

## Senate

**24/01** A meeting of the Senate was held at 2.15 pm on Wednesday 28 February 2024 via Teams.

Present:

Vice-Chancellor (Chair)  
Professor Maarten Ambaum  
Professor Tabarak Ballal  
Dr Caroline Baylon  
Professor Kat Bicknell  
Dr Simon Clarke  
Professor Phil Dash  
Professor Richard Frazier  
Professor Carol Fuller  
Professor Becky Green  
Professor Louise Hague  
Dr MARRISA JOSEPH  
Professor Gunter Kuhnle  
Professor Allan Laville  
Dr Shu-Ling Lu  
Dr Rachel McCloy  
Professor Elizabeth McCrum  
Dr David Marshall  
Professor Gail Marshall  
Professor Peter Miskell  
Dr Rachael Neal  
Professor Adrian Palmer  
Dr Karen Poulter  
Professor Rebecca Rist  
Dr Sharon Sinclair-Graham  
Professor Amy Smith  
Dr Sokratis Stergiadis  
Professor Katja Strohfeldt  
Professor Gabor Thomas  
Brian Turner  
Professor Sarah von Billerbeck  
Professor Carol Wagstaff  
Dr Shixuan Wang  
Professor Adrian Williams  
Professor Hong Yang  
Professor Dominik Zaum  
Dr Ruvi Ziegler

**Students:**

RSU Activities

[Name withheld, Section 40] *Student representative*

[Name withheld, Section 40] *Student representative*

**In attendance:**

Dr Deepa Driver

Dr Richard Messer

Penny Egan

Andrew Grice

Louise Sharman (Secretary)

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed members to the Senate.

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 Tony Giles - Tony joined the University in 1960 as a Lecturer in the Department of Agricultural Economics and Management before progressing to Head of Department. Tony was the Founding Director of the Farm Management Unit from 1979-1993 and retired in 1993.

The following colleagues sadly all died in service:

Mrs Hilary Harris – Lecturer in Early Childhood Care and Education in the Institute of Education.

Dr Herbert James (known as Les) – Supervising Tutor in the Institute of Education

**24/02 Minutes of the last meeting**

The Senate approved Minutes 23/34 to 23/51 of the last formal meeting held on 1 November 2023.

**Items for Presentation and discussion****24/03 Lifelong Learning**

The Senate received a presentation from Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Miskell on Lifelong Learning.

The presentation highlighted to the Senate:

- The two ways of thinking/types of learning between traditional undergraduates based on campus (type 1), and those undertaking HE as an addition to the world of work (type 2 - possibly older, living at home, part time, predominantly off campus, immersed in a professional/family life)
- Would the lifelong learning agenda require the University to re-balance its activities and modes of provision?
- The University already offers professional education to learners at different career stages – prescribing courses, coaching programmes, clinical training, MBS, degree apprenticeships

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  - [Redacted, Section 43]
  - [Redacted, Section 43]
  - [Redacted, Section 43]
- [Redacted, Section 43]
- Government were introducing the LLE to come into effect September 2025:
  - It would provide all students with access to funding for post 18 education which could be used flexibly over their working life
  - Opportunities to study would be in bite-sized chunks accumulated over time towards a full degree
  - There would not be a separate funding stream, but all students (levels 4-6) would access the same system
- But.... Was there evidence of student demand? Short course trials had little take up amongst students and demand for traditional undergraduate programmes remained buoyant. There were limited incentives for universities to offer these courses
- [Redacted, Section 43]
- The following questions and comments were raised on the presentation:
- Was the Government's timescale of September 2025 realistic? It was suggested that the timescale was not realistic and that there would be no surprise if it were pushed back
- Would a different Government keep the LLE? Any Government was likely to expect universities to provide opportunities for students to access HE regardless of background – making HE open and accessible would cut across any government agenda
- Introducing the LLE would be a major piece of work for HEIs if introduced and it would take time to develop a substantive market
- There was little demand at present, in fact demand for traditional (type 1) undergraduate degrees was increasing along with the number of commuter students, and students who needed to work part-time alongside their studies
- It was expected that the direction of travel would move to support those commuter students and students who needed to work

The Senate thanked Professor Miskell the presentation.

#### **24/04 Academic Career Framework**

The Senate received the latest version of the Academic Career Framework. Professor Zaum and Professor Strohfeldt updated the Senate on work that had taken place since its last meeting on 1 November 2023.

The Senate had previously reviewed and commented on an earlier version and had agreed that the final iteration should be produced together with a review group composed of members of Senate (Dr Ilan Dwek, Dr Marissa Joseph), Heads of School (Professor Phil Dash and Professor Carmel Houston-Price), a T&L Dean (Professor Katja Strohfeldt) and a Research Dean (Professor Roberta Gilchrist). The Group had

met twice to review the framework, and to compare it against Probation, Professorial Review and Personal Titles criteria, to ensure consistency. The revised version also included comments from relevant committees (UCRI and UBTLSE).

It was noted that the framework was now much improved and included more explanation upfront on what it would be used for. With one exception, the expectations outlined in the framework aligned with the current Probation, Promotion, and Professorial Review criteria. The framework includes an explicit expectation that all T&R and RI staff make competitive funding applications, and as they progress develop a track record of successful grant applications. This was a departure from the current personal titles criteria, where R3 (research income) was an optional criterion, not a compulsory one.

Following approval by Senate, consultation with UCU would be required. There was also more work to be undertaken to consider the operational implications of this framework for existing HR and wider University policies and processes. Any changes to existing policies and processes might also require consultation with UCU. If there were any substantive changes to the framework then these would be brought back to the Senate.

The Senate were now asked to approve the framework in principle.

The following comments were raised:

- The categories (achieving/excelling/leading) how been redefined and reframed
- The latest version was much clearer and was welcomed
- In thinking about implementation there would need to be some nuancing around different roles/career paths, in particular in managing work loads
- Metrics would be discipline specific. Metrics would sit within discipline level statements for a more nuanced approach
- The development of discipline specific statement would be taken forwards as a next step in conjunction between Schools/Departments and the Planning and Strategy Office

The Senate voted and unanimously approved the framework in principle.

The Senate recorded its thanks to all those colleagues in the review group for their help.

## **24/05 Risk Management and the Corporate Risk Register**

The Senate received a paper that had been submitted to the Council at its meeting on 28 September 2023 in regard to the Corporate Risk Register and risks relevant to Council and its Sub-Committees.

Professor Zaum, as Chair of the Risk Management Group, explained how risks had been allocated to Council and its Sub-Committees. The Senate noted that it had been allocated the following risks:

Risk 2 – Along with the Student Experience Committee – [Redacted, Section 43]

Risk 6 – Along with Scrutiny and Finance Committee – [Redacted, Section 43]

Risk 7 – Along with Scrutiny and Finance Committee – [Redacted, Section 43]

Risk 8 – Along with the Student Experience Committee, and Scrutiny and Finance Committee – [Redacted, Section 43]

Chairs of Council Sub-Committees had been invited to consider in their committees in the session whether and how they could explore one or more of the risks most relevant to their committee's work in greater detail.

Senate noted that an update on Risk 6 would be presented to its Summer Term meeting.

In regard to Risk 7 the Committee received a presentation from Professor McCrum on Academic Quality in Education (AQAR) (also see the UBTLE report 24/09) to give an overview of the mechanisms in place to mitigate the risk.

The presentation highlighted to the Senate:

- OFS Conditions of Registration
  - a) Access and participation for students from all backgrounds
  - b) Quality, reliable standards and positive outcomes for all students
  - c) Protecting the interests of students
  - d) Financial sustainability
  - e) Good governance
  - f) Information for students
  - g) Accountability for fees and funding
- The B conditions covered:
  - Academic experience
  - Resources, support and student engagement
  - Student outcomes
  - Assessment and awards
  - Sector-recognised standards
  - Participate in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)
- TEF was one of a number of external regulatory requirements that assured the quality of provision. Others included: accreditation and reaccreditation by PSRBs; the work of the external examining system in reviewing award standards; performance related data around continuation, completion, progression and NSS
- For all areas of performance related data the University met the thresholds set by the OfS. There was also benchmark data, for e.g. for the TEF
- [Redacted, Section 43]
- The results of the NSS had been presented previously to the Senate. The results for 2023 were an improved position particularly for learning resources, teaching and academic support. [Redacted, Section 43]
- There were also a range of internal quality assurance mechanisms, including:
  - Institutional reviews: DELT, UBTLE and Senate; data; examiners surveys; partnerships; apprenticeships; PSRBs

- Local review at Boards of Study and Student Experience, and School Teaching Enhancement and Action Planning (STEAP)
- Internal data on attainment and progression
- Within the Senate papers (24/09) was the Annual Learning and Teaching Report which drew together all of the assurance into one document
- Feedback from STEAP had focused on the following themes:
  - [Redacted, Section 43]
  - [Redacted, Section 43]
  - [Redacted, Section 43]
  - [Redacted, Section 43]

The following comments were made:

- [Redacted, Section 43]
- [Redacted, Section 43]
- [Redacted, Section 43]
- [Redacted, Section 43]
- [Redacted, Section 43]
- The University would continue to work in partnership with RSU on cost of living and supporting students in financial difficulty
- The University would keep under review its expectations and what that meant for the current student body as it evolved
- It was important to remember that the OfS could undertake investigations on a range of fronts. A number of investigations at other institutions were currently underway

The Senate thanked Professor McCrum for the presentation.

#### **24/06 Update on PRP**

The Senate received an update on the PRP implementation for Spring 2024. The paper set out key progress over the last 12 months and the work to be undertaken ready for launch of the new academic year and programme changes in September 2024.

In response to a question in regard to 30% blended learning, Professor McCrum clarified that the 30% was never a target and that in considering programmes Schools should think about what could be best delivered by technology.

#### **24/07 Report of the Vice-Chancellor**

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

Community:

- This month was LGBTQIA+ History Month with a programme of events planned. Dr Ziegler recorded thanks to all those colleagues involved in the events
- Women@Reading – Tharindu Liyanagunawardena had been appointed as co-chair and there was still a vacancy for a second colleague to join in this role.
- The Office for Students (OfS) had approved the University's Access and Participation Plan (APP) for the academic years 2024/25 to 2027/28. The APP set out strategies and objectives to support students from diverse and underrepresented backgrounds before, during and after their higher education. An approved APP was a condition of registration with the OfS. From 2024/25 onwards, APPs would be reviewed every four years.
- Academic Freedom and external speaker guidance – All colleagues were reminded to follow the guidance in the external speaker policy when booking an external speaker for an event. The Vice-Chancellor had spoken out on several occasions about the importance of academic freedom, and it was important to remember that this policy was intended to ensure an external speaker could freely discuss or debate their topic – in accordance with the University's commitment to academic freedom – whilst making sure the event could go ahead safely.
- Cost of living - The University and Reading Student Union (RSU) joint Cost-of Living Taskforce met in the Autumn term to evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives implemented last year and consider new measures to provide enhanced support to students in the year ahead. These new initiatives included the introduction of the Access to Activity Fund, which guaranteed all students the opportunity to engage in societies and sports clubs. Additionally, the Academic Fund had been established to assist students in acquiring essential books and textbooks. Furthermore, a subsidised hot meal and beverage offer had been introduced at Mojos.
- International students - The Government had removed the ability of some international students to come to the UK to study with their dependants from 1 January 2024. This would impact on international undergraduate and master's students. Postgraduate research or government-funded scholarships would be exempt.
- In December, the Home Office announced a new package of measures on Spiking. The Home Office had now announced a significant package of measures which included: updating legislation to state specifically that spiking was illegal; requirement on all licensees to prevent incidents of spiking; and to consider the prevention and reporting of sexual harassment and misconduct.

#### Excellence:

- TEF - The University's Silver TEF rating was published at the end of September 2023, along with other providers (that had not made representations about their result). The majority of the remaining 50 or so provider outcomes were published in December, following an appeals process. The University was one of 125 providers (56%) and one of 73 HEIs (c. 62%) to be awarded a Silver rating. Across the sector, 51 providers received Gold ratings (22%), 125 Silver (55%) and 48 bronze (21%) with one Requires Improvement and two results still pending. The University's five identified comparator institutions (Nottingham, Royal Holloway, Southampton, Sussex, and Surrey) also received Silver awards. The award meant that the panel found that the student experience and outcomes at the University were typically very high quality. Within the submission, the panel highlighted two outstanding (gold) features: the use of research to support provision and the tailoring of provision to support successful outcomes. The OfS had now published most of the provider submission and panel summary statements.

- Blackboard Learn Ultra project was being rolled out over two academic years with all course material and modules ready for 2024/25.
- ECMWF - planning permission had been granted for the new European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) headquarters on the Whiteknights campus; construction would start in 2024.
- REF – the timing for the next exercise had been extended by one year; the results of REF 2029 would be published in December 2029 with institutions submitting around December 2028.
- Agrifood Scoping Project - UEB had received a project update in early January, providing a summary of activity from June to December and outlining plans for the final phase of work. The Project had continued to progress well, meeting milestones on time and benefitting from high levels of engagement from colleagues across the University. Consultations with senior representatives of external stakeholder organisations (BBSRC, DEFRA, Wellcome Trust) had been helpful. The final phase was to develop a long-term strategic plan for agrifood research at Reading. The Project's external Advisory Panel meets for the final time at the end of February to review the strategic plan and shape the final recommendations. The Project was on track to deliver its final report at the end of April.

#### Sustainability:

- Financial Statement 2022/23 - In December, the University published its financial statement for 2022/23. Following years of Covid-19 related impacts, the University saw an increase in its income as activity returned to the new normal post-pandemic. However, it also saw a significant rise in expenditure levels. This was due to increased activity compared to 2022; increased staff costs, including the early implementation of the 2023/24 national pay award; a rise in energy prices; and other inflationary pressures, such as static home undergraduate tuition fee rates. As confirmed by Council, a £30m deficit for the year 2023/24 remains the financial target
- USS – changes had now been implemented to both employee and employer rates from January 2024

In respect of a question related to the External Speaker Policy the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that being prevented from speaking at another HEI would not disqualify that speaker from speaking at Reading. The question asked in the Event form was simply a way to triage events. It was noted that the University had never barred anyone from speaking but on occasion had asked that practical measures be put in place for the health and safety of speakers, attendees, any demonstrators.

The Senate noted the Vice-Chancellor's recent address at the House of Parliament on protecting academic freedom.

#### Items for report and approval

#### 24/08 Report of the University Executive Board



There was no formal report on this occasion, all items had been covered elsewhere on the agenda.

### **24/09 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 1 November, 5 December 2023, and 15 January, 15 February 2024.

The report contained updates on:

- Key decisions and changes to policies
- University Annual Quality Assurance Report 2022/23
- Degree Outcomes Statement 2023
- Risk Registers
- Exceptional Circumstances Process Review
- Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools (GAIT)
- Portfolio Review Pathway
- School Teaching Enhancement Action Planning
- Freedom of Speech
- Graduate Outcomes 2020/21
- Student Surveys 2024 (NSS & PTES)
- Postgraduate Student Experience Survey 2023
- League Table Summaries
- Academic Careers Framework
- Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)
- Sector bodies and national initiatives
- Partnerships in Learning and Teaching (PLanT) projects, NTF nominations and CATE nominations

The Senate were asked to:

- note the contents of the report; and
- approve and commend to Council the Annual Learning and Teaching Report (Spring 2024).

The Senate approved and commended the ALTR to the Council.

### **24/10 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 had received updates on the University's research governance structure and reporting committees' Terms of Reference and Membership.
- The Board had received updates from the PVC (R&I) including: Agri-food scoping exercise; University strategic partnerships; Research awards and applications data as of FQ1 2023/24; UKRI competitive funding decisions data 2017/18 – 2022/23.
- The Board discussed approaches to increasing research income generation and the University report on Perceptions of research culture at the University of Reading.
- It had received an update on progress with the University procurement of a Current Research Information System (CRIS) and an update on Funding body decisions and University plans for REF 2029.
- It had approved the updated University Research Data Management Policy.

#### **24/11 Report of the Global Engagement Strategy Board**

The Senate received and noted the report of the Global Engagement Strategy Board held on 29 November 2023 and 24 January 2024.

#### **Items for note**

#### **24/12 Chair's Action**

The Senate noted that the following items had been approved by Chair's action -

- Approval of external examiners for a Doctor of Science candidate
- Appointment of Professor Sarah von Billerbeck to the University Research Ethics Committee
- Minor amendments to Ordinance A9 and B3 to reflect the Director of Finance appointment to University Executive Board
- Minor amendments to Ordinance A1 and B4 to include the title of Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor

#### **24/13 Retirement of Professors**

The Senate approved that that the following be accorded the title of Emeritus/ta Professor with effect from the date indicated:

Professor Jim Dunwell (31.12.23)

Professor Rick Poynor (22.12.23)

#### **24/14 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:

Dr John Bowen (14.11.2023)

Wendy Neale (1.1.2024)

Andrew Heaps (31.1.2024)

Dr Sheila MacIntyre (29.2.2024)

#### **24/15 Reports of Examiners for Higher Degrees by thesis**

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

#### **24/16 Dates of next meeting**

Wednesday 1 May 2024 at 2.15 pm (reserve)

Thursday 20 June 2024 at 2.15 pm (in person)