



GA21-M1

Minutes of the meeting held on 09 June 2021.

Attendance

Present:

6 members joined in-person or via Microsoft Teams.

In attendance:

Professor Bob Allison (Chair), Dr Jennifer Nutkins (Secretary), Tanika Dhiri (Assistant Secretary)

21/1 Minutes

GA19-M1

The minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2019 were confirmed as accurate.

21/2 Matters arising from the minutes

There were no matters arising from the minutes.

21/3 Revisions to Statutes

GA19-P1

There had been no revisions to Statutes since November 2019.

20/4 Vice-Chancellor's Report

- 4.1 The Vice-Chancellor reflected on a visit to the School of Social Sciences and Humanities during his first year in post and thanked SSH colleagues for their time and engagement. Thanks were extended to all colleagues for their support throughout the Vice-Chancellor's rewarding time at Loughborough University and he was confident that his successor, Professor Nick Jennings, would receive the same welcome and support.
- 4.2 It had been a challenging year and thanks were extended to all colleagues and the campus trade unions for their continuous efforts throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.
- 4.3 The University had put students and staff at the centre of its pandemic response and had been praised for its internal Track and Trace services. The Vice-Chancellor thanked Alumni for their financial contributions that had allowed the University to provide extensive support for students that were required to self-isolate or were unable to travel home.
- 4.4 On Monday 14 June, there would be an announcement regarding the UK's Covid-19 roadmap out of lockdown. Graduation ceremonies would be able to go ahead in the absence of any lifting of restrictions, however, social activities surrounding the events might be affected.

- 4.5 The current affordability issues related to the USS pension scheme were discussed. The situation was complex and a satisfactory outcome would require University and College Union (UCU), Universities UK (UUK) and the USS Trustee to find a mutually agreeable way forward which was ideally acceptable to the Pensions Regulator. The latter could take action if they did not regard the solution as acceptable and, although the final position of UCU was not yet clear, at this stage a further dispute in the autumn looked likely. Much of the sector was affected by the issue but the liabilities meant that the cost of leaving the scheme was prohibitive to individual institutions. The 2020 valuation of the scheme had been challenged by UCU but the UUK view was that some changes were unavoidable. There was also concern that the scheme had become unaffordable for staff on lower incomes; this could constitute age discrimination and could be challenged in the courts. A more flexible scheme, allowing contributions to be varied during and individual's career could be attractive and increase fairness but fundamental resolution of the problems appeared a long way off at the present time.
- 4.6 The Vice-Chancellor reflected on what the sector was like now compared to when he initially started his career. External regulation had increased and the sector was much more diverse. Recent years had seen constant pressure on resource and the country needed to decide what it wanted from its higher education system and what it was prepared to fund.

21/5 Date of Next Meeting

Spring Term 2021 (TBC)