Senate

11/80  A meeting of the Senate was held in The Nike Theatre, Agriculture Building, Earley Gate, on Wednesday 7 December 2011 at 2.15 pm.

Present:  

The Acting Vice-Chancellor

Dr M J Almond  
Professor R K Auchmuty  
Dr J W Bell  
Professor D C Berry  
Professor J C Bignell  
Professor J Board  
Professor G Brooks  
Dr L T Butler  
Professor R W Chapman  
Dr B Cosh  
Dr J D Creighton  
Mr J Doak  
Professor C J H Duggan  
Professor J A Ellis  
Professor R H Ellis  
Dr M D E Fellowes  
Mr R Gibbard  
Professor V A Gibson  
Professor M J Gooding  
Professor A C Goodwyn  
Professor S D Green  
Dr P E Hatcher  
Dr W C Hayes  
Dr O Kennedy  
Professor P Kruschwitz  
Dr M E Lewis  
Professor K Liu  
Dr T Macfadyen  
Professor G Marston  
Dr R McBain  
Dr P Miskell  
Professor S J Mithen  
Mrs J H Munro  

Professor H M Osborn  
Mr T Pitman  
Professor R L Robson  
Professor A Rugman  
Dr R S Sherratt  
Professor C M S Sutcliffe  
Dr A P Tonkyn  
Professor G H Tucker  
Professor P J van Leeuwen  
Professor A C Williams  
Professor C M Williams  
Dr P E Woodman  

The University Secretary

Students:

Mr M Chimbombi  
Ms C Dalziel  
Mr B Haines  
Mr A Hartley  
Mr K Hobley  
Ms S Johnson  
Mr J Legon  
Mr A Slater  

In attendance:

Mr S P R Horan  
Dr R J Messer  

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

The Acting Vice-Chancellor paid tribute to the following who had died since the last meeting of the Senate:
Emeritus Professor Frank Bisby, who had been appointed Professor of Botany in 1997 and retired formally in 2010 but was continuing to work on research projects for the University at the time of his death.

Mr Robert Cook, who had been appointed in 1934 and had retired as Lecturer in Agricultural Economics in 1977.

Emeritus Professor Eric Faulkner, who had been appointed in 1960 and had retired as Professor of Solid State Electronics in 1986.

The Senate stood in memory of these former colleagues.

*11/81 The Minutes (11/58-11/71) of the meeting held on 12 October 2011 and the Minutes (11/78-11/79) of the Special Meeting held on 17 October 2011 were confirmed and signed.

11/82 Reports of Committees of Selection (Item 2(a))

The Senate received the following Reports of Committees of Selection:

* (i) Director of IT Services
* (ii) Readership in Environmental Economics.

11/83 Elections (Item 2(b))

Appointment of one member of the Senate not being a registered student of the University to the Council. The Senate received a report that one nomination had been received and that, accordingly

Dr B. Cosh

had been appointed by the Senate to membership of the Council in Class 4 for the period ending 31 July 2014.

11/84 Report of the Acting Vice-Chancellor

The Acting Vice-Chancellor reported that:

(a) the University was to be awarded its fourth Queen’s Anniversary Prize, on this occasion for work in Typography & Graphic Communication. In addition, University staff (Professor Mark Pagel and Dr James Ferryman) had been shortlisted in two categories for The Times Higher Education Awards and, although ultimately unsuccessful, had been in distinguished company and had attracted welcome publicity.

(b) Sir David Bell had been familiarising himself with the University prior to his taking up office as Vice-Chancellor in January 2012. Sir David had
already met with the members of the Senior Management Board and had engaged with staff, students and visitors at a recent Open Day.

(c) the University had exceeded its control number for Home and EU undergraduate admissions in October 2011 and the financial consequences of this were as yet unknown. Applications for admission in October 2012 bore favourable comparison with 2011, were thus far exceeding those for 2010 and, overall, remained of a reassuringly high quality. In response to questions, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Robson) explained that it was not yet possible to quantify the shifting balance between Home and EU applications and that no firm conclusions could yet be reached in regard to the popularity or otherwise of particular subjects.

(d) in the past fortnight, the University had enjoyed a period of unparalleled success in securing research grants and contracts from most of the major funders and across a wide spread of subject areas. The University now occupied a place in absolute terms amongst the top twenty institutions in receipt of Research Council grants and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Williams) commented that this performance was greatly to the credit of the academic staff of the University and to those administrative colleagues who supported them.

(e) in regard to the Halls Transfer Project, the partners had now embarked upon the obligatory two-week ‘standstill’ period required by the procurement process. There was confidence that the arrangement between the University and University Partnerships Programme (UPP) would be concluded at the end of this period and that, in consequence, capital would become available for academic investment of a strategic nature.

(f) an opportunity had arisen for an exchange of contracts in relation to the University’s Iskandar development on Sunday 11 December 2011 in the presence of the Malaysian Prime Minister. Thereafter, completion remained subject to the approval of the University Council in the Spring Term 2011.

(g) the Chancellor of the Exchequer’s Autumn Statement had revealed little in regard to universities. It had however disclosed that Treasury modelling of average fees from 2012 assumed an amount above that which it had originally been targeting. There was a risk therefore that the additional cost to the Treasury loan book would be taken from the HEFCE settlement and this, in turn, meant that universities did not yet know what additional income if any there would be from HEFCE for teaching, especially in the sciences. There remained concern that what was provided would not be sufficient. Elsewhere, Opposition proposals had emerged for a “fully funded” fee cap at £6,000, though this was unlikely to translate into manifesto pledge for the next election.

(h) A White Paper on Research and Innovation, to be published shortly, was expected to focus more on innovation than on research.
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Mithen) had recently returned from a successful visit to Nigeria and Ghana. The recently published brochure promoting the University’s many links with Africa bore testament to its work in and about Africa, much of it of long standing. Colleagues from across the University would imminently be travelling to a Sudan Symposium and an Africa Forum in January 2012 would further raise the University’s profile and promote its achievements in this area.

The Promoting Excellence Project, which was intended to enable staff to fulfill their potential by setting and communicating expectations, building management and leadership capability, linking performance to reward and modernising procedures was underway and gaining momentum. Heads of School and Directorate had already received a briefing and the Senate could expect to hear more in due course.

The Institute of Education had begun its move from Bulmershe Court to London Road and the Senate joined the Acting Vice-Chancellor in acknowledging the significance of this important development and in wishing colleagues well.

In conclusion, Professor Downes thanked all who those had assisted him throughout his period as Acting Vice-Chancellor, and expressed his appreciation for the many personal messages of support he had received.

11/85 Senior Management Board: 10 and 24 October and 7 and 21 November 2011 (Item 4)

* The Senate received a Report of the meetings of the Senior Management Board held on 10 and 24 October and 7 and 21 November 2011 and approved the recommendations contained therein.

In regard to item 5 (Structure of the Academic Year), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Robson) provided reassurance in response to a question from Professor Berry that the Working Group would pay due regard to the particular position of research.

In regard to item 6 (Report of the Faculty Offices Working Party), the Acting Vice-Chancellor expanded upon the rationale for the structural changes that it had been agreed be made with effect from 1 August 2012. In response to questions he explained that a review of the extenuating circumstances process was to be undertaken without delay, that a detailed project plan would underpin the physical bringing together of the functions currently performed in individual Offices and that space for the resulting Joint Office would be readily available within the Carrington Building in an area that had been occupied until recently by a Centre for Excellence in Teaching and Learning (CETL).

11/86 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 12 July, 22 September, 19 October and 7 and 24 November 2011.

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Robson) drew attention to the valuable contribution made to Periodic Review by large numbers of colleagues and noted the importance to the University of the impending QAA Institutional Review. As one of the first institutions to be subjected to the newly introduced methodology it had much to gain and approached the exercise with confidence.

Concluding his final remarks to the Senate as Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor Robson thanked all those who had helped him throughout his tenure. In turn the Acting Vice-Chancellor, thanked Professor Robson for his many achievements across a broad range of teaching and learning activities and the Senate responded with acclamation.

11/87  Report of the University Board for Research and Innovation (Item 5(b))

* The Senate approved the Report of the meeting of the University Board for Research and Innovation held on 23 November 2011.

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Williams) drew attention to the growing significance of Doctoral Training Centres as a distinctive mark of research intensity. More generally, she observed that Reading now occupied thirteenth place (of eighteen) amongst 94 Group universities in terms of research income per FTE and commented that this was an uncomfortable position which the University was pledged to address. It had always been intended that a period of investment should follow the conclusion of the reshaping project and this was now gaining momentum.

Professor Berry reminded the Senate that a draft code of practice relating to the selection of staff for inclusion in the forthcoming Research Excellence Framework was currently under consideration by relevant committees. This would set out a binding procedure that was both fair and transparent and must not be pre-empted prior to approval and promulgation.

11/88 Report of the Management Board of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Science (Item 5(c))

* The Senate approved the Report of the meetings of the Management Board of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Science held on 19 October and 16 November 2011, the first such report from the newly merged Faculty.

11/89  Report of the Management Board of the Faculty of Life Sciences (Item 5(d))

* The Senate approved the Report of a meeting of the Management Board of the Faculty of Life Sciences held on 28 September 2011 and a meeting of the Board held jointly with the Management Board of the Faculty of Science on 16 November 2011, subject to the correction of “….a ’2+2’ BSc Applied
Chemistry…..” to read “….a ‘3+1’ BSc Applied Chemistry…..” in the context of collaboration with Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology.

11/90 Report of the Management Board of the Faculty of Science (Item 5(e))

* The Senate approved the Report of a meeting of the Management Board of the Faculty of Science held on 13 October 2011 and a meeting of the Board held jointly with the Management Board of the Faculty of Life Sciences on 16 November 2011.

11/91 Report of the Management Board of the Henley Business School (Item 5(f))

* The Senate approved the Report of the meetings of the Management Board of the Henley Business School held on 24 June, 13 September, 20 October and 16 November 2011.

11/92 Report of the Research Ethics Committee for 2010-11 (Item 5(g))

* The Senate received, and for its part approved, the Report of the Research Ethics Committee for 2010-11.

11/93 Retirements (Item 6(c))

The Senate noted the retirement of the following members of the Academic Staff and agreed to recommend to the Council that each be accorded the title of Honorary Fellow with effect from 1 January 2012 until his or her normal retirement date:

Mrs C.A. Davidson
Dr M.L. Parsons
Ms B.M. Richards.

11/94 Thanks to the Acting Vice-Chancellor

On behalf of the Senate, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Williams) thanked Professor Downes for the skill and dedication he had brought to the role of Acting Vice-Chancellor since 1 August 2011. The Senate responded with acclamation.

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[Student representatives withdrew from the remainder of the meeting]
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