Senate

10/01 A meeting of the Senate was held in The Nike Theatre, Agriculture Building, Earley Gate, on Wednesday 10 March 2010 at 2.30 pm.

Present:

The Vice-Chancellor

Dr M J Almond
Professor N W Arnell
Revd Dr T R Astin
Professor R K Auchmuty
Professor M A Baker
Dr S Banks
Professor S E Belcher
Professor D C Berry
Professor J C Bignell
Dr I M Bland
Professor C J Bones
Dr R Bonser
Professor G Brooks
Professor R W Chapman
Professor M Clark
Dr B Cosh
Dr J D Creighton
Dr T C Davies
Professor S Dentith
Professor T A Downes
Professor C J H Duggan
Professor S I Edwards
Professor J A Ellis
Professor R H Ellis
Dr M D E Fellowes
Professor P R Ghandhi
Mr R Gibbard
Professor V A Gibson
Dr P J Giddings
Dr M J Gooding
Professor A C Goodwyn
Professor C G Guy
Mr C B Hardman
Professor R G Harrison
Professor B Heuser
Professor C J Hilson
Professor W P Hughes
Professor U S Kambhampati
Dr M-M Kleinhans
Professor P M Leopold

Professor G Marston
Dr P Miskell
Professor G R Mitchell
Professor S J Mithen
Mrs J H Munro
Professor C Newdick
Professor S Nortcliff
Professor R Palmer
Dr J R Park
Professor J Pemberton
Mr T Pitman
Dr C Print
Ms A C Quinn
Professor R L Robson
Mr D M Roch
Dr I F Roe
Dr V F Ruiz
Professor J D Saddy
Dr J E Setter
Ms E A Smith
Professor P J Stratton-Lake
Professor C M Sutcliffe
Mr P G Swallow
Dr F Tallett
Professor J R Tiffin
Professor S F Walker
Dr K H White
Professor A C Williams
Professor C M Williams

The University Secretary

Students:

Ms A Barnes
Ms E Bell
Ms S Brennan
Ms H Bryant
Mr S Combstock
Ms D. Dennis-Betts
Mr T Gilchrist
Ms K Jackson
Mr M Jackson
Ms M Pennyfather
Mr M Szamfeber

In attendance:

Mrs J A Ghandhi
Mr S P R Horan
Dr R J Messer
Mr C Robbins

(* in margin denotes that a copy of the document has been inserted in the Minute Book).

The Vice-Chancellor paid tribute to Mrs S.J. Rayner who had died since the last meeting of the Senate. Sue Rayner had been appointed to the then Press and Information Office in 1994 and became Communications Manager in 1998. She had held the title of Director of Communications at the time of her death.

The Senate stood in her memory.

* 10/02 The Minutes (09/89-09/109) of the Meeting held on 2 December 2009 were confirmed and signed.

Arising on the Minutes:

Minute 09/95: Report of the University Board for Teaching and Learning

It was reported that the Chairman had agreed on behalf of the University Board for Teaching and Learning and the Vice-Chancellor had agreed on behalf of the Senate that an MSc programme in Data Assimilation and Inverse Modelling in Geosciences be introduced with effect from October 2010.

10/03 Reports of Committees of Selection (Item 2(a))

The Senate received the following reports of Committees of Selection:

* (i) Professorship of Applied Mathematics
* (ii) Professorship of Biomedical Sciences
* (iii) Professorship (part-time) of Biomedical Sciences
* (iv) Readership in Organisational Behaviour.

10/04 Elections (Item 2(b))

Nomination by the Senate of one member of the Academic Staff to serve on the standing Restructuring Committee established by the Council in anticipation of likely recommendations for reductions in numbers of Academic and other staff arising from the Project for the Reshaping of the University:
It was reported that one nomination had been received, that of Professor S. Nortcliff. Accordingly, Professor Nortcliff had been appointed to the standing Restructuring Committee by the President on behalf of the Council.

10/05 Report of the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor outlined the national economic context, its impact on the HE sector, and the effect that this was likely to have on the University of Reading.

The national economy was entering uncharted territory with a Public Sector Borrowing Requirement higher than ever before and the prospect of an emergency Budget, possibly two, and a Comprehensive Spending Review immediately following the impending General Election. Constraints on public spending seemed likely to persist for best part of a decade.

Funding for higher education and the UK science base had not attracted the level of protection afforded to other sectors and, in consequence, HEFCE had already foreshadowed cuts of 12.6% over three years in recurrent grant together with a reduction of 57% in capital spending. The Government appeared to have no plans for restorative action save for holding out unrealistic levels of hope that the outcome of the Browne Review of Variable Tuition Fees might provide a panacea for all the financial ills of the sector.

At Reading, the three-year planning process had been completed but any announcement of the provisional outcomes had been delayed until the University received its annual HEFCE grant letter in mid-March. Nonetheless, the University faced the future in better shape than many of its competitors. Its academic portfolio was well-balanced, it had rightly fought shy of becoming involved in short-term, superficially attractive, Government initiatives, its estate had undergone marked improvement and the merger with Henley Management College had been a success. The University’s enviable asset base had been well-stewarded and enabled prudent borrowing which underpinned certain major capital developments. Astute financial forecasting had anticipated many of the cuts now facing the sector and the Strategy and Finance Committee had agreed deficit budgets for a period of two, possibly three, years to enable the University to maintain its pursuit of excellence whilst reshaping its activities for the future.

In conclusion, the Vice-Chancellor reminded the Senate of the wealth of achievement that was to be found described on the University website, within press releases, and in the latest edition of Research Review. Alluding to recent events which had beset the University of East Anglia, he expressed confidence in the quality and integrity of the research carried out in all areas of the University.

10/06 Report of the Strategy and Finance Committee (Item 4(a))

* The Senate received the report of the meeting of the Strategy and
Finance Committee held on 1 March 2010 and deferred substantive discussion of the matters contained therein until Item 4(b) below.

10/07 Report of the Senior Management Board: 30 November and 14 December 2009, 11 and 26 January 2010 and 8 February 2010 (Item 4(b))


In regard to item 2 (Report of the Review of the Centre for Advanced Computing and Emerging Technologies (ACET)), item 3 (Report of the Review of the School of Systems Engineering) and item 3 (Report from the Project Board for the Reshaping of the University), the Senate received the Report of the Review of the Centre for Advanced Computing and Emerging Technologies (ACET), the Report of the Review of the School of Systems Engineering and a Report of the Project Board for the Reshaping of the University and approved a recommendation that Applied Statistics (including the Statistical Services Centre) be moved from the School of Biological Sciences into the School of Mathematics, Meteorology and Physics, specifically to be combined with the Department of Mathematics, with effect from 1 August 2010.

In consequence of these Reports it was to be recommended by the Strategy and Finance Committee on the proposal of the Senior Management Board to the Council:

(a) That there be a reduction in the permanent Academic Staff of the School of Systems Engineering of between six and twelve FTEs and that, in consequence, a Restructuring Committee be established in line with Statute XXXIII Part II and the University’s Review and Restructuring Policy;

(b) That a reduction in permanent support staff of the School Systems Engineering of between five and ten FTEs be included within the remit of the proposed Restructuring Committee;

(c) That within the School of Biological Sciences

REDACTED S.40(2)

(i) in Environmental Biology, there be a reduction of between three and five Academic Staff and that, in consequence, a Restructuring Committee be established in line with Statute XXXIII Part II and the University’s Review and Restructuring Policy; and

(ii) in Biomedical Sciences, there be a reduction of between two and four Academic Staff and that, in consequence, a Restructuring Committee be established in line with Statute XXXIII Part II and the University’s Review and Restructuring Policy; and
(d) That within the Department of Chemistry, there be a reduction of between two and four Academic Staff (REDACTED S.40(2)) and that, in consequence, a Restructuring Committee be established in line with Statute XXXIII Part II and the University’s Review and Restructuring Policy.

Following introductions to each Report from either the Deputy Vice-Chancellor or Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Williams) as appropriate, members of the School of Systems Engineering expressed disappointment at the outcome of the Review of that School and sought clarification regarding the circumstances of the acquisition, and subsequent commercial underperformance, of the JS21 supercomputer within ACET. Further discussion related largely to staff/student and income/expenditure ratios in the affected areas with contributions from inter alia the Dean of the Faculty of Life Sciences, the Head of the School of Biological Sciences and the Head of the School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy. In the matter of the JS21 supercomputer, the Vice-Chancellor explained that the decision to proceed had been taken by the Senior Management Board with the express encouragement of the Strategy and Finance Committee to be alert to such an opportunity, and that the process had since been the subject of independent audit. In regard to ratios, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor explained that in areas where QR income was low the staff/student ratio was likely to be high since correspondingly less staff time could be spared for research.

At the conclusion of the discussion, the Vice-Chancellor reminded the Senate that it had the opportunity to formulate a collective view in the matter that he, as its Chairman, would convey to the Council but, since so few members of the Senate had spoken on the substance of the proposals in the course of an unusually well-attended meeting, he found it difficult to detect a consensus. Two members, Revd Dr Timothy Astin and Ms Sinead Brennan, summarised their positions in final contributions from the floor and the Vice-Chancellor undertook to report these to the Council.

Dr Astin, speaking as a member elected by the Academic Staff, considered that the case for reductions in the numbers of staff by other than voluntary means had not been adequately made and that, particularly in respect of Biological Sciences and Chemistry where full Reviews had not been conducted, the Senate was being asked, unreasonably in his view, to comment on outcomes that were unsupported by evidence. He suggested that the reshaping exercise took the University on a new and divisive path, fraught with peril for all parties and beyond the experience of any of its members.

Ms Brennan, President of the Students’ Union, reiterated a concern expressed earlier in the meeting by a fellow student that reductions in the numbers of staff allied to increases in student numbers would impact adversely on the quality of the student experience. She expressed the support of the Students’ Union for the Reading
branch of the University and College Union (UCU) which she understood was pressing the University to engage in consultation with staff and their representatives at the earliest possible opportunity with a view to avoiding involuntary redundancies.

In conclusion, the Vice-Chancellor offered the view that the issues now before the Senate had been fully considered; that a strategic approach to the reshaping exercise was in the long-term interests of the University; and that, throughout its history, the University had always sought to arrange matters such that it pursued academic excellence. Further comments on these observations – and on the substantive recommendations of the Strategy and Finance Committee to the Council – were invited but none were forthcoming. A suggestion from Dr Bland that the Senate proceed to a vote in the matter of its comment to the Council attracted no support.

In regard to item 6 (Review of Research and Enterprise Services), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Williams) explained the background to the recent re-organisation of Research and Enterprise Services and described the future, more developmental, emphasis for this important function.

10/08 **Report of the University Board for Teaching and Learning** (Item 5(a))

* The Senate approved the Report of the meetings of the University Board for Teaching and Learning held on 13 January and 25 February 2010 and agreed to recommend to the Council alterations to Ordinance III (Degrees Diplomas and Certificates) and Ordinance LV (Degrees of Master (Postgraduate)) to provide for the degree of Master in Teaching and Learning.

10/09 **Report of the University Board for Research** (Item 5(b))

* The Senate approved the Report of the meeting of the University Board for Research held on 18 February 2010.

10/10 **Report of the University Board for Enterprise** (Item 5(c))

* The Senate approved the Report of the meeting of the University Board for Enterprise held on 16 February 2010.

10/11 **Report of the Management Board of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities** (Item 5(d))

* The Senate approved the Report of the meetings of the Management Board of the Faculty of Arts and Humanities held on 20 January and 18 February 2010.
The Senate approved the Report of the meetings of the Management Board of the Faculty of Social Sciences held on 21 January and 17 February 2010.

The Senate approved the Report of the meetings of the Management Board of the Faculty of Life Sciences held on 10 December 2009 and 28 January 2010.

The Senate approved the Report of the meetings of the Management Board of the Faculty of Science held on 10 December 2009 and 20 January 2010.


The Senate received the Report of the Deputy and Pro-Vice-Chancellor Committee and agreed to recommend to the Council that:

- Professor T.A. Downes be re-appointed as Deputy Vice-Chancellor for the period from 1 August 2010 to 31 July 2014;
- Professor R.L. Robson be re-appointed as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for the period from 1 August 2010 to 31 July 2014; and
- Professor S.J. Mithen be appointed as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for the period from 1 August 2010 to 31 July 2014.

The Senate approved the Report of the meeting of the Advisory Board for Library Services held on 8 February 2010.

Professor Chapman asked that members draw the attention of their colleagues to the paper entitled University Library – roles and priorities as appended to the Report.
10/18  Report on behalf of the Standing Disciplinary Committee on
disciplinary sanctions imposed in the Autumn Term 2009 (Item 5(k))

* The Senate approved the Report on behalf of the Standing
Disciplinary Committee on disciplinary sanctions imposed in the
Autumn Term 2009.

10/19  Report of the Joint University/UCU Committee (Item 5(l))

* The Senate approved the Report of the meeting of the Joint
University/UCU Committee held on 9 February 2010.

10/20  Retirement of a Professor (Item 6(b))

The Senate agreed to recommend to the Council that under the
provisions of Ordinance XXIV the title of Professor Emeritus be
conferred upon Professor G. Jeronimidis with effect from 1 April
2010.