to creating the best research culture.

2020.151   Members **asked** whether it was possible to get the application success rates for the different research funding schemes to help improve the quality of Queen Mary's applications. The publication of success rates varied by funder with some only publishing award success rates. The Vice-Principal (Research and Innovation) would look into which scheme rates were publicly available and report back to Senate.

Proposal for unfunded PhD extensions due to disruption to research caused by Covid19 (SE2020.37)

2020.152   Senate **received** a proposal for unfunded PhD extensions due to disruption to research caused by Covid-19.

2020.153   Members **noted** that the proposal to provide 3-month unfunded extensions to all PhD students had been approved by the Research Degree Programmes and Examinations Board (RDPEB) and the Vice-Principal (Research) Advisory Group (VPRAG). This would bring Queen Mary in line with practice elsewhere in the sector and mirrored extensions available to students funded by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). A blanket 3-month extension would be the minimum and longer extensions would be considered on a case by case basis.

2020.154   Members **noted** that the policy would be applied to the writing up period as students did not pay fees. This did not prevent students from conducting research during this time.

2020.155   Members **noted** that the current policy excluded students who had interrupted for a Covid-related reason. Senate was asked to **consider** whether this requirement should be removed from the policy. This could lead to duplicating consideration of students who had already been extended. Senate **agreed** that the matter should be referred back to RDPEB for consideration. RDPEB could monitor the workload related to considering exceptional cases and amend the policy accordingly. Senate **approved** the policy as written.

Annual report on student casework (2019– 20) (SE2020.38)

2020.156   Senate **received** the annual report on student casework.

2020.157   Senate **considered** the report and **noted** that while the number of appeals had decreased, the levels of casework was increasing. There was good evidence that these cases were dealt with well at a local level.

2020.158   Members **noted** that it was important to have a robust informal stage of the process to see if a dialogue between the student and school could resolve issues before moving to the formal process.

2020.159   Members **noted** that targets for responding to students were not always met due to the volume of cases under consideration and the complexity of many of the cases. Members further noted that it was important that students were kept informed on the progress of their case and that they had access to wellbeing support throughout.

2020.160   Members **noted** that cases of plagiarism remained high and suggested that training on this be made compulsory in an effort to reduce the number of cases. It was recognised that some schools offered training to students, but it was felt that training on academic practice should be consistent across all schools and institutes.

2020.161   Members **noted** the suggestion that caseworkers could automatically dismiss cases that did not meet the criteria for consideration; currently, this process was done in tandem with the Chair of the Appeal Panel. The suggestion had been made to help turn cases around more quickly, and the change would be reviewed as part of the review of the Appeal Policy. Members **noted** it would be important not to disadvantage students through this process and that spot checks could be carried out to ensure that there was no disparity between colleagues' application of the process.

2020.162   Members **noted** that it was important to support students going through the academic misconduct process and that students should be directed to Advice and Counselling where appropriate. It was important to remember that students could be deregistered through this process and that they still required access to QMUL's support services and contact with others going through a similar experience.

2020.163   Senate **agreed** that it was important to ensure that students had access to the appropriate support services while their cases were under consideration.

Part 3: Matters for Report

Freedom of Speech Policy* (SE2020.39)

2020.164   Senate **received** a paper on the Freedom of Speech policy.

2020.165   Members **noted** that the policy would be reviewed in the context of the government's policy paper *Higher education: free speech and academic freedom*. The current policy was considered to be fit for purpose but that new elements may be needed to reflect changes in legislation. Members were invited to submit comments on the policy for consideration.

Taught Programmes Board* (SE2020.40)

2020.166   Senate **noted** the proposals relating to programme and module academic developments that had taken place between December 2020 and February 2021.

Education Quality and Standards Board* (SE2020.41)

2020.167   Senate **noted** the executive summary of the Education Quality and Standards Board meeting held on 17 February 2021.

Research Degrees Programmes and Examinations Board* (SE2020.42)

2020.168   Senate **noted** the executive summary of the business considered by the Research Degrees Programmes and Examinations Board at meetings held between November 2020 and February 2021.

Partnerships Board* (SE2020.43)

2020.169   Senate **noted** the executive summary of the business considered by Partnerships Board between 04 November 2020 and 26 January 2021.

Part 4: Other matters

Dates of future meetings

2020.170   Senate **noted** that the next meetings of Senate would be held as follows:
- Thursday 10th June 2021, 3pm-5pm in the Colette Bowe Room, Queens' Building, Mile End (TBC).