Senate

14/01 A meeting of the Senate was held in The Nike Theatre, Agriculture Building, Earley Gate, on Wednesday 12 March 2014 at 2.15 pm.

Present:

The Vice-Chancellor

Professor Matthew Almond
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 Ann Chippindale
Dr Ben Cosh
Dr John Creighton
Professor Tony Downes
Professor Richard Ellis
Professor Richard Frazier
Professor Abby Ghobadian
Professor Ginny Gibson
Professor Mike Gooding
Professor Andy Goodwyn
Professor Stuart Green
Dr Paul Hatcher
Professor Chris Hilson
Mr Bruce Howell
Dr Eileen Hyder
Professor Peter Kruschwitz
Professor Paul Luna
Dr Elizabeth McCrum
Professor George Marston
Professor Roger Matthews
Professor Geoff Meen
Professor Steven Mithen
Mrs Susan Mott
Professor Helen Osborn
Professor Julian Park
Dr Ben Potter
Professor Shirley Reynolds
Professor Ros Richards
Professor Virginie Ruiz
Professor Simon Sherratt
Professor David Stack
Professor Philip Stratton-Lake
Professor Hugo Tucker
Professor Sue Walker
Professor Adrian Williams
Professor Christine Williams

The University Secretary

Students:

Ms Emma Jackson
Mr Josh Cave

Faculty Representatives:

Mr Scott Tytheridge (LS)
Mr Anup Kocheril Kurian (S)

In attendance:

Mr David Savage
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:

Mr Peter Kalkhof who had been appointed Lecturer in Fine Art in 1966 and had retired in 1999.
14/02 The Minutes (13/71-13/86) of the meeting held on 4 December 2013 were confirmed and signed.

14/03 New Year Honours

The Senate received a report that the following appointment had been made in the New Year Honours List:

DBE – Dr Alison Carnwath, Chairman of Land Securities and an honorary graduate of this University (HonLLD, 2010), for services to Business.

DBE – Professor Julia Slingo, OBE, Chief Scientist at the Meteorological Office, sometime Professor of Meteorology in this University, currently Visiting Professor in the School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences and an honorary graduate (HonDSc, 2011), for services to Weather and Climate Science.

OBE – Professor James Knowlson, Professor Emeritus of French and a graduate and honorary graduate (HonDLitt, 2006) of this University, for services to Literary Scholarship.

OBE – Cllr Paul Swaddle, representative of Wokingham Borough Council on the University Council from 2009 until 2011 and a graduate of this University, for voluntary political service.

MBE – Professor Peter Lansley, Professor Emeritus of Construction Management and a graduate of this University, for services to Research into Ageing and Well-being of Older People.

14/04 Reports of Committees of Selection (Item 2(b))

The Senate received the following Reports of Committees of Selection:

* (i) Associate Professorship in Accounting
* (ii) Head of Strategic Projects
* (iii) Head of Admissions.

14/05 Report of the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor addressed the Senate (copy inserted in Minute Book), referring in particular to:

(a) the unknowable effects of the removal by Government of the cap on student numbers which he believed might represent an opportunity for the University to increase student numbers provided such growth was
accompanied by a nuanced approach to entry grades for individual programmes but which upheld standards overall. Meanwhile, the immediate priority remained to attract as many well-qualified students to Reading as possible in present context which saw Home undergraduate applications down and overseas applications holding steady. Colleagues throughout the University were to be commended for their teamwork in ensuring that a positive impression was presented at all times;

(b) the contribution made by the Faculty Management Boards to refining a final version of the University Strategy which would shortly be disseminated in a range of formats. Meanwhile, information had been circulated to staff on the work that came within the compass of the Efficiency and Effectiveness theme;

(c) significant investment in technology-enhanced learning which was intended to render the University’s existing provision more pervasive and thus to maximise its reputation in this area. Alongside this, over 70,000 individuals had now registered for the University’s Massive Open-Online Courses (MOOCs) which enjoyed a sector-leading position;

(d) a bid to the HEFCE Catalyst Fund to create an Institute for Environmental Analytics which, if successful, would enable the University to foster commercial applications in certain of its key areas of expertise;

(e) the recent submission to the Chinese Ministry of Education of an application for a UK/China College, a partnership with the Nanjing University of Information Science and Technology which, if successful, would lead to a suite of dual-award programmes;

(f) the welcome extent to which Schools and Services had aligned their Three-Year Plans to the themes suggested by the University Strategy. The outcome of the Three-Year Planning Exercise for 2014-17 had recently been communicated to Heads of School and Service and had been conditioned by the need to maintain a contingency (of £1.75m) and to return an operating surplus (of not less than £1m) for the financial year ending 31 July 2015;

(g) the University’s Estate Strategy for the coming period which was to be submitted to the Council for approval at its meeting on 24 March 2014. Feasibility work was already underway in anticipation of a number of key capital projects;

(h) a recently published HEFCE Report on the Financial Sustainability of Universities in 2012-13 which had suggested that institutions with strong balance sheets, such as Reading, would be those most obviously destined to prosper in the future provided they could demonstrate their ability to live, operationally, within their means. In this context, the forthcoming triennial valuation of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) appeared likely to
bring substantial new pressures to bear;

(i) the success of colleagues in bringing distinction to themselves and to the University through the award of national and international prizes and other tangible marks of recognition;

(j) the commitment of the University to ensuring that enforced gender segregation did not take place at any public event under its control; and

(k) the interest in universities that had newly been taken by the Office of Fair Trading and the commitment of that Office to work with institutions to manage any increased regulatory burden that might result.

In response to a question from Professor Hilson, the Vice-Chancellor explained that the commitment to forbid gender segregation could not legally extend to acts of worship.

14/06 University Executive Board: 9 December 2013, 20 January, 3 and 17 February 2014 (Item 4)

* The Senate received a Report of the meetings of the University Executive Board held on 9 December 2013, 20 January, 3 and 17 February 2014.

In regard to item 1 (Review of the National Centre for Language and Literacy), the Vice-Chancellor explained that, at its meeting on 24 January 2014, the Council had established a Restructuring Committee consequent upon the Review of the National Centre for Language and Literacy and in accordance with both Statute XXXIII and the University’s Review and Restructuring Policy, on the understanding that any comment the Senate might formulate in the matter at its meeting on 12 March 2014 would be relayed to it. The Senate had no comment to make.

In regard to item 2 (Staff Fee Waivers), the Senate noted that, in substitution for the present arrangements and only in instances where registration for any programme offered by the University had been agreed in the context of Performance and Development Review to be relevant to the role performed by an individual and had been agreed by the Head of the relevant School or Service to be affordable in all the circumstances, the required fee would be met with effect from 1 August 2014 from School or Service Funds. Thus, any treatment of the waiver as a benefit-in-kind was avoided and no personal tax liability would accrue. The Senate had no comment to make.

In regard to item 3 (Reflections on the planning and management of REF 2014), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Williams) set the University’s submission in a national context and saw no reason to believe that its approach – thoughtfully constructed and consistently deployed – had been anything other than correct. She praised the efforts of colleagues from across the University and noted the contribution to its
return that had been made by those recruited as a result of the Academic Investment Project. Panels throughout the country were currently engaged in the scoring of outputs.

In response to a question from Dr Hatcher, the Head of the School of Systems Engineering and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor explained that enhanced standing in research had not been the sole, or even the primary, purpose of the reshaping exercise that had taken place in 2010 and 2011. Rather, that exercise had yielded broader benefits which the Heads of the relevant Schools were still working to maximise.

14/07 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 9 December 2013, 6 February and 27 February 2014 and agreed to recommend to the Council the adoption of a revised Student Complaints procedure with effect from 1 April 2014.

The Senate noted the correction of “MRes/MA(Res)/MSc(Res)” to read “MRes” within Annex 3 to the Report.

14/08 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 February 2014.

14/09 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 9 December 2013 and 22 January 2014.

14/10 Report of the Management Board of the Faculty of Life Sciences (Item 5(d))

* The Senate approved the Report of the meeting of the Management Board of the Faculty of Life Sciences held on 19 February 2014 and a meeting of the Board held jointly with the Management Board of the Faculty of Science held on 19 February 2014.
14/11 Report of the Management Board of the Faculty of Science (Item 5(e))

* The Senate approved the Report of the meeting of the Management Board of the Faculty of Science held on 10 December 2013 and 14 January 2014 and a meeting of the Board held jointly with the Management Board of the Faculty of Life Sciences held on 19 February 2014.

The Senate joined the Dean of the Faculty of Science in extending its thanks and good wishes to Professor Warwick who was shortly to take up appointment as Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Research at the University of Coventry.

14/12 Report on behalf of the Standing Disciplinary Committee on disciplinary sanctions imposed in the Autumn Term 2013 (Item 5(g))

* The Senate received a Report on behalf of the Standing Disciplinary Committee of disciplinary sanctions imposed in the Autumn Term 2013.

14/13 Appointments to Committees and other bodies (Item 6(a))

The Senate received a report that the Vice-Chancellor, acting on its behalf, had agreed that:

(a) Professor Susan Breau (vice Professor Gavin Brooks) be appointed to the panel from which the membership of a Tribunal is drawn under Statute XXXIII to serve until 31 July 2017;

and

(b) Dr Henny Osbahr, being a member of the Academic Staff, be nominated for appointment by the Council to the Restructuring Committee established in respect of the National Centre for Language and Literacy.

14/14 Retirement of Professors (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 on each of the following with effect from 1 January 2014:

Professor Richard Bradley
Professor Galen Strawson.
The Senate agreed to recommend to the Council that each of the following be accorded the title of Honorary Fellow for a period of five years with effect from 1 January 2014 unless otherwise stated:

Ms Sheila Billard (1 February 2014)
Mrs Carol Derham
Mrs Carolyn Lyle
Mrs Eleanor Rose
Mr John Scarrott.