A meeting of the Senate was held in The Nike Theatre, Agriculture Building, Earley Gate, on Wednesday 4 December 2013 at 2.15 pm.

Present:

The Vice-Chancellor

Professor Matthew Almond
Dr Maarten Ambaum
Dr Karen Ayres
Dr Jonathan Bell
Professor Jonathan Bignell
Ms Helen Bilton
Professor John Board
Professor Gavin Brooks
Dr Laurie Butler
Professor Peter Byrne
Professor Simon Chandler-Wilde
Dr David Carter
Dr Ben Cosh
Dr John Creighton
Mr Joe Doak
Professor Richard Frazier
Dr Clare Furneaux
Mr Roger Gibbard
Professor Ginny Gibson
Professor Roberta Gilchrist
Professor Paul Glaister
Professor Mike Gooding
Professor Andy Goodwyn
Professor Stuart Green
Dr Paul Hatcher
Professor Chris Hilson
Mr Bruce Howell
Dr Eileen Hyder
Dr Orla Kennedy
Professor Peter Kruschwitz
Dr Liam McGiffin
Professor George Marston
Professor Geoff Meen

Professor Steven Mithen
Professor Helen Osborn
Professor Julian Park
Dr Ben Potter
Dr John Preston
Professor Ros Richards
Professor Patricia Riddell
Professor Virginie Ruiz
Professor Françoise Le Saux
Dr Libby Schweber
Professor Simon Sherratt
Professor David Stack
Mr Richard Tranter
Professor Hugo Tucker
Professor Sue Walker
Dr Susan Walsh
Professor Adrian Williams
Professor Christine Williams

The University Secretary

Students:
Mr Mark Kelleher
Ms Emma Jackson

Faculty Representatives:
Mr Florian Marcus (AH&SS)
Mr Scott Tytheridge (LS)
Mr Anup Kocheril Kurian (S)

In attendance:
Dr Richard Messer

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

The Vice-Chancellor paid tribute to the following who had died since the last meeting of the Senate:

Dr Simon Booth who had been appointed Senior Lecturer in Management
Studies in 1989 and had been Vice-Dean (International) of the Henley Business School at the time of his death.

Mr Ian Wallace who had been appointed Lecturer in the Agricultural Extension and Rural Development Centre in 1985 and had retired in 2000.

The Senate stood in memory of these former colleagues.

*13/72 The Minutes (13/51-13/64) of the meeting held on 16 October 2013 were confirmed and signed.

13/73 Report of a Committee of Selection (Item 2(a))

* The Senate received the Report of the Committee of Selection for an Associate Professorship in Accounting and Financial Management.

13/74 Elections (Item 2(b))

Election of twelve Professors to the Senate: The Senate received a report that, subsequent to its last meeting, one further nomination had been received, that of:

Professor Simon Sherratt.

Accordingly, the Vice-Chancellor, acting on behalf of the Senate, had agreed that Professor Sherratt additionally be deemed elected to serve for the period to 31 July 2014. No vacancies now remained.

13/75 Report of the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor addressed the Senate (copy inserted in Minute Book) and noted in particular that:

(a) the consequences of an overall shortfall in admissions against forecast were being addressed both in budgetary terms and in the setting of future recruitment targets. In the course of a recent visit to the University, the Chairman of HEFCE had suggested that the present regime which combined capped with uncapped student numbers was likely to persist in its fundamentals for the foreseeable future;

(b) the introduction of a changed funding model for initial teaching education had affected Postgraduate Certificate in Education programmes to the extent that some institutions were withdrawing from the activity altogether. At Reading, the Institute of Education continued to compete effectively but the Vice-Chancellor had spoken publicly on the matter and Universities UK was lobbying Government;
(c) the University's submission to the Research Assessment Framework 2014 had been made on Friday 29 November and thanks were due to all who had contributed under the leadership of Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Williams). Preparations for the next such exercise, most notably around the impact of research, must perforce begin without delay;

(d) a consultation exercise on education and training in Pharmacy carried the implication that student numbers in this area might in future be capped;

(e) universities were newly required to prepare an integrated access and widening participation statement, work on which was in hand;

(f) the Office of Fair Trading had begun to pay closer attention than hitherto to universities, bringing a new dimension the regulatory landscape;

(g) detailed guidance from Universities UK on External speakers in higher education institutions had recently been published and would inform the University's approach to this sensitive issue;

(h) a recent visit by a delegation of colleagues to China, led by the Vice-Chancellor, had seen at first hand some of the University's activities and collaborations in that country and had identified further opportunities for future partnerships.

In response to a question from Professor Kruschwitz, the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that he was not aware of any substance attaching to recent press reports that a significant reduction in student funding was being contemplated by Government.

13/76 Strategy and Finance Committee: 25 November 2013 (Item 4(a))

* The Senate received the Report of the meeting of the Strategy and Finance Committee held on 25 November 2013. In regard to the proposal that a School of Architecture be established, the Senate had been invited to formulate a view for transmission to the Council.

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Brooks) explained that the introduction of Architecture into the University’s academic portfolio would fit well with existing expertise in a number of related professional areas, would attract significant numbers of well-qualified and employable students to Reading and would confer both reputational and competitive advantage. Similar arguments had applied to the successful introduction of Pharmacy some years earlier.

Expressing a concern that the introduction of a new specialist discipline to the University had the potential to weaken other academic areas in the context of the overall levels of resource available, Dr Hatcher questioned the speed at which it was realistic to assume that reputation and market share would be won. Professor Brooks pointed to the distinctive and differentiated nature of the programme that had been designed and noted that the School of Pharmacy, to which similar arguments had
applied, had quickly become one of the University’s highest recruiting areas. Professor Green commented that the School of Construction Management and Engineering already had strong links with the architectural profession and the clients it served, thus enabling the University to enter the market with an early advantage and considerable confidence. In voicing their strong support for the proposal, other members of the Senate suggested that the distinctiveness of the programme, incorporating as it did the opportunity to study abroad, would be further enhanced by synergy with other disciplines such as Classics and Archaeology which drew upon architecture in ways that might not immediately be apparent.

The Senate agreed that the draft minute of its discussion be conveyed in extenso to the Council at its meeting on 24 January 2014 by way of comment.

13/77 University Executive Board: 14, 28 October, 11, 18 and 25 November 2013 (Item 4(b))

* The Senate received a Report of the meetings of the University Executive Board held on 28 October, 11 and 25 November 2013 and approved the recommendations contained therein.

In regard to item 2 (Review of IT Services), Dr Cosh commented that the timetable which had been set appeared ambitious. The Vice-Chancellor assured that Senate that the thoroughness of the exercise would not be compromised.

In regard to item 5 (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Incentive Fund for Principal Investigators), Professor Chandler-Wilde stated, as Head of the School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences, that he understood the reasons for modifying the scheme but regretted certain of its consequences for the University’s most successful grant earners.

In regard to item 6 (Library Opening Hours), the Vice-Chancellor noted that the introduction of 24-hour opening to the University Library had proved popular with students. The striking effects of the Library Refurbishment Programme could already be seen and a further phase was planned for Summer 2014.

13/78 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 16 October and 21 November 2013 and agreed to recommend to the Council alterations to Ordinance XLV (University Board for Teaching and Learning) to provide for increased representation of students on the Faculty Boards for Teaching and Learning.

In regard to item 7 (Turnaround times for feedback to students and communication of assessment criteria), members of the Senate raised a number of concerns including the applicability of the fifteen ‘working’ day standard to periods when Academic Staff were taking annual leave and the potentially deleterious effect that the imposition of the standard might have on the quality of formative feedback. Contrariwise, others spoke of the importance of the University providing a clearly defined level of service to students in an increasingly competitive environment and
of the relative freedom enjoyed by Academic Staff to vary the nature and timing of assessment in such a way as to mesh with their other commitments. On behalf of the Students’ Union, the President explained that from his perspective the intention behind the proposals was to achieve a culture shift by means of an institution-wide benchmark. Professor Park undertook to convey the issues that had been raised to the Implementation Group established to oversee and monitor the matter.

13/79 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 20 November 2013.

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Williams) described the University’s submission to the Research Excellence Framework 2014 in numbers and thanked all those from across the University who had contributed to the exercise. The Senate, in turn, expressed its thanks to Professor Williams for her leadership.

13/80 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 17 October and 13 November 2013.

13/81 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 25 September 2013 and a meeting of the Board held jointly with the Management Board of the Faculty of Science on 13 November 2013.

13/82 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 10 October 2013 and a meeting of the Board held jointly with the Management Board of the Faculty of Life Sciences on 13 November 2013.

In regard to item 2 (University Strategy), the Dean drew attention to a number of questions and concerns raised by the Management Board of his Faculty. In particular, he sought to reflect the Faculty’s view that the approach taken thus far within the efficiency and effectiveness strand appeared to be insufficiently inclusive and would be the stronger if a means could be found for the voice of those in Faculties and Schools to be heard and their input heeded. Heads of School and others spoke in support of this view. The Vice-Chancellor assured the Senate that more widespread engagement and fuller articulation were his immediate priorities and that a two-way communication process would commence early in 2014.
13/83  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 22 October and 13 November 2013.

13/84  Report of the Research Ethics Committee for 2012-13 (Item 5(g))

* The Senate received, and for its part approved, the Report of the Research Ethics Committee for 2012-13.

13/85  Retirement of Professors

The Senate agreed to recommend to the Council that under the provisions of Ordinance XXIV Professor Chris Garforth be accorded the title of Professor Emeritus with effect from 1 January 2014.

13/86  Other Retirements

The Senate agreed to recommend to the Council that Dr Sara Poole be accorded the title of Honorary Fellow for a period of five years with effect from 1 November 2013.