

SENATE – SPECIAL MEETING

Minutes of the Special Meeting held at 14.00 on 18 APRIL 2018, at MedRus 1, Penbryn.

Present: Prof Elizabeth Treasure, Vice-Chancellor (Chair); Ms Rebecca Davies, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Chief Operating Officer) (until minute 62.5); Prof John Grattan, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience and International) (until minute 62.5); Dr Rhodri Llwyd Morgan, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Welsh Language and Culture, and External Engagement); Prof Chris Thomas, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research); Prof Judy Broady-Preston, Director of IPD; Prof Mike Gooding, Director of IBERS; Prof Neil Glasser, Director of IGHPP; Prof Qiang Shen, Director of IMPaCS; Prof Tim Woods, Director of IAH; Dr Elin Royles, Chair of the Aberystwyth University Branch of the Coleg Cymraeg Cenedlaethol (CCC); Prof Reyer Zwiggelaar, Head of the Graduate School; Dr Gordon Allison; Dr Guy Baron; Prof Richard Beardsworth; Prof Paul Brewer; Dr Hazel Davey; Dr Gwion Evans; Dr Chris Finlayson; Mr Nigel Hardy; Dr Anwen Jones; Dr David Ceri Jones; Dr Louise Marshall; Prof Robert Meyrick; Dr Ola Olusanya; Dr Maria Plotnikova; Dr Rachel Rahman; Mrs Anne Uruska; Mr Tim Davies; Ms Louise Jagger; Mr Bruce Wight, AberSU Union Development Officer; and Mr Gwion Llwyd Williams, UMCA President.

In attendance: Mrs Lucy Hodson, Director of Planning; Mrs Jean Jones, Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office; Mrs Esther Prytherch, Head of Communications and Public Affairs; Mr Geraint Pugh, University Secretary; Mr Nicholas Rogers, Director of Change Strategy; and Ms Emma Williams, Director of the Academic Quality and Records Office (AQRO).

Apologies for absence had been received from Prof Jo Crotty, Director of IBL; and Prof Malcolm Thomas.

59. MATTERS RAISED BY THE CHAIR

1. WhatUni Student Choice Awards

The award ceremony for the 2018 WhatUni Student Choice Awards would be held the following evening. Aberystwyth University (AU) had been shortlisted for seven awards, including for the University of the Year award for the second year running. The University would be represented at the awards by a delegation including the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience and International); and the Aberystwyth University Students' Union (AberSU) Academic Affairs Officer.

60. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The nature of the proposed University restructure which was currently being consulted upon meant that a number of Senate members would have a personal interest in the outcome of the consultation process. Members were reminded that Senate's contribution to the consultation related to the proposed academic structures, and the discussion would be based on the principles set out in the report and not on individuals and their roles. It was therefore not considered necessary for any Senate member to recuse from the discussion.

61. UCU INDUSTRIAL ACTION

NOTED

1. The outcome of a ballot of members of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) had been announced last Friday, where there had been clear support for the understanding reached on a review of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS). The on-going 'action short of a strike' had therefore come to an end.
2. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience and International) and team were working hard to ensure that students would not be disadvantaged as a result of the industrial action taken by members of the UCU over recent weeks. Members particularly welcomed assurances that it would be possible to either adjust assessments, including those leading to professional accreditation, to be based on what had been taught, or to make appropriate allowances in marking and moderation procedures.

62. PROPOSED UNIVERSITY RESTRUCTURE

RECEIVED

Report by the Vice-Chancellor, incorporating the 'Proposed University Restructure of Executive Roles, Academic Structures and Professional Services (including Academic Administration/Support)' consultation document (SEN1718-068).

NOTED

1. On Friday, 23 March 2018, the Independent and Student members of Council had met to discuss proposals to significantly restructure the University to deliver the required savings as part of the Sustainability Implementation Plan (SIP) and ensure that costs are aligned more closely with current income levels. While student numbers at the University had reduced over recent years, management structures had not adapted accordingly.
2. Aberystwyth University's governing documents require Council to approve proposals to establish, rename, restructure, reconfigure, or abolish the institution's academic and professional service units. This is undertaken by Council in consultation with the Senate on any proposals relating to academic units. This Special Meeting of Senate, as the academic governing body, had therefore been convened to provide an opportunity for members to formally consider the restructure proposals in relation to the University's academic units.
3. Members were reminded that alternative proposals and feedback could also be submitted via e-mail or the anonymous online portal by the deadline of 09 May 2018. All feedback received would be considered as part of developing the final proposal to be considered by the committee of Council.
4. Number of Academic Units
 1. Despite initial challenges and the need to develop new structures and processes, members felt that a number of the current Institutes were now working well and that their reconfiguration risked good practice being lost. The importance of ensuring that the appropriate internal structures be in place for when the new academic units come into existence was therefore emphasised, with regulations used as appropriate to standardise these structures.
 2. Members welcomed the proposal to replace the six current Institutes with a smaller number of Faculties / Colleges. However, some concern was expressed about the configuration of the three new Faculties / Colleges as proposed, due to their disproportionate size.
 3. Various options were discussed for the reconfiguration of the new Faculties / Colleges, which as the institution's academic units would be the primary

budgetary units. During the discussions, members were reminded that alternative proposals which would reduce the savings generated would in turn require additional savings to be identified elsewhere within the University.

4. The clear preference amongst members was for three new Faculties / Colleges: two of which would include science disciplines; with the other comprising of the arts, humanities, and social sciences. The second preference was for two new academic units: one for science, and another covering the remaining disciplines.

5. Nomenclature of Academic Units

1. In advance of the Special Meeting, members had been specifically encouraged to seek feedback from their departments on whether the new academic units should be referred to as Faculties or Colleges. Members reported the views of their constituencies, and the positive and negative arguments in relation to both titles.
2. Some concern was expressed that the title Faculty had previously been used at the University, prior to the introduction of the Institutes in 2013. However, the new academic units now being proposed would differ from the previous Faculties in that they would be the institution's primary budgetary units. The use of the title College could equally be confusing given the institution's previous status as a College within the federated University of Wales structure.
3. Having debated both options, there was a clear preference amongst members for the title Faculty, although it was recognised that a large minority was in favour of adopting the term College.

6. Departmental Structures

1. As part of the staff consultation on Professional Services structures during December 2017, a number of the responses received had underlined the importance of retaining the identity of academic disciplines through the existing departments. The current University restructure proposal had therefore been designed with this in mind.
2. Members were reassured that there was no proposal for IBERS to lose its identity and that retaining its Institute title within the new academic unit could be an option. The fact that IBERS does not have an internal departmental structure at present was also noted, and the Institute's representatives on Senate requested that any internal restructuring of IBERS be progressed as part of the current proposal, rather than as a separate process.
3. Questions were raised about the appropriateness of merging the departments of Learn Welsh and Lifelong Learning, given their differing internal processes due to their respective funding sources. Should the merger go ahead, some staff in the departments had expressed a view that the new unit report directly to the new Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching, and Student Experience), rather than to a Dean.
4. Both iMLA and Lifelong Learning had lost their statuses as academic departments during previous restructures. Both had since been managed at an Institute-level over recent months in the absence of internal departmental structures. This would need to be considered as part of the proposed University restructure. However, it was equally emphasised that disciplines could retain their external profiles without the need to be recognised as budgetary cost centres internally.

7. Welsh Language and Culture

1. Some concern was expressed that the Welsh-language requirements of the new Pro Vice-Chancellor and Dean positions within the revised structure were unclear. It was equally noted that while there may be an expectation that an individual can speak Welsh, that would not automatically mean that they will have a strategic role to lead on Welsh-language and culture matters.
2. The contribution of the Directors of Welsh Language within the current Institutes had been instrumental in increasing Welsh-medium academic provision throughout the institution. and in had helped the University to attract substantial funding from the CCC. The need for senior leadership within the new academic units with respect to Welsh-medium academic strategy and compliance with the new Welsh Language Standards was therefore emphasised.
3. This aspect of the proposed University restructure had been considered in detail at a recent meet of the AU of the CCC, and representatives from the Branch would meet with the Vice-Chancellor in the near future to discuss further.

RESOLVED

8. That this minute be presented to the committee of Council which will consider the final proposal following the consultation period, as a summary of Senate's views on the University restructure proposals in relation to the academic (**ACTION:** University Secretary).
9. That the view expressed during the Special Meeting also be considered by the Vice-Chancellor as part of the development of the final proposal to the committee of Council (**ACTION:** Vice-Chancellor).