

**MINUTES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL SENATE (SPECIAL MEETING)
WEDNESDAY 22 MAY 2024 / 3.15PM / BRETT BUILDING**

Present:	Professor T Jones (Vice-Chancellor, Chair), Professor T Ali, Dr A Alsalloum, Dr H Arnolds, Professor K Atkinson, Professor J Balogun, Dr M Berenbrink, Professor N Berry, Professor F Beveridge, Professor R Black, Professor J Bridgeman, Professor G Brown, P Brown, Professor I Buchan, Dr V Chauvet, Professor K Coleman, Professor D Colquitt, Dr S Cornell, Professor L Crolley, Professor M D’Onofrio, Professor P Drake, Professor G Endfield, Professor C Eyers, Dr L Gahman, Professor B Gibson, Professor L Harkness-Brennan, Dr N Helassa, Professor A Hollander, Professor D Jeater, Professor D Lane, Dr H Little, Professor G Lynall, Professor A Lyons, Professor D Mair, Professor V Mitsilegas, Professor M O’Flaherty, Professor K O’Halloran, Dr S Parameswaran, Professor E Patterson, Professor I Prior, Professor S Rocha, Professor S Sheard, Professor P Shirlow, Professor R Smith, Professor J Surroca, Professor J Sweeney, Professor T Teubner, Professor M Towsey, Professor W van der Hoek, Professor S Voelkel and Professor F Watkins. Student Representatives: J Barber, R Bradbury, E Campbell, L Dubbins, K Manley, S Mitra and V Samuels.
Apologies:	Professor M Baylis, Dr C Belfrage, Professor K Bennett, Professor R Chiverrell, Professor P Clegg, Dr L Corner, Dr K Furman, Professor M Garcia Finana, Professor L Kenny, Professor B Konev, Professor W Liu, Professor D MacEwan, Professor P McCormick, Professor P Murray, Dr M Rose, Professor H Scott, Professor F Vis, Professor T Walley, Dr B Wilm and Dr J Woolf.
In Attendance:	M Edge (Secretary, Governance, Compliance and Regulatory Manager), Professor L Anderson, Thérèse Choudhary (Project Manager, Strategic Change), R Parkes (Head of Project and Programme Management, Strategic Change), K Ryan (University Secretary and General Counsel) and A Williams (Student Life).

COMMITTEE AND MEMBERSHIP MATTERS

1. Welcome

NOTED:

- i. New Senate member, Professor Deirde Lane, was welcomed to their first meeting.

2. Disclosures of Interest

Members were asked to disclose any interest that could give rise to conflict in relation to any item on the agenda. No such interests were disclosed.

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting

3.1 Minutes of the Meeting Held on 20 March 2024

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- i. The draft minutes from the meeting held 20 March, included as a reference point. The minutes would still need to be presented to the next ordinary meeting of Senate, scheduled for 26 June, for formal approval.

3.2 Matters Arising

3.2.1 *Purpose of Additional Senate Meeting*

REPORTED:

- i. This special meeting had been arranged to enable Senate members to discuss in detail the emerging thinking around the Curriculum Review Project, including any potential changes to the existing credit structure.

4. Curriculum Project Discussion Paper

RECEIVED:

- i. A paper on the direction of travel for the proposed Curriculum Project, which had been identified as one of the immediate priorities for the Education and Student Experience pillar of Liverpool 2031, plus a presentation from the PVC for Education, summarising the key points from the paper.

REPORTED:

- ii. Through wide consultation, the Project proposal consisted of three main elements, namely:
 - a. A new Institutional Learning Framework – that would develop graduates as employable, socially responsible global citizens, emphasising holistic skills alongside disciplinary knowledge.
 - b. A new approach to structuring programmes – that would help manage timetable complexity, both within individual programmes and across related programmes and departments.
 - c. A possible move to a new credit framework – with greater use of larger modules that would present an opportunity to enhance teaching methods for greater efficiency and effectiveness, fostering deeper learning among students and enhancing teaching resilience.

- iii. The drivers for change included:
 - a. *Programme structure and module choice* – the University currently had 113 modules running with five or fewer students. It also currently had 7,653 versions of degree programmes, 5129 of which were unique to one student.
 - b. *Balancing workload* – in the 2019 staff survey, 28% of staff had reported that their workload was too high. High workloads also potentially restricted research time and had a negative impact on staff wellbeing.
 - c. *Timetabling challenges* – streamlining the curriculum presented opportunities for better resource allocation and estate utilisation.
 - d. *Student satisfaction* – the Project presented an opportunity to address low student satisfaction with assessment. In the 2023 NSS, the University had scored 4.5% below benchmark.
 - e. *Uniform data* – analysis of data had suggested inefficiencies in the University’s approach to delivering assessment and exams related activity.

- iv. Through the Curriculum Project, the University aimed to achieve the following objectives:
 - a. Develop clear principles to guide programme development fostering progressive specialisation.
 - b. Develop clear assessment principles providing enhanced guidance to academic teams and addressing over-assessment.
 - c. Review existing module choice with a view to offering guided rationalisation for students and reducing timetable complexity.
 - d. Introduce greater flexibility through the utilisation of hybrid models to enhance programme delivery.
 - e. Review exams and assessment management processes, identifying efficiencies and enhancing user experience.
 - f. Embed key priorities within the design of programmes such as, research-connected teaching, digital and employability skills, and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion.

- v. Key themes that had emerged from the consultation exercise had included:
 - a. Workload Pressures and Resourcing – implementing an institutional curriculum review was a large undertaking and would require significant effort from Academic and Professional Services colleagues in all areas.
 - b. Credit Structure – the Project had consulted on the merits of moving to a 20-credit structure and whilst a number of colleagues supported this move, believing it would reduce workload in the medium term and improve overall alignment and learning outcomes, there were concerns from others that it could generate considerable additional workload in the

short term and potentially negatively impact student choice and access to specialist content.

- c. Learning Framework – there was a broad consensus amongst staff who had provided feedback in relation to the proposed new Institutional Learning Framework, that it would provide greater opportunities to embed key priorities into curriculum design.

- vi. As part of the consultation there were a number of concerns raised that a move to a 20-credit structure might lead to programme closure, it was explained that this was not an objective of the Project. Instead, the goal was to enhance the attractiveness and efficiency of University programmes, especially given the significant financial challenges facing the sector.

NOTED:

- vii. Senate members welcomed the opportunity to discuss in detail the emerging thinking around the Curriculum Project. Whilst some Senate members expressed their support for a proposed move to a 20-credit structure, overall, there were a number of concerns raised from members highlighting the potential additional workload such a proposal could generate, the potential negative student-impact this may have particularly on choice, and concerns that there had not yet been a full risk assessment undertaken on the Project. A number of concerns were also raised around the potential resource implications of moving to a 20-credit structure, and whether the University had undertaken a cost benefit analysis of this.

- viii. Overall, there was a general feeling that the 20-credit structure proposal had overshadowed discussion on other important parts of the Curriculum Project, particularly around the learning framework, programme design and assessment, which should also be a key focus for Senate.

- ix. A number of Senate members also provided their own experiences of successfully implementing other credit structures. There was a feeling amongst a number of members that the University would be able to achieve its objectives without the need to adopt a 20-credit structure.

- x. Overall, there was broad support for the Curriculum Project objectives and a recognition that work was required to improve the University's institutional learning framework and timetabling for the benefit of both staff and students. The principle of reducing assessment, which would support both staff and students, was one that was broadly supported.

- xi. Feedback from the Liverpool Guild of Students representatives welcomed the approach from the University to address a lot of the concerns raised by students regarding timetabling and assessments. The Guild had engaged in this Project through various groups.

- xii. The sector was changing at considerable pace, and there was a need for the University to respond to changing market demands, grow its international PGT student numbers, and to address the considerable challenges of a static Home undergraduate fee by delivering its programmes more efficiently and releasing time for its staff to concentrate on value adding activities. The Curriculum Project had been identified as a key enabler of the objectives within the Education and Student Experience Pillar, helping to address issues identified in student feedback, current curriculum complexities and associated timetabling difficulties.

AGREED:

- xiii. The proposal relating to a change in credit structure did not receive sufficient support overall, noting a number of concerns raised around a potential 20-credit structure, and therefore should not be taken forward.
- xiv. The other two proposals relating to the Institutional Learning Framework and programme structure (timetabling) did receive broad support from Senate, and should therefore be approved.
- xv. An updated paper on next steps should be presented to the next meeting of Senate.

5. Draft Forward Plan of Business

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- i. A copy of the Senate draft forward plan of business for 2023/24.

6. Date of Next Meeting

NOTED:

- i. The next ordinary meeting would be held at 2pm on Wednesday 26 June 2024.