

Senate

20/56 A meeting of the Senate was held via teams, on Wednesday 4 November 2020 at 2.15 pm.

Present:

The Vice-Chancellor (Chair)

Professor Adrian Bell	Dr Mark Shanahan
Professor Cindy Becker	Professor Simon Sherratt
Dr Katrina Bicknell	Professor David Stack
Professor Ingo Bojak	Professor Vesna Stojanovik
Professor David Carter	Andrew Urquhart
Professor Claire Collins	Dr Maria Vahdati
Dr Yota Dimitriadi	Professor Sue Walker
Professor Peter Dorwood	Dr Hong Wei
Professor Mark Fellowes	Professor Emily West
Dr David Field	Dr Karin Whiteside
Professor Richard Frazier	Professor Adrian Williams
Professor Clare Furneaux	Professor Paul Williams
Dr Francesca Greco	Dr Hong Yang
Professor Andrew Godley	Professor Parveen Yaqoob
Professor Louise Hague	Professor Dominik Zaum
Professor Chris Harty	Students:
Dr Lawrence Hill-Cawthorne	Alexandre Ribeiro
Professor Carmel Houston-Price	
Mr Paul Inman	George Ingram
Professor Rodney Jones	Bandy Karki
Dr Daniela La Penna	Rachel Wates
Dr Allan Laville	Alex Rose
Dr Tim Lees	
Professor Elizabeth McCrum	In attendance:
Professor Gail Marshall	Ms Louise Sharman (Secretary)
Professor Simon Mortimer	Ms Sam Foley
Professor Steve Musson	Dr Richard Messer
Professor Julian Park	Mrs Sally Pellow
Dr Karen Poulter	
Professor Jane Setter	

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed members to the Senate, and in particular the new RUSU officers and student representatives for 2020/21.

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

Mrs Jean Nursten - Visiting Professor of Social Work at the University for a number of years

in the 1980s and was a member of the University Women's Club for many years. She and her late husband Harry were members of the Senior Common Room since coming to Reading in 1976 and also supported the Friends of the University and the Alumni.

Emeritus Professor Clare Robertson - Clare joined the University in 1988 as a Lecturer in the History of Art department. Clare spent the rest of her career teaching at the University of Reading, becoming a Reader, and then a Professor in 2009. Clare also spent several years in the 1990s as Head of Department.

Dr Matthias Siebold, who recently passed away in Germany amongst family. Matthias studied for a PhD in the School of Agriculture, Policy and Development. In 2016, he re-joined the School as a Lecturer in Agricultural Business Management and acted as Programme Director for the BSc Agricultural Business Management programme.

Keith Greenow – head porter at Windsor Hall from 1976 to 1992, and University Macebearer from 1992 to 2002. Greenow House was named after him.

20/57 The Minutes (20/27 – 20/55) of the meeting held on 25 June and 30 September 2020 were approved.

At the start of the meeting the Vice-Chancellor referred to his email to Senators on 21 October 2020. He reminded the Senate that it was important to use the correct distribution list when circulating messages. He stated that he did not wish to stifle debate or scrutiny by Senate but that all communications should be expressed in a respectful and inclusive manner.

20/58 Membership of the Senate in 2020/21 (Item 4)

The Senate received a list of its membership for the session 2020/21 and noted Ordinance A3.

Items for Presentation and Discussion

20/59 Report from Phase 2 Workshops (Item 5)

The Senate received copies of feedback from the three workshop sessions on: Space, Teaching Portfolio, Expectations and Workload Management. Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Fellowes) thanked the Senate for their constructive engagement with the workshops, all of which had been very positive and well attended. Two pieces of feedback that were highlighted were: 1) that colleagues wanted more detail on the proposals – these proposals would return to Senate as standing agenda items as work progressed 2) Local engagement at School level was very important and further consideration would need to be given as how to continue that.

Senators were asked to report back on key points from each workshop:

Space:

- Reading was very inefficient in its use of space compared to others. It needed to continue to cut costs but did not wish to do so via staff cuts.

- Rationalising space would cut costs, open up opportunities for lettings, provide space for growth.
- The main proposals were that: All staff should be accommodated in shared offices, unless role demanded otherwise; All general-purpose teaching space to be centrally managed and scheduled; All meeting space to be centrally managed and booked; All teaching lab spaces to be pooled by functional capability and centrally scheduled with a similar approach for studio space; General principle toward providing more study space – repurposing spaces to be overtly student facing to create more pockets of study space; Development of a capability led portfolio for specialist research space; Collections maintained and held within School space should be relevant and actively used to support current, externally funded research or teaching.
- There was broad acceptance that the Estate represented both significant cost and some opportunities for savings and commercial income generation.
- Concerns raised included:
 - Space calculations, and broader University policies and activities, created an artificial divide between teaching and research. For many staff, these divisions did not exist and represented a false picture of how time (and office space) was used.
 - There were significant variations in the size of cellular office space in Schools and simply requiring ‘office space to be shared’ did not recognise this.
 - There were a number of School and Departmental roles which, by their nature, require frequent and confidential discussions.
 - Discrimination against those unable to work from home; concerns about collegiate/office working.
 - Difficulties for those with disabilities in sharing office; those with an undisclosed disability may feel pressure to declare it in order to secure appropriate working space
 - Move to greater blended learning and impact of sharing offices on ability to deliver synchronous online teaching, recording lectures, use of Teams for internal/external meetings & collaborations
 - Schools made use of their space used for different reasons at different times. An example was the commercial letter of space at a particular time of year enabling the School to cover facility running costs.
 - It was unclear how the ‘right kind of teaching space’ would result from requiring academic staff to share offices.
 - It was important not to lose sight of the mental health impacts of remote working.
 - Discussions on provision of space should take place at School level and a ‘one size fits all’ approach was unlikely to be possible or practical.
 - Sense of place and belonging was important to staff and students alike and changes to space allocations should ensure that a sense of community and School identity was retained. The opportunity to co-locate disparate colleagues and student cohort was welcomed.
 - There was a need for more social space outside of catering outlets

Expectations and Workload Management:

- There was a very good discussion, the Workshop was presented with a brief summary of the current progress of thinking on a workload allocation model with the

caveat that this had to date only considered research in its development, so needed further work.

- It was accepted that better management of workload and expectations on staff would be beneficial – particularly to focus on realistic expectations that were achievable while maintaining work-life balance. This was of critical importance to support early-career staff (both teaching and research) who could have a distorted idea of what was expected of them.
- Work-life balance was a missing dimension as the focus of the work to date had been largely been on performance management. Most models assumed a working year of 1650 hours, yet we know that staff do not take annual leave and work beyond these hours.
- Taking account of variation between disciplines and contract types came up as a major point and the unsuitability of a one-size fits all approach. It was difficult to capture the differing workload pressures of lab-based vs desk-based research for example, and the differences in funding across disciplines, the need to support teaching scholarship. Therefore, developing principles by which Schools and Departments could construct tailored models and PDR objective setting seemed more sensible. However, the additional managerial effort required and the impacts on Heads of Schools and Departments and other line managers needed to be considered in this.
- A point in relation to models currently used (such as the Henley model) was that they tend to quantitate, breakdown and allocate contributions to T&L workload, while research was often allocated as a percentage of time rather than focused around specific research activities or objectives. This played into the work-life issues as it was too easy for the research and scholarship time to be eaten into or to be pushed into non-core hours (evenings and weekends). This point also led into concerns expressed about how reliable/truly representative some data returns were.
- Unintended consequences were raised – rewarding numbers of PGR students supervised rather than their quality was an example. How do we ensure that teaching scholarship was recognised, allocated time and appropriately rewarded.
- The workload and performance expectations were presented as if they focussed on academic staff only. Consideration of the workload of professional, administrative and technical support staff would be beneficial also. This was important for their wellbeing and development, but also to support the workload of academic staff where there was a reliance on teaching support, research support, contracts support.

The Vice-Chancellor informed the Senate that further work around workload management was also being discussed with UCU and the Staff Forum as part of the Phase 1 proposals.

Teaching Portfolio:

- Rationalisation of the portfolio:
There was broad support for Portfolio review, but a number of concerns were raised about implementation:
 - A centralised approach should ensure that local context and circumstances were heard in the discussion. Some areas had already made decisions on portfolios and done a great deal to refine their offerings. Some schools offered a number of apparent programmes, but these were in fact pathways with different module combinations leading to degrees with different names,

but the marginal cost remained the same. There was concern that too much rationalisation would lead to too little choice of degrees and there was much concern about variation between Schools as to how best to carry out assessment. But it was clear that having a lot of different programmes led to high marginal cost. There was a drive to balance between structure and flexibility.

- There was support for developing a more unified approach to blended learning, but to do so it was felt that more investment was needed in the technology to support virtual teaching and other activities. Linking to this, the differential engagement of students with either BlackBoard or Canvas needed to be explored as the attractiveness of a chosen VLE was of huge importance. In addition, the diversity impact of blended learning should be taken into account so that students were not differentially affected by this process.
- It was suggested that the current proposals seem to be focussed on looking inward, i.e. cost reduction, and that more should be done to take an outward-looking perspective where external challenges could be turned into opportunities. The inward-looking actions would take time to take effect and whilst this is happening, external companies might have jumped in to exploit other opportunities.
- It was proposed that there should be a light touch approach to portfolio review as some Schools had been through this work already and a focus on the outliers.
- A question was raised of what we know about the efficacy of blended learning and whether there was any evidence of the effects on student learning. It was noted that there is still work to do on issues such as this.
- It was noted that the effect of the current financial model could be detrimental to cross-disciplinary working and forced disciplines into silos, and that this would need to be addressed in tandem as part of implementing these proposals.

Restructuring the academic year:

- There was broad support for having extra time for teaching in the third term with assessment being held at the end of each term.
- Changing the structure of the academic year offered advantages in terms of a few extra weeks of teaching time, but it was highlighted that we must beware the risk of unintended consequences.
- A range of issues were highlighted including practical impacts such as on student accommodation contracts and very specifically the impact that changing the academic year could have on research.
- It was suggested that further consideration would need to be given to the relevance of Week 6 in any new model.

The following questions and comments were raised:

- The additional sessions had been very useful and further sessions in the future would be

welcomed particularly as more concrete proposals were developed – this would allow more scrutiny and feedback.

- There was a balance to strike between high level proposals and the amount of detail provided.
- A new financial model for the University would be required – success in all the proposals would depend on that.
- Better data was required, because the ‘devil will be in the detail’.
- The division between teaching and research was entrenched in the document – that needed to be thought about seriously.
- There needed to be more sensitivity to the local context.
- Could the proposal to extend the teaching day be reconsidered to increase capacity? Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor McCrum) responded that this could be looked at again but was unlikely to be popular with students and staff.
- The strategic reviews would need not to just focus on past performance .

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Fellowes) thanked the Senate for their input and gave a commitment to keep talking about the proposals. He reported that more detail on the strategic review and the financial model would come back to Senate and that he agreed with the comments on the need to engage further locally.

20/60 NSS (Item 6)

The Senate received a presentation from Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor McCrum) and George Ingram (Education Officer RUSU) on the NSS.

By way of context Senate noted that the Teaching and Learning Strategy 2018-21 gave commitments:

- To fostering a culture of excellence in teaching and learning
- To working in partnership with students and colleagues to ensure we deliver an outstanding experience for our students.
- To continue to uphold the academic and pedagogic principles set out in the Curriculum Framework, ensuring that student outcomes were at the heart of everything we do.

The University Strategy set out Educational and Student Experience priorities to enable the University to achieve the strategic principles set out in the Institutional Strategic Plan. In particular:

- Supporting our community and ensuring our sustainability by rationalising teaching and assessment to reduce staff workloads and create capacity for innovation and future growth where appropriate.
- Enhancing our provision, restructuring the academic year and improving student voice to create a greater sense of community and cohesion for our students.
- Enhance teaching excellence and the student experience through data-driven School and Institutional-level improvement.

In respect of the NSS 2020:

- The NSS enabled us to reflect on what we were doing well and to identify data driven

priorities for future interventions to secure improvements needed.

- COVID-19 and the timing of the survey might have somewhat attenuated the results.
- The University remained consistent in overall satisfaction scores (84%) but in a declining sector, resulting in a rise of 11 places.
- The University performed well in relation to organisation and management.
- Small but consistent improvements in satisfaction with academic support.
- This year Schools would produce School Teaching Enhancement Action Plans informed by the NSS identifying key priorities and actions to take to address them.
- Work with Schools would be prioritised according to their NSS results and relative contribution overall, supporting improvements in key areas.

The Education Officer outlined RUSU's reflections on NSS:

- The timing of the survey relative to COVID-19 meant that the results were most likely impacted in several areas:
 - Specifically questions 12,13,15,16,17,18,19,20
 - RUSU's own performance in the NSS of 56.5% against the sector 55.99%
- RUSU's main priorities:
 - Were to support students through their journey
 - To ensure that students had an effective voice and the power to achieve positive change
 - To enable students to connect with each other, the wider community and to develop as individuals.

The three key institutional priorities were:

- Assessment and Feedback – the University had made progress on aspects of assessment and feedback as a result of intervention and development (e.g. assessment criteria). The focus this year would be on feedback, especially timeliness and quality
- Student Voice and Partnership – the Student Voice and Partnership Project had contributed to improvements in aspects of the student voice (e.g. academic representation and programme evaluation). The University needed to focus on being clear how students feedback on their courses had been acted on to address low institutional score in this area.
- Learning Resources – there had been a recovery in scores in relation to learning resources following the Library refurbishment. There were issues around satisfaction with IT resources, facilities and high quality 'distributed' study space in comparison with the sector – this would be prioritised in planning.
- These priorities aligned with RUSU's priorities.

The Senate noted that a content analysis had been undertaken of all student comments. These qualitative comments aligned with the priority areas identified – timeliness of feedback; module selection, options, process; inconsistent workloads; coinciding deadlines. Students had responded positively around academic support.

The University would be even more ambitious with student engagement and focus in 2020-21. Colleagues were working with RUSU to strengthen student voice and engagement in decision making, teaching and research through: RUSU, Student Partners, Student Reps, Surveys, ROSIE, Student Voice Ambassadors, Student Panel, Student COVID Review.

The Senate thanked Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor McCrum) and the Education Officer for the Presentation.

20/61 Report of the Vice-Chancellor (Item 7)

The Senate received the Vice-Chancellor's address to the Senate, noting in particular:

- a) **COVID-19 the continuing response** – the dashboard reported the number of positive COVID cases and was updated every weekday. From Tuesday 20 October the University had been required to report its case numbers to the OfS on a daily basis. Currently, most of the cases were in private housing and most were 'expected' cases in the sense that students were already self-isolating with a household member testing positive. With PHE and the local authority at limited capacity and unable to deal with campus-related activities, the University had set up its own case management team (with staff volunteers) operating seven days a week to conduct local test and trace .
- b) **Test and trace: permanent centre** - a walk-through testing centre opened in the Great Hall, London Road campus, on Saturday 24 October and was open to staff, students and the local community.
- c) **Local outbreak planning** – meetings continued twice weekly with PHE/Local Authority colleagues and, with the DfE approving the local outbreak plan. The plan explained different tiers/scenarios of restrictions that would apply in the event of an outbreak. It was important to note that Higher Education providers were able to remain open at every alert level, and it was down to universities to decide what was best in terms of teaching delivery, in consultation with the local Health Protection Team.
- d) **Supporting local schools** - During local schools' half-term week, the University was funding up to 250 meals a day for children in the local community who were entitled to free lunch, and would be looking at what further support it might be able to offer in the future.
- e) **Race equality review** - The race equality review led by Professor Parveen Yaqoob, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, and Allan Laville, Dean for Diversity and Inclusion, had started the first phase of active listening with students, colleagues and alumni sharing their experiences. The race equality review was the subject of the most recent all-staff talk and generated thoughtful discussion and questions.
- f) **Black History month** – the University had an active Black History month with a great range of online events for our community.
- g) **Maintaining our leading position in world rankings** - The University had continued its strong global position after being ranked among the top universities in seven of THE World University Rankings by Subject in 2021, reflecting strengths across a breadth of disciplines. In the latest rankings published on Wednesday 28 October, Reading improved its position in three out of the seven tables it was ranked in, placing it in the top 125 ranked institutions in the world for Education, and Business and Economics. Elsewhere, Agriculture at Reading was ranked in the top ten in the world in the QS World Rankings by subject for 2020 for the fifth year in a row.
- h) **Ballot outcome and next steps** - Earlier this month, the outcome of the UCU ballot was announced in respect of the agreement in principle to address the shortfall in income as a result of the COVID pandemic. UCU had confirmed that local members voted in favour of accepting the University of Reading 'Consultation Group – final proposal' and 'Memorandum of Understanding'. Support from the UCU and the Staff Forum in developing the proposal through the consultation process was very much appreciated, all the more since it required some significant sacrifices to ensure that the University remained financially viable.

The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that a joint meeting had been held on 3 November 2020 with UCU and the Staff Forum to consider revised financial information – it was likely that of

the planned savings that the tiered pay cut would be dropped following better than anticipated recruitment. An announcement would be made in the all-staff talks on 5 November 2020. No decision would be taken about removing the pay cut until the beginning of February 2021.

- i) **European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF)** -The UK Government had made its submission to the ECMWF's governing council to provide a new, state-of-the-art headquarters for ECMWF on the Whiteknights campus. In December, the ECMWF Council would make the final decision on the location for the 'new ECMWF facility', that would host the EU-funded Copernicus activities on climate and atmospheric monitoring. The Government's bid was for both the ECMWF itself, and the EU-funded activities, to be based at the University of Reading.

Items for report and approval

20/62 Report of the University Executive Board (Item 8)

The Senate received a Report of the meetings of the University Executive Board held between 8 June and 19 October 2020.

20/63 Report of the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (Item 9)

The Senate received the Report of the meetings of the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (UBTLSE) held on 7 July, 15 September and 6 October 2020.

The Senate noted updates on:

- COVID-19 provision, including:
 - o Arrangements for approval of urgent recommendations in the context of the pandemic
 - o Key decisions and changes to policies
 - o Update on September exams period
 - o Trailing credits
 - o Individual safety net for the 2020/21 academic year
 - o Postgraduate Research Studies
 - o Study Abroad and the CIP process
 - o Enhanced Risk Assessment Process for Placements Academic Year 2020/21
 - o Interim Enhanced Risk Assessment Process for Study Abroad Academic Year 2020/21
 - o Evacuation & Travel Contingency Policy
 - o Publication and guidance from sector bodies in relation to COVID-19
- Membership and Terms of Reference
- Examiner nominations
- Terms and Conditions and Student Fees Policy
- Risk Registers
- University Annual Quality Assurance Review Report 2018/19
- Periodic Review
- NSS 2020

- UKES 2020
- PGT Student Experience
- League Tables
- Quality Assurance Review
- Extenuating Circumstances Redesign Project
- Academic Tutor System Project
- Student Attendance & Management Support
- Policy on and procedures relating to student academic engagement and fitness to study
- PGT classification algorithm
- Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)
- Ofsted Monitoring visit report
- 2020 National Teaching Fellowship winners
- 2020 University Teaching Fellowship winners

The Senate approved proposed amendments to the Recognised Teacher Status of the University of Reading (NUIST).

20/64 Report of the University Board for Research and Innovation (Item 10)

The Senate received the report of the University Board for Research and Innovation.

In particular, the Senate noted that the Board's autumn term meeting would take place on 6 November. At this meeting, it would:

- Review of the University risk register with reference to research and innovation-related risks.
- Receive some performance-related data, including research grants and awards outcomes for 2019/20, and recent world league table performance.
- Receive an update on the University's activities and actions to implement the Concordat to support the career development of researchers. The University became signatory to the Concordat in October 2019.
- Update on the Phase 2 implementation with specific discussion of the academic proposals in relation to space, academic year and workload.
- Endorse the plans for the use of the Research Endowment Trust Fund in 2020/21.

20/65 Report of the Global Engagement Strategy Board (Item 11)

The Senate noted that there was no report on this occasion. Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Paul Inman) reported that he would be giving an all-staff talk in early December.

20/66 Global Recruitment and Admissions (Item 12)

The Senate received an analysis of the University's enrolment position compared to target and to the previous cycle.

Senate recorded its thanks to all colleagues involved in this year's admission round which had taken place in challenging circumstances.

Items for note

20/67 Report of the Senate Standing Committee on Examination Results (Item 13)

The Senate received and noted a report from the Senate Standing Committee on Examination Results summarising cases since the last Senate.

20/68 Report of the Student Appeals Committee (Item 14)

The Senate received the Report of the meeting of the Student Appeals Committee held in August 2020 and noted the outcomes of the Committee's decisions.

20/69 Retirement of Professors (Item 15 a)

The Senate approved that under the provisions of Ordinance B7 the title of Emeritus/ta Professor be conferred with effect from the date indicated on:

Professor Michael Shaw (30.9.20)

Professor Jeanine Treffers-Daller (30.9.20)

Professor Peter Hawkins (31.10.20)

20/70 Other Retirements (Item 15 b)

The Senate approved that that the following be accorded the title of Honorary Fellow for a period of five years with effect from the date indicated:

Lynda McCulley (31.8.2020)

Susan Peel (1.9.2020)

Dr Michael Daller (30.9.2020)

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Student representatives withdrew from the remainder of the meeting
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RESERVED BUSINESS

20/71 The reserved minutes (20/48-20/49) of the meeting held on 25 June 2020 were approved.

20/72 Reports of Examiners for Higher Degrees by thesis (Item 18 b)

The Senate approved recommendations for the award or otherwise of Higher Degrees.