

SENATE

Minutes of the meeting held at 12:30 on 05 FEBRUARY 2021, via Zoom.

Voting members: Prof Elizabeth Treasure, Vice-Chancellor; Prof Neil Glasser, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Faculty of Earth and Life Sciences); Professor Tim Woods, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning, Teaching and Student Experience); Prof Simon Banham; Dr Cathryn Charnell-White; Dr Hazel Davey; Mr Prysor Davies (until minute 27); Dr Sarah Davies; Prof Iain Donnison; Dr Rebecca Edwards; Dr Gwion Evans (from minute 27); Dr Sarah Higgins; Prof Nigel Holt; Mr Penri James, Chair of AU Branch of the CCC; Mr Morgan Lewis, UMCA President; Mr Chris Loftus; Dr Alex Mangold (until minute 27.16); Dr Louise Marshall; Mr David Moyle; Mr Nathaniel Pidcock, AberSU President; Prof Eleri Pryse; Prof Phillipp Schofield; Ms Chloe Wilkinson-Silk, AberSU Academic Affairs Officer; Dr Victoria Wright; and Prof Reyer Zwiggelaar, Head of the Graduate School.

Non-voting members: Dr Guy Baron, Prof Simon Cox; Dr Andrew Davies; Prof Andrew Evans; Dr Patrick Finney, Dr Thomas Jansen; Dr Anoush Simon (from minute 27); and Prof Andrew Thomas.

Academic Board members: Dr Stephen Atherton; Prof Joanne Hamilton; and Dr Fred Long.

In attendance: Mrs Kim Bradick, Deputy Registrar – Assurance & Enhancement; Mr Tim Davies, Director of Information Services; Ms Helen Davies, Governance Administrator; Ms Jean Jones, Head of the Vice-Chancellor’s Office (from minute 27); and Ms Emma Williams, Academic Registrar.

Apologies for absence had been received from Ms Rachael Davey; Dr Anwen Jones, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences); Prof Colin McInnes, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research, Knowledge Exchange and Innovation); Prof Robert Meyrick; Mr John Morgan; Mr Geraint Pugh, University Secretary; and Prof Qiang Shen, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Faculty of Business and Physical Sciences); and Ms Sarah Wydall.

25. MATTERS RAISED BY THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

1. Academic Board

Members of the Academic Board had not had an opportunity to consider the proposed amendments to regulations prior in advance of this special meeting of Senate. Those Academic Board members who were not also members of Senate had therefore been invited to attend the meeting, and were encouraged to contribute to discussions.

26. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest were declared during the meeting in relation to the business to be transacted. However, Prof Neil Glasser advised of a conflict of interest after the meeting had ended and provided assurances that he had withdrawn from the discussion once he had identified the conflict and had not participated in the vote.

27. AMENDMENTS TO REGULATION AND ASSOCIATED MEASURES IN RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC

RECEIVED

Report by the Academic Registrar (SEN2021-036).

NOTED

1. The following mitigation measures had been agreed at the November 2020 Academic Board and Senate meetings: students could continue to be able to request extensions and consideration under 'Special Circumstances' arrangements without the need to provide supporting evidence and the 2% 'Window of Opportunity' as operated during the summer of 2020 would be retained for 2020-21.
2. Although adjustments to delivery and assessment had been put in place for 2020-21, the ongoing uncertainty and continued disruption meant that Senate was being asked to consider further adjustments for the current year. This was necessary to ensure that students did not suffer significant detriment, while maintaining academic standards and academic integrity. The proposal would allow further opportunities to improve performance, as well as retaining the slightly more generous Window of Opportunity rule introduced last year.
3. In preparing the proposal the most recent QAA guidance had been taken into account; the Associate Deans (L&T), Faculty Registrars, Students' Union Sabbatical Officers, and the Senate External Reviewer had been consulted; Heads of Department had also been invited to comment on initial suggestions at a meeting on 19 January 2021.
4. The proposals for Part Two of Bachelor's and Integrated Master's awards and UGs on Foundation Degree schemes were as follows:
 - a. Students would be offered uncapped (H indicator) resit opportunities for failures and non-submissions; these must be taken at the earliest opportunity which, in most cases, will be August 2021 unless they have Special Circumstances at that time.
 - b. There would be no cap on the number of credits that students can attempt in August (students failing more than 80 credits would be offered a choice between attempting resits in August or repeating the year; students would be contacted by the Registry after results release to make this offer).
 - c. Students would be offered one further opportunity to improve a mark on any passed module which must be taken in August unless they have Special Circumstances at that time. Students would be required to register in July if they wished to take this opportunity which will be on the basis of no detriment: the higher mark will stand.
 - d. Finalists would be given one opportunity to accept or decline their indicative class on the publication of results at the end of the session (note that this only applied to classified awards). Once an indicative class has been accepted, module marks will be final.
5. Part One of Bachelor's and Integrated Master's awards and the first year of schemes with a foundation year would be offered uncapped (M indicator) resit opportunities for

failures and non-submissions, but NOT to improve pass marks. There would be no cap on the number of credits that students could attempt in August.

6. Taught Postgraduates would be offered uncapped (H indicator) resit opportunities for failures and non-submissions and one opportunity to improve a mark on any passed module including the dissertation. Finalists on classified awards would be given one opportunity to accept or decline their indicative class in June or December 2021.
7. The Window of Opportunity for UGs and PGTs (classified awards): Students whose cascade average falls within 2% of any borderline would be raised to the higher class provided they met the preponderance criteria stated in the Examination Conventions. There would be no Window of Opportunity for special circumstances.
8. The Senate External Reviewer was supportive of the approach proposed noting '*..It would be invidious to create a situation where it would have been better for a student to have failed an assessment than to have passed it; and if uncapped resits are offered to those who have failed, the same must then surely apply to those who have passed..*'
9. The Student Union Sabbatical Officers welcomed the proposal and confirmed that they had been given the opportunity to comment during the drafting.
10. There was support for the proposal from across the Senate membership. The impact on workloads for staff in the summer was a significant concern. The impact on staff mental health and research time were highlighted. Some groups of staff were likely to be affected more than others, for example early career researchers and those who had been advised to focus efforts on developing their research for promotion; it would also narrow the time available for staff to take annual leave.
11. The importance of good communication with students was noted. It was critical that students understood the work needed to improve a mark particularly for those considering resitting passed modules. The workload associated with advising students was 'hidden' in that the data from the summer showed those who had resat, but did not reflect the number of students who had sought advice and subsequently decided not to resit.
12. The Vice Chancellor noted the concerns about workloads, the impact on research and the impact on particular groups of staff and would take discussions about additional resource forward within the Executive.
13. It was suggested that a blank slate approach might address concerns about some students not working as hard because they knew they could better their mark at a later date, although there was a counter argument that knowing they had a safety net would encourage other students to submit in time instead of deferring. It was also noted that a blank slate approach, if offered as the only mitigation, could be less favourable as it would require students to spend an additional year studying with associated fees and costs.
14. A small number of colleagues noted that the measures that had already been put in place should be sufficient mitigation.
15. Under the proposal students, where reattempting might not mitigate against serious ongoing issues, would not be able to be raised in the 2% WOO. A meeting had been arranged for the Coronaregs group the following week and it would be asked to look

again at the approach that might be taken in the case of students with particularly severe special circumstances.

16. It was proposed to extend the supplementary resit period to three weeks, starting a week earlier on 9th August and running to 26th August. This would allow departments more flexibility in setting deadlines and the Senate Examination Board would be moved from 9th to 16th of September to allow more time for marking and the examination process.

RESOLVED

17. By a show of hands the Senate approved the proposals for the amendments to regulations for 2021, with two votes against and one abstention [**ACTION:** Academic Registrar].
18. The proposal to extend the supplementary resit period to three weeks, starting one week earlier in August, and to hold the Senate Examination Board one week later in September was approved unanimously [**ACTION:** Academic Registrar].

KRB 08/02/21