

Senate

19/01 A meeting of the Senate was held in G06 Chancellor's Building, on Wednesday 6 March 2019 at 2.15 pm.

Present:

The Vice-Chancellor (Chair)

Professor Maarten Ambaum
Dr Emma Aston
Professor Adrian Bell
Professor Helen Bilton
Professor Ingo Bojak
Dr Sarah Brewer
Dr David Carter
Dr Claire Collins
Dr John Creighton
Dr Giuseppe Di Fatta
Professor Mark Fellowes
Professor Richard Frazier
Professor Paul Glaister
Professor Andrew Godley
Professor Chris Harty
Professor Ellie Highwood
Professor Carmel Houston-Price
Professor Uma Kambhampati
Dr Steve Langdon
Dr Time Lees
Dr Patrick Lewis
Dr Anne McCartney
Professor Elizabeth McCrum
Professor Gail Marshall

Dr Karen Poulter
Professor Susan Rose
Dr Mark Shanahan
Professor Catherine Tissot
Professor Richard Tranter
Professor Sue Walker
Professor Julia Waters
Professor Emily West
Professor Parveen Yaqoob
Professor Dominik Zaum

Students:

Jason Dabydoyal
Dan Bentley
Nozomi Tolworthy
Ali Perry

Student Representatives:

William Page

In attendance:

Ms Louise Sharman (Secretary)
Dr Richard Messer

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed members to the Senate.

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

Professor Cyril Weir – Lecturer in the Centre for Applied Language Studies from 1986 to 2000.

Ms June Brazier – Secretary to the Vice-Chancellor from 1969 to 1990, Personal Assistant in the VC's Office until 1995. She provided support to Sir Harry Pitt, Dr Ewan Page and Professor Sir Roger Williams.

The Reverend Dr John Ogden – Lecturer in the Computer Unit in 1966

before moving to the Department of Computer Science on its establishment in 1971, Senior Lecturer in 1973, Head of Department between 1977 and 1989. On retirement in 2001 he continued to work as a part-time Methodist Chaplain.

The Vice-Chancellor informed the Senate that recruitment was in progress for 7 Heads of School vacancies (Institute of Education; School of Archaeology, Geography and Environmental Sciences; School of Politics, Economics and International Relations; School of Law; School of Humanities; School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy; School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences). It was noted that Professor Cathy Tissot had been reappointed as Head of the Institute of Education; members of the Senate congratulated Professor Tissot. The remaining interviews would be concluded by the end of the Spring Term.

19/02 The Minutes (18/46 - 18/63) of the meeting held on 7 November 2018 were approved.

Items for Presentation and Discussion

19/03 REF 2021 Code of Practice (Item 4)

The Senate received a presentation from Pro-Vice-Chancellors (Professor Yaqoob and Professor Zaum) in respect of REF 2021 and the Code of Practice. The Senate noted that it was a requirement to consult widely with staff representatives on the Code of Practice.

The Senate noted that:

- Given current internal and external contexts, Reading's performance in REF 2021 would have implications for the overall character and financial sustainability of the University.
- Key points for REF 2021 included:
 - Staff – all staff must have a substantive connection to the Unit, be on a T&R or R contract, and be an independent researcher;
 - Outputs – there had been a partial decoupling from staff with the portfolio representing the research of the UoA rather than individuals; a minimum of 1 maximum of 5 outputs could be submitted for each member of staff; outputs would be to be open access compliant; outputs authored by staff no longer at the University at the census date could be included.
 - Impact – 2 case studies would be permitted for the first 20 FTE, with an increase of 1 thereafter for every 15 FTE; this would have a much greater impact than previously.
 - Environment – institutional and UoA statement would be required, these would need to demonstrate how the unit facilities research and enables impact.
 - Code of Practice – the Code must demonstrate adherence to principles of transparency, accountability, consistency and inclusivity; it must be discussed with staff representatives; the deadline for submission was 7

June 2019.

- By way of context:
 - The University had submitted to 23 UoAs in 2014, and would submit to in 2021 (although different UoAs to 2014).
 - In 2014 590 out of 700 FTE were eligible for submission, in 2021 approximately FTE would be eligible.
 - As of 6 March 2019 there were of which were open access compliant. The expected number of outputs submitted to REF 2021 were .
 - The total number of projects in BOISP were ; the expected number of impact case studies required

- Approximately 100 academic staff were directly involved in preparations for the REF, with support from a large number of the professional services (Planning and Strategy Office, Library, Human Resources, Knowledge Transfer Centre, Research and Enterprise Services, and the Graduate School).
- During 2019 work would focus on: reviewing the UoAs and the University's position; address risks identified; develop and review the environment sections; develop and submit a Code of Practice; voluntary declarations of circumstances.
- The Code of Practice would: frame decision-making processes for REF 2021 and demonstrate consideration of equality and diversity, compliance with legislation, and avoidance of discrimination.
- Significant responsibility for research –

The University would need to demonstrate how the process had been communicated and consulted on and agreed with key staff groups. There would be an appeals process for staff. An Equality Impact Assessment would be produced to consider the implications of potential decisions.

- Research independence would apply to: all T&R staff and all Grade 8 Research only staff; all eligible Research Fellowships; Grade 7 Research only staff fulfilling at least four out of six defined criteria.
- Structures would be put in place to support voluntary declarations of circumstance. Processes would also be developed for adjusting expectations of an affected individual's contribution to a UoA output pool. The Code of Practice would include a description of policies, procedures and personnel involved in the decision making.

Members of the Senate undertook some group work to review whether elements were addressing the four guiding principles of transparency, consistency,

accountability and inclusivity. Feedback from the Senate would be incorporated into REF planning.

19/04 Report of the Vice-Chancellor (Item 5)

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

- a) University Strategy - The Council had asked the Vice-Chancellor, as a key priority, to progress and conclude the new University Strategy at the earliest opportunity. It also asked that the University be radical in the way it positioned itself in an increasingly challenging environment. This would require colleagues, students and external stakeholders to play a part in the discussions.

At present four broad key themes were emerging: Community; Excellence; Guardianship of the University's long-term future; the role of the University as a Civic University for Reading.

The Senate noted that its input in shaping the Strategy would be important and that it was intended to use the reserve meeting on 8 May for a broader discussion on the Strategy.

- b) Student Recruitment -

Across the sector, and closet competitor universities, undergraduate applications were down by a small percentage overall.

The Voluntary

Redundancy Scheme would play an important role in returning Schools and Functions to positions of financial sustainability. The Voluntary Redundancy Scheme had now closed; discussions would be held with Schools and Functions over the coming week in regard to the applications received.

- c) NIRD and Reading UCU vote of no confidence - Colleagues would have seen press coverage reviewing the details of the sale of land belonging to the National Institute for Research in Dairying trust, and the University's finances more generally. The Vice-Chancellor recognised the potential reputational damage that this could have for the University and had responded quickly and openly to the issues raised with both the Charity Commission and the Office for Students. The Vice-Chancellor also worked with the President of Council to ensure that the appropriate governance arrangements were put in place. It is important to note that this governance matter had no wider implications for the University group's ongoing financial position. The University responded the very same day to

the Guardian article.

UCU had written to the Vice-Chancellor in response to the press coverage, to which he had replied as well as attending a meeting with UCU on 13 February to discuss this in detail in person. UCU later passed a motion of no confidence, to which the Vice-Chancellor had responded. The UCU Chair had also been invited to a meeting to discuss details of the concerns raised.

[copies of relevant correspondence were made available to the Senate].

- d) Community Relations and the Community Forum – The University would continue to work with others to fulfil its mission as a civic university. At the University Court in March the Economic Impact Report would be launched as well as giving external stakeholders the opportunity to learn more about our partnerships with the local community.

Senators raised a number of points with the Vice-Chancellor in response to his address, in particular:

- What the current situation was in regard to the University of Reading Malaysia (UoRM) – The Vice-Chancellor informed the Senate that discussions in regard to UoRM had been ongoing for some time and were continuing to be held, however, the situation was very complex from a number of perspectives.
- Whether global engagement would be included as part of the Strategy – The Vice-Chancellor responded affirmatively.
- In regard to academic excellence whether there should be further consideration of A' Level grades as a predictor for outcomes and whether baselines should be set.
- In regard to being a Civic University, the University should consider its role more broadly across Berkshire rather than just Reading.

Items for report and approval

19/05 Report of the University Executive Board (Item 6)

The Senate received a Report of the meetings of the University Executive Board held on 5, 12, 19, 26 November, 3, 10, 17 December 2018, 7, 14, 21, 28 January, 4, 11, 18 February 2019.

In particular, members of the Senate noted that the Board had considered the Report of the Review of Modern Languages. The Board had considered two options proposed by the Review Group: Option A – that the Department of Modern Languages and European Studies (MLES) was merged with the Institution Wide

Language Programme (IWLP) within the School of Languages and Literature with effect from 1 August 2019, the proposal would reduce staffing levels to be between 24.5-29.5 FTE against the current total of 37.68; Option B – in order to achieve the required savings 20 FTE be removed from the current staffing across the two units, which would make the current provision, particularly in MLES, unsustainable. The Board had agreed to recommend to the Council that Option A be chosen.

Members of the Senate were asked to comment on the decision taken by the Board. It was agreed that the verbatim comments would be submitted to the Council on 18 March 2019 to reflect Senate's discussion.

Professor Julia Waters, of the Department of Modern Languages and European Studies, addressed the Senate and stated that:

- 1) There were inaccuracies and misrepresentations within the report and UEB minute:
 - The report conflated the Implementation Group with the Consultation Group.
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 - There was a misrepresentation of input from some of the external advisers, one of whom had returned their fee as they disagreed with the recommendations of the report.
 - The report should not include Option B (teaching only unit) and closure of MLEs when the recommendation was for Option A.
 - The terms of reference for the Review had changed since it was set up. The research narrative went against the REF equality and inclusivity agenda; University-wide finances and student recruitment numbers had changed and a different operating plan had subsequently been used ; concerns had been raised in the UEB Minute about the 'product', yet MLES's NSS scores were all above 90%, external examiners' reports and the conclusions of the latest Periodic Review had been entirely positive.
- 2) Student Experience and the Student Contract:
 - Students were not consulted during the Review.
 - Many students had still not properly been informed (including those on year abroad who would be the most directly affected).
 - The proposed cuts to staffing would make it difficult/impossible to deliver on the student contract.
- 3) Timing
 - If approved by Council on 18 March 2019 it would be impossible to merge provision, have a meaningful consultation period, restructure two units, and redesign multiple single and joint honours programmes in time for 1 August 2019 let alone for module selection.

4) National picture and reputational damage

- Letters had been written to senior management from subject associations, other HEIs (including some of the external advisors on the review). While merger of MLES and IWLP was not necessarily problematic, it is in this case over-hasty and ill-judged 11 days before the UK was due to leave the EU.
- A recently published report, Languages in the UK: A Call to Action – authored by the 4 National Academies (British Academy; Academy of Medical Sciences; Royal Academy of Engineering; Royal Society) had made the nation-wide case that: “If we want to enhance both our engagement with the rest of the world and our social cohesion, we need our citizens to be better at languages other than English and to value them more highly”. A report of the All-Party Parliamentary Group on Languages had also called on the Government to adopt and implement a National Recovery Programme for Languages. Both initiatives had received lots of coverage in the national media and in Parliament.
- The University ought to be investing in languages and intercultural communications, not cutting provision at a moment of national crisis when languages would be needed more the ever.
- There was a risk of great reputational damage if the University ploughed ahead with the recommendations.

Professor Waters asked the Senate to:

- As a minimum address the errors within the report/UEB Minute.
- Reject or delay the review recommendations on the basis of undue haste and damaging extent of proposed staffing cuts.
- Support instead the MLES five-year recovery plan, in line with National Recovery Programme for Languages.

The Vice-Chancellor informed the Senate that both options (A/B) were considered fully by the Board and the Board had voted for Option A which was a merger rather than closure. Without a recovery plan there was a substantial financial shortfall. The Board took these reviews very seriously and did listen to the views expressed. However as guardians of the University it needed to ensure its long-term financial sustainability. It was reported that over the last five years that a number of institutions had closed their modern language provision; the University did not wish to do that but had sought to find the best solution to make MLES sustainable.

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Fellowes), as Chair of the Review, informed the Senate that the Review Group had sought to maintain language provision at the University and to give MLES different options for the future including non-European languages currently taught through the IWLP.

Professor Waters responded that if there were a 30% reduction in staffing there was a danger that languages at Reading would be destroyed by default. The speed of the proposed changes would hugely impact those staff that remained, as well as

damaging the Department's reputation.

Professor Bilton thanked Professor Waters for her address and asked on behalf of the Senate, what the Senators could do to help.

The Vice-Chancellor responded that the role of the Senate was to comment on the report for transmission to the Council, but that ultimately it was the decision of the Council on whether to accept the recommendation.

The Senate were reminded that the review had taken a year, and that this was the fifth review of MLES in last 5 years.

Professor Waters informed the Senate that it would be impossible to plan programme delivery when it was not known which staff would be leaving. The Vice-Chancellor responded that that matter would be for consideration by the Implementation Group.

The Welfare Officer informed the Senate that students had not been consulted by the Review Group and that a number of students were very unhappy about this. Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Fellowes) reported that students were not consulted during the review process but that meetings had since been arranged with students to inform them of the review recommendations. Professor Waters pointed out that the majority of these students had been finalists, who would be least affected by the proposed changes.

Professor Ambaum asked whether local plans were considered as part of reviews. The Vice-Chancellor responded that Departments were invited to develop ideas and that these ideas were discussed with the Heads of School, meetings had also been arranged with staff. The review process was about finding a plan that worked. The University was committed to language provision but the financial challenges faced were quite explicit.

Professor Waters informed the Senate that staff had provided input into aspects of the review but reiterated that there were inaccuracies in the report, and that the timing was unrealistic.

The Head of School of Languages and Literature (Professor Marshall) informed the Senate that all students had been communicated with since the report had been produced. The issue around module availability would be communicated to students once it was known which staff were leaving under the redundancy scheme. It was acknowledged that staff had put forward a number of ideas into the review process and that a number of these would be taken forward through implementation.

The Head of ISLI (Dr Carter) informed the Senate that he had also been a member of the Review Group. He stated that the merger of IWLP and MLES in itself did not save money, the savings would be provided from job losses. The Senate were asked to consider the amount of management time spent on long reviews and whether it was proportionate to the quality of the conclusion reached. The Vice-Chancellor

informed the Senate that the post-project review process would consider in due course the MLES Review and make recommendations for future reviews and lessons learnt. In respect of this Review, it was his view that the management time was well spent and had created opportunity for discussion internally and externally, and had allowed the best ideas and considered outcomes to come forward. There was a danger in rushing reviews.

The Vice-Chancellor reminded the Senate of the financial imperative in undertaking the Voluntary Redundancy Scheme.

The Senate agreed that the draft minute should be sent to Professor Waters to comment on ahead of its submission to the Council on 18 March 2019. Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Fellowes) was asked to speak with Professor Waters in regard to the errors that she claimed were in the report/UEB Minute so that they could be updated ahead of Council.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked Senators for the open discussion.

[Post meeting note - Professor Waters was given the opportunity to review the Senate Minutes]

19/06 Report of the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (Item 7)

The Senate received the Report of the meetings of the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (UBTLSE) held on 30 October, 3 December 2018, 28 January and 18 February 2019.

The Senate approved internal and external examiners for 2018/19.

The Senate noted that a number of policies had been introduced, or revised and updated since its last meeting, including:

- Publication of the Harassment & Bullying Policy Statement;
- Revisions to the policy on providing feedback to students on their performance;
- Amendments to the Code of Practice on the External Examining of Taught Programmes;
- Revisions to section 13: Moderation of the Assessment Handbook
- An amendment to the policy on Penalties for Late Submission and a corresponding amendment to Section 6: Conduct of Assessment: Examinations and Coursework of the Assessment Handbook;
- An amendment to the policy on Academic Integrity and Academic Misconduct;
- Amendments to the Procedure for institution-wider partner status and the Typology for academic partnerships, and a proposed new Policy on 'recognising/endorsing' qualifications and training from other institutions;

- An amendment to the Guidelines on the structure of undergraduate and taught postgraduate programmes; and
- An amendment to the Policy on student evaluation of teaching and learning.

19/07 Report of the University Board for Research and Innovation (Item 8)

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

19/08 Report of the Global Engagement Strategy Board (Item 9)

There was no report on this occasion.

Items for note

19/09 Report of the Senate Standing Committee on Examination Results (Item 10)

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

19/10 Report of the Student Appeals Committee (Item 11)

The Senate received the Report of the meeting of the Student Appeals Committee held on 4 December 2018, 16 and 18 January, 19 February 2019 and noted the outcomes of the Committee's decisions.

19/11 Report of the Standing Committee of Academic Misconduct (Item 12)

The Senate received the Report of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Academic Misconduct outlining 18 cases received to date.

19/12 Items approved by Chair's Action (Item 13 a)

The Senate noted the following items had been approved by Chair's Action:

- SSCER Recommendation 9.1.2018 to vary a result for a Postgraduate Research Student from failed to DNS
- SSCER Recommendation 11.2.2019 to give the option to make amendments and to submit a thesis for examination for an MPhil

19/13 Retirement of Professors (Item 17 b)

The Senate approved under the provisions of Ordinance B7 the title of Professor Emeritus/Emerita be conferred upon the following with effect from the date indicated:

Professor Gerard Unger (18 November 2018)
Professor Howard Colquhoun (31 December 2018)
Professor Christine Williams (5 April 2019)
Professor Geoff Meen (31 July 2019)

19/14 Other Retirements (Item 17 c)

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:

Mrs Bridget Green (12 October 2018)
Dr David Ewers (31 October 2018)
Mrs Lesley Tranter (31 December 2018)
Mr Martin Wagner (31 December 2018)
Mrs Deborah Hobbs (30 January 2019)
Mr Andrew Fromant (31 January 2019)
Mrs Jane Clarke (28 February 2019)

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Student representatives withdrew from the remainder of the meeting
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