

## Senate

**23/34** A meeting of the Senate was held at 2.15 pm on Wednesday 1 November 2023 in Chancellors G06.

Present:

Vice-Chancellor (Chair)  
Professor Maarten Ambaum  
Dr Tabarak Ballal  
Dr Caroline Baylon  
Professor Elena Beleska-Spasova  
Professor Kat Bicknell  
Dr Simon Clarke  
Dr Ilan Dwek  
Professor Richard Frazier  
Professor Carol Fuller  
Professor Becky Green  
Professor Louise Hague  
Dr Chris Jones  
Dr MARRISA JOSEPH  
Professor Gunter Kuhnle  
James Lloyd  
Dr Shu-Ling Lu  
Dr Rachel McCloy  
Professor Elizabeth McCrum  
Dr John McKendrick  
Dr David Marshall  
Professor Gail Marshall  
Professor Peter Miskell  
Professor Keiichi Nakata  
Professor Adrian Palmer  
Dr Karen Poulter  
Professor Rebecca Rist  
Dr Sharon Sinclair-Graham  
Dr Sokratis Stergiadis  
Professor Katja Strohfeltd  
Dr Praveen Teleti  
Brian Turner  
Professor Sarah von Billerbeck  
Professor Carol Wagstaff  
Dr Shixuan Wang  
Professor Adrian Williams  
Professor Hong Yang

Professor Parveen Yaqoob  
Professor Dominik Zaum  
Dr Ruvi Ziegler

**Students:**

RSU Education  
RSU President  
RSU Inclusion  
[Name withheld, Section 40] *Student Representative*  
[Name withheld, Section 40] *Student Representative*  
[Name withheld, Section 40] *Student Representative*

**In attendance:**

Deepa Driver  
Dr Richard Messer  
Penny Egan  
[Name withheld, Section 40] (interpreter)

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed new members to the Senate, and members of the Senate introduced themselves.

The Vice-Chancellor outlined the format of the meeting to Senators encouraging them to raise any additional items for discussion under the Vice-Chancellor's report.

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

Emeritus Professor John David Maitland Wright - John was appointed Professor of Pure Mathematics in January 1971. He was later appointed the Head of the Department of Mathematics from 1980 to 1984 and an additional year period from 1992 to 1993 before retiring.

Dr Arthur Ian Alexander Tiffin - Arthur was appointed Lecturer in Microbiology in September 1964 and continued his work at the University until his retirement on the 30th of September 1992. During his time at the University, Arthur was also a Warden of St. Davids Hall

Emerita Professor Irene Philippaki-Warbuton – Irene joined the University in 1970 teaching theoretical linguistics, syntax and morphophonology. She retired in 2004 as Professor of Linguistics.

Emerita Professor Virginie Ruiz – Virginie joined Cybernetics in 1998 as a Senior Lecturer, she was Head of the School of Systems Engineering from 2014 to 2016. She left the University in 2016.

Valerie Walker – Valerie worked in various administrative roles in the School of the Built Environment, MCE and the School of Mathematical, Physical and Computational Sciences. She left the University in 2022.

The following colleagues sadly all died in service:

Dr Christoph Arndt – Associate Professor in the School of Politics, Economics, and International Relations. Christoph joined the University in 2017 as a Lecturer in Comparative Politics.

Eleanor Draycott – Head of Customer Experience & Service Delivery in DTS. Eleanor joined the University in March 2018.

Dr Polly Smith – Postdoctoral Research Assistant in the School of Mathematical, Physical and Computational Sciences. Polly joined the University 2008.

### **23/35 Minutes of the last meeting**

The Senate approved Minutes 23/15 to 23/33 of the last formal meeting held on 22 June 2023.

### **23/36 Membership of the Senate in 2023/24 (Item 4)**

The Senate received a list of its membership for the session 2023/24 and noted Ordinance A3.

### **Items for Presentation and discussion**

#### **23/37 Research Quality and Standards**

The Senate received a presentation from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Dr Anne-Marie Van Dodeweerd on Quality Assurance in Research (QAR), ahead of an update to the Council on 22 November 2023.

The presentation highlighted to the Senate:

- QAR was typically concerned with:
  - Accountability & responsibility of those involved in research – this included everyone who undertook research, including visitors
  - Transparent project planning
  - Training and competence of research staff
  - Research funder requirements
  - Facilities and equipment
  - Documentation of procedures and methods
  - Research records
  - Handling of samples and materials
- Accountability and responsibility for QAR sat with:
  - PVC R&I
  - Head of QA in Research (Abbe Davey)
  - Director of Research Services (Anne-Marie van Dodeweerd)
  - Head of Governance (Louise Sharman)
  - Chief Strategy Officer & University Secretary (Establishment Licence holder)
  - Co-chairs of University Research Ethics Committee (UREC)
- The role of CORRI was:

- Responsible for institutional policies and procedures in relation to open research, research integrity, and research ethics; fitness for purpose and compliance with statutory and funder requirements.
- Embed open research into University management and processes.
- Support development of effective communications and direct engagement activities relating to open research.
- Engage with open research developments nationally and internationally.
- Fulfil reporting requirements relating to the CSRI (annual statement approved by Council at July meeting).
- There were two concordats relevant to QAR:
  - The Concordat to support Research Integrity – this had no regulatory teeth but aimed to drive change in a positive direction
  - Concordat for Environmental Sustainability in Research and Innovation – this was likely to be launched in January 2024
- Researcher Funder Expectations:
  - All research funders had expectations/requirements of the institutions that they provided funding to
  - Usually outlined in their standard terms and conditions (but could be scheme specific requirements in addition)
  - Contracts team in RES reviewed terms and conditions for: New funders and updated terms from current funders
- Standard requirements included compliance with national legislation including National Security & Investment Act, Subsidy Control act, as well as maintaining policies on conflicts of interest, safeguarding, bully and harassment, EDI, whistleblowing. There were also additional requirements for due diligence, safeguarding and preventing harm for staff and research participants.
- Maintaining policies on: managing conflicts of interest; Safeguarding; Bullying & Harassment; EDI; Whistleblowing
- Trusted Research including:
  - More rigorous due diligence for funders
  - Reputational, governance, financial and sanctions checks, including affiliations with government departments or the military
  - Cyber security and data management
  - Data security and separation
  - Loan laptops when travelling to certain areas
  - Export control
  - Draft policy and guidance, training was to follow
- Reporting requirements including UKRI funding assurance visits every three years
- The University's Code of Good Practice in Research, Animal Research Policy, and Ethical Frameworks were helpful documents in understanding QAR

The Senate thanked the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Dr Anne-Marie Van Dodeweerd for the presentation.

The following questions and comments were raised:

- Was there a list of countries/organisations that the University should not accept funding/undertake research with?

There was no single list but the Research Collaboration Advice Team (RCAT) in the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy specifically could help with this. For certain countries there were additional steps, checks, and due diligence that would need to be undertaken.

- The LGBTQIA+ Network had been developing a travel tool kit it would be helpful to integrate this with other guidance.
- The Vice-Chancellor advised that a national level work was in hand to counter the proliferation of requirements for undertaking research

### **23/38 Presentation from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor International**

The Senate welcomed Dr Caroline Baylon to her first meeting as Pro-Vice-Chancellor International. Dr Baylon gave an introductory presentation to the Senate on her first three months in the role highlighting:

- Initial observations
  - Reading had a lot already and a lot more to offer
  - There was a need to get the basics right in some areas
  - There was some fragmentation
  - The University's global reputation could be enhanced
- Immediate challenges and priorities included:
  - [Redacted, Section 43]
  - [Redacted, Section 43]
  - [Redacted, Section 43]
  - [Redacted, Section 43]
- Longer term planning, prioritisation and monitoring – [Redacted, Section 43]

The following comments and questions were raised by the Senate:

- Schools had a number of named roles for different activities, could additional roles be brought in specifically to support/co-ordinate global engagement?

A number of Schools already had such roles. Dr Baylon would be happy to discuss this matter further with Schools.

- [Redacted, Section 43]
- The University's Travel Policy contained measures to reduce the impact on climate change and as such had restrictions around some travel. How could those policies be balanced against plans for international student growth?

[Redacted, Section 43]

Senate thanked Dr Baylon for the presentation.

### **23/39 Presentation from RSU**

The Senate welcomed the new RSU Officers. The Full-time Officer team for 2023/24 had agreed on several priorities they wanted to work on throughout the year ahead, these were concerns and worries that students currently had:

- Inclusion and Belonging
  - Pledge against hate speech
  - Events Committee to ensure that events cater for all student needs
  - More cultural events
- Cost of Living
  - Savers menu and free tea and coffee
  - Academic resource fund
  - Societies and sports memberships
- Safety
  - Review of security within RSU
  - Work to improve safety in Halls & RSU venues
  - Bystander and Consent Training
- Housing
  - Guarantor Scheme
  - Renters' rights

The following comments and questions were raised by the Senate:

- Had RSU considered a fund or trade in system for second-hand books?

The Library was looking into a scheme

- Was there any sense of how students were managing the cost-of-living crisis?

Many students were continuing to struggle with costs. The cost-of-living fund had already spent half of its budget for the year. Students were particularly struggling with accommodation costs which would only increase as student numbers went up. Most maintenance loans no longer covered rent.

- Most of the priorities were not academically focussed – if there was one thing that RSU could ask of the Senate what would that be?

Improving student engagement and ensuring students do not fall between the gaps, particularly with the cost-of-living crisis and needing to work alongside studies

- Given the link between engagement and student success how much could the University influence the cost of the Halls accommodation?

The University had a clear system for setting rent with UPP. UPP could not increase rates above a certain level and rates were towards the favourable end under the current agreement

- Could more be done to reduce the costs of catering, e.g. allowing transfer of meals across weeks?

The Catering team were working hard to reduce the costs of the Clever Cuisine programme. There was a need to balance allowing flexibility with the increased food waste and greater costs involved.

- How was mental health being taken into account with cost-of-living concerns?

Work on the Mental Health Charter was a priority for RSU

- Were there differences in concerns between students living in hall, private accommodation, at home?

Cost of living was hitting all students across the board, but particularly those in Halls and private accommodation. Many students were struggling to find suitable accommodation

Senate thanked the RSU Officers for their presentation.

### **23/40 Update on the work of the AI Group**

The Senate received an update from Professor Louise Hague on the work of the Artificial Intelligence (AI) Group.

It was noted that:

- The Group had been established in September 2023 to consider how the University could take a positive, educational approach to the potential use of generative AI technology (GAIT) as part of teaching, learning and assessments at Reading
- The Group was focussing on: consistency of experience and approach for students and staff; looking at study advice; disseminating information on academic integrity and in particular an academic integrity course that could be undertaken by students referred to SCAM in order to reflect on academic practice; monitoring the evolution and appearance of GAIT.
- Consideration was being given as to how GAIT could provide opportunities for staff and students
- No cases had yet been identified where students had misused AI
- The AI position statement would be used to develop a detailed policy on AI in teaching, learning and assessment in collaboration with the Academic Integrity Working Group.
- The Academic Integrity Policy had been updated and cases involving GAIT could be dealt with transparently and fairly at School level and SCAM.
- There was no reliable detector tool as yet. There was an optional tool in Turnitin but that had not been activated due to the prevalence of false positive results. Discussions were being held with other institutions on this matter.
- The Group was considering how to support staff through: assessment design; guides and updates to policy; embed responsible use of AI; guidance on referencing and citations
- It was likely that measures would need to be embedded at programme level due to disciplinary differences

- Two lunch time sessions were planned on GAIT for colleagues to attend
- The use of AI was likely to be a graduate attribute going forward

The following comments and questions were raised by the Senate:

- Most cases at SCAM would be dealt with under plagiarism and/or falsification of data
- Is Reading lagging behind other institutions on this?

The University was part of a network of institutions. Reading was taking the same approach and was in line with other institutions

- There was a need to be careful as to how colleagues use Chat GPT – there was a possibility of loss of Intellectual Property
- There was a trade off between open access and AI – guidance would be needed for researchers

### **23/41 Report of the Vice-Chancellor**

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

Community:

- In September 2023, Professor Dominik Zaum became interim PVC Academic Planning and Resource with Professor Parveen Yaqoob now PVC Research and Innovation portfolio full-time.
- As part of the professional services review, appointments had been made for the Heads of Directorate. Following an internal recruitment process, the following colleagues took up these new posts on 1 October 2023:
  - Student Experience & Education – Matt White
  - Research & Innovation – Karen Henderson
  - Planning, Governance & Legal – Julie Rowe
  - External Relations – Fiona Blair
  - HR – Claire Rolstone
  - DTS – Stuart Brown
  - Estates – Andrew Casselden
  - Finance – Andrew Grice
- Supporting our community on Israel and Gaza concerns - Last week, around 50 students and colleagues from across the University accepted a joint open invitation from the President of Reading Students' Union and the Vice-Chancellor to an informal discussion at the Students' Union. At the event, attendees discussed what to do as a community to support each other, and how to act as individuals and collectively to help those in need. It was encouraging that so many people came together to talk in a constructive and respectful manner, despite differences of opinions and perspectives.
- Universities UK (UUK) and the University and College Union (UCU) had pledged a collaborative approach to increasing benefits and accrual rates back to the levels prior to the reductions made



in April 2022, (so reducing contribution rates for members and employers by around a third) and exploring options to make the scheme more sustainable.

- Diversity and Inclusion – The second edition of the Decolonising the Curriculum resources was published in 2023, featuring new case studies from colleagues and input from student inclusion consultants. Black History Month had taken place in October; planning was underway for Disability History Month.
- Universities UK (UUK) had published a report into the regulatory burden (defined as those activities that higher education providers must do – and be seen to be doing to be registered with OfS). These activities were in addition to business-as-usual activities and were mandatory given that OfS registration was essential to award degrees, hold a university title and give access to student loans etc. The University provided comprehensive input into the report and its findings made interesting reading. For example, on average universities had 18 full time colleagues dedicated to these activities, and 41% of universities felt that the costs of regulation outweighed the benefits. UUK suggested several proposals to reduce the burden from publishing impact assessments ahead of new stipulations to OfS resetting its relationships with providers to rebuild trust and engagement.

#### Excellence:

- The new School of Art building opened at the start of term.
- Reading improved its position in latest Guardian UK university rankings, from 61 to 44. The improvement came primarily from stronger performance in last year's National Student Survey. In the Times/Sunday Times Reading was ranked 34, down slightly from 30 last year with no significant changes at individual metric level against the previous year. Reading was ranked 38 in the inaugural Daily Mail UK university rankings.

#### Sustainability:

- Successful open days had been held in October.
- The difficult decision to suspend several staff reward and promotion activities at the University to help address the financial challenges. This suspension had now been communicated to all colleagues. The suspension would provide an opportunity to review and improve processes and systems used to run the schemes.
- The Travel Policy came into effect on 1 August 2023, including measures to stop business class flights and encourage colleagues to consider the carbon footprint of all their travel decisions. Colleagues would be expected to use trains instead of planes to reach European destinations within 8 hours. Any flights that were necessary must be via economy as this was the lowest-carbon option.

#### Engaged University:

- A Community Engagement Steering Group had been established to provide strategic oversight of community engagement activity at the University.
- The University had joined London Higher.

## Items for report and approval

### 23/42 Report of the University Executive Board

#### a) School of Humanities

At its meeting on 16 October 2023 the University Executive Board had considered a proposal in respect of the closure of the School of Humanities and moving of its constituent Departments.

It was proposed that:

- a) The Department of Classics be moved into the current School of Literature and Languages
- b) The Department of History be moved into the current School of Literature and Languages
- c) The School of Literature and Languages and the Departments of History and of Classics consider an appropriate new name for the School, which reflected its constitutive disciplines.
- d) The Department of Philosophy be moved into the current School of Politics, Economics, and International Relations.
- e) The School of Politics, Economics, and International Relations, and the Department of Philosophy consider an appropriate new name for the School, which reflected its constitutive disciplines.
- f) SLL and SPEIR consider their new Executive Support requirements. If it became necessary to put executive support staff at risk of redundancy, all efforts would be made to redeploy affected colleagues, in accordance with the University's Restructuring Procedure. All efforts would be made to avoid dismissals for redundancy at the end of the transition period.
- g) The School of Humanities would be formally closed as of 1 January 2024.

In accordance with the University's Restructuring Procedure Clause 4.2 a Consultation Group would be established. The proposal was being submitted to the Senate for comment and Council for approval.

Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Zaum recorded his thanks to Professor Gail Marshall for Acting as temporary Head of School.

The following comments and questions were noted:

- The timeframe for implementation by January 2024 seemed quite short. When would the University know whether any redundancies were required?

The timeframe was set out in accordance with the Restructuring Procedure, with formal consultation starting after the meeting of Council on 22 November 2023. It was highly unlikely that any redundancies would be required, particularly given current support requirements in the relevant Schools, but no formal commitment could be given until the process was complete

- Had the students been consulted?

RSU had been spoken with, but not students on the programmes as there was no change or impact on them

- Should other Schools be concerned by this, particularly other disciplines that were small in size?

The proposal was not just on the basis of size of the School and its Departments. There was a clear academic case around research and teaching synergies, including the realignment of research divisions ahead of REF. The University had also tried on two occasions to appoint a new Head of School, both times unsuccessfully

- This would be the 5<sup>th</sup> configuration for the School of Literature and Languages (SLL) – how long would this configuration be left for?

There was no intention to change SLL structure again, but no guarantee could be made that a change would not be required at some future point

- There were some concerns that there would be one less voice speaking for the Arts and Humanities Schools, hopefully this would not reflect a diminution in the importance of Arts and Humanities to the University

Arts and Humanities were recognised as a critical part of the breadth of disciplines offered

- A new name for the School would be chosen

The Senate voted fully in favour of the proposal to close the School of Humanities and move its constituent Departments.

## b) Draft Academic Career Framework

The Senate received the Draft Academic Career Framework for comment. As part of the Individual Expectations Framework, a commitment had been made to the Senate to develop on 'Institutional Expectations' document, this framework served that purpose.

It was noted that Academic Career Frameworks were common across the sector, to support academic colleagues in career planning and development, and to support line managers with appraisals, recruitment, and development.

The draft framework drew on existing criteria and expectations at the University, including Probation, role profiles, and Personal Titles criteria; as well as on the principles of the University Strategy and the 3Rs. Rather than developing new expectations, it brought together in one place, and through the lens of an academic career, the University's proposed expectations at different career stages.

The framework would be for use by colleagues and their line managers in relevant processes such as PDRs and promotions but would also inform job descriptions in recruitment processes. It would be expected to be used, over time, alongside the disciplinary expectation statements piloted in the Individual Expectations project, to inform PDRs and workload planning.

The Senate was asked to note the draft paper, and Senators were invited to provide any comments as part of the consultation process. In addition, Senate was to agree to the establishment of the proposed review group, with Senate participation, to finalise the paper and guidance.

The following comments were noted:

- Issues around metrics were recognised
- As part of the next step it was important to consider the process and how it could be supported
- The Group should include more junior colleagues
- UBRI would also consider the framework and be asked for their input
- It would be helpful under Lecturer if the three areas could be thought about horizontally sitting alongside each other
- Consideration would need to be given as to how the framework would sit alongside other processes. Reward was not part of this process
- In some respect the framework felt a simplification. It did not take into consideration different contract types

The document was designed to be a simplification. It was not a blueprint for how to progress. There was no difference in expectation between contract types in terms of quality

Members of the Senate were asked to let the Secretary know if they were interested in joining the review group.

### **23/43 Report of the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience**

The Senate received the Report of the meetings of the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (UBTLSE) held on 17 July, 12 September, and 3 October 2023.

The report contained updates on:

- Safeguarding
- The Teaching Excellence Framework
- Annual Statement from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)
- Annual Report on Sexual Misconduct and Harassment
- Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools (GAIT)
- Strategic Priorities
- Portfolio Review Pathway
- Risk Registers
- National Student Survey 2023
- Programme Monitoring and Review processes
- School Teaching Enhancement Action Planning
- Decolonising the Curriculum
- Blackboard Learn Ultra

- Student Voice and Partnership
- Sub-Group on Education for Sustainable Development
- Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)
- Sector bodies and national initiatives
- 2023 University Teaching Fellowship winners

Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor McCrum highlighted in particular to the Senate the outcome of TEF (Silver) and the improvements in the NSS results, and thanked all those colleagues in Schools and Functions involved.

### **23/44 Report of the University Board for Research and Innovation**

The Senate received a 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 7 November 2023. At this meeting, it would consider the following principal items

- Academic Careers Framework
- Open Access fund future plans for use
- University-wide research culture survey: key findings.
- Research performance-related data, including research grants and awards outcomes for 2022/23, research-related University Key Performance Indicators, and recent world league table performance.
- Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2028: Initial Funding body decisions, University response to consultation and University REF 2028 planning activity.
- Update on progress with the Current Research Information System
- Updated on the Concordats to support research integrity and the career development of researchers
- Minutes/reports from reporting committees
- Launch of the Research Output Prize

### **23/45 Report of the Global Engagement Strategy Board**

The Senate received and noted the report of the Global Engagement Strategy Board held on 11 July and 6 October 2023. Dr Baylon advised the Senate that she would look at function of the Board going forward.

### **23/46 Enrolment Analysis 2023**

The Senate received and noted a report from Global Recruitment and Admissions on the current recruitment position.

#### **Items for note**

### **23/47 Chair's Action**

The Senate noted that the following items had been approved by Chair's action - the appointment of Brian Turner and Professor Becky Green to Honorary Degrees Committee to 31.7.25; Dr Karen Poulter to University Personal Titles Committee (31.7.24); Professor Gunter Kuhnle (31.7.26), Dr MARRISA JOSEPH (31.7.24) and Sharon Sinclair-Graham (31.7.24) to the Senate Agenda Group; Dr Chris Jones to UBRI (31.7.26); Professor Keiichi Nakata to UREC (31.7.26)

### **23/48 Appointments to Committees and other bodies**

In respect of appointments, the Senate noted that vacancies were still available on the Arts Committee.

### **23/49 Other retirements**

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:

Alan Grant (31.3.23)

Stephanie May (3.8.23)

Susan Potts (5.8.23)

Dr Diane Watts (31.8.23)

Gary McGuirk (31.8.23)

Dr Maria Asensio (31.8.23)

Dr Mike Proven (31.10.23)

Sue Brannam (31.10.23)

### **23/50 Reports of Examiners for Higher Degrees by thesis**

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

### **23/51 Dates of next meeting**

Wednesday 3 January 2024 at 2.15 pm (reserve)

Wednesday 28 February 2024 at 2.15 pm (via Teams)

Wednesday 1 May 2024 at 2.15 pm (reserve)

Thursday 20 June 2024 at 2.15 pm (in person)