

## Senate

**24/37** A meeting of the Senate was held at 2.15 pm on Wednesday 30 October 2024 in Chancellors G06.

**Present:**

Vice-Chancellor (Chair)  
Pamela Cottrell  
Dr Ilan Dwek  
Professor Richard Frazier  
Professor Becky Green  
Professor Louise Hague  
Professor Carmel Houston-Price  
Dr Marrisa Joseph  
Professor Yelena Kalyuzhnova  
Professor Uma Kambhampati  
Dr Stephen Kastoryano  
Professor Gunter Kuhnle  
Dr Shu-Ling Lu  
Dr Rachel McCloy  
Professor Elizabeth McCrum  
Professor Gail Marshall  
Dr Kieran Lee Marshall  
Dr Sarah Marston  
Professor Peter Miskell  
Professor Henny Osbahr  
Dr Karen Poulter  
Professor Trish Reid  
Dr Sokratis Stergiadis  
Professor Katja Strohfeldt  
Brian Turner  
Professor Adrian Williams

**Students:**

RSU Activities  
RSU Education  
RSU President  
RSU Welfare  
RSU Inclusion  
RSU Built Environment UG Senior Rep – [Redacted, Section 40]  
RSU Law UG Senior Rep - [Redacted, Section 40]  
RSU Mathematical, Physical & Computational Sciences UG Senior Rep - [Redacted, Section 40]  
Caroline Redzikowska (Secretary)

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed members to the Senate, and in particular the new RSU Officers.

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 Brian Palmer – Brian was Principal of Bulmershe College of Higher Education, which merged with the University in 1989. Following the merger he became Dean of the Faculty of Education and Community Studies. Following his retirement he remained a visiting member of staff.

Sadly the following colleague had recently died in service:

James Allison – James had worked with the Security Services Team for over 17 years

### **24/38 Minutes of the last meeting**

The Senate approved Minutes 24/17 to 24/36 of the last formal meeting held on 20 June 2024.

### **24/39 Membership of the Senate in 2024/25**

The Senate received a list of its membership for the session 2024/25 and noted Ordinance A3, which contained its terms of reference. Since this was the first meeting of the new academic year, and there were many new members, the Vice-Chancellor drew Senators' attention to its major remit, which was to exercise general responsibility for the academic standards of the University

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

#### **24/40 RSU Teaching Excellence Awards**

The Senate received a presentation from the RSU Education Officer, Shreyas Gandhi.

The presentation explained that the Awards were a valuable opportunity for students to appreciate members of staff and value their efforts.

The presentation explained how the scheme worked with nominations made and an open survey conducted. Decisions on the winners of the Awards were made by the RSU Education Officer looking at all of the information received.

In response to questions the Education Officer advised:

- He was not sighted on who had been chosen by previous Education Officers
- Success was not solely dependent on the number of nominations or responses. Consideration was given to the comments made and the level of student support.

Members of Senate thanked the Education Officer for the very helpful presentation which had provided much clarity on how the awards were made and made the following points and suggestions:

- Colleagues genuinely appreciated the nominations and awards which were often referred to in promotion processes
- The nominations/awards were a good thing to celebrate and recognise within Schools. It would be very helpful if information on nominations and awards could be communicated to Schools particularly if this was in a celebratory and easily sharable form.
- In order to avoid any perception of bias or corruption etc, it was recommended that decisions on awards be made by a committee rather than just one person
- It might be helpful to make it clearer in the nomination form that comments were very important, more so than volume of responses.

The Education Officer thanked Senate for their comments and agreed to take on board the points that had been made.

## **24/41 Department of Chemistry**

The Senate received a paper in respect of the Department of Chemistry. The paper proposed:

- Closure of the Chemistry Department on grounds of academic performance,
- Closure and teach-out of MChem and MSc programmes due to low student numbers, and to reduce the complexity of the portfolio.
- The transfer of remaining Chemistry programmes to the School of Pharmacy
- To narrow the focus on Chemistry research aligned with Pharmacy.
- That a review of space and infrastructure requirements be undertaken.

By way of context, Chemistry had for many years struggled to perform against most research indicators. In the latest three REF or RAE exercises, back to 2008, it had been ranked in the bottom quartile. This was also reflected in its research impact as measured through the Field-Weighted Citation Index (FWC), being 52% below the sector average, and its research income per FTE, which was also in the bottom half (second) quartile for the discipline. As a consequence of this, a decision had already been made to no longer submit Chemistry as a separate Unit of Assessment to future REF exercises, and to align it with UoA 3.

More recently, its performance against many teaching indicators had also been significantly below the disciplinary benchmarks. It was the only discipline in the University that sat below all NSS benchmarks, a position maintained since the pandemic.

Although the intake of new students in Chemistry had increased this year (mainly at the Foundation level), student numbers had declined over the last decade. Even with this year's expected increase, numbers remained low. A more focussed approach to both Chemistry teaching and research, and a change to the organisational and leadership structures supporting this, was therefore necessary.

The School of Chemistry, Food, and Pharmacy (SCFP) hosted significant research infrastructure, in particular the Chemical Analysis Facility (CAF). Chemistry was only one of several users of the CAF, but the most significant one for some of the platforms. Any change to the scope of academic activity in Chemistry would have implications for the utilisation of CAF research infrastructure.

In light of this, a range of interrelated proposals were made:

Department of Chemistry:

A number of options, including the closure and teaching out of Chemistry had been considered as part of the proposal. However, given the links with other disciplines and programmes, most notably Pharmacy and programmes in the School of Biological Sciences, the Science Foundation Year, and NUIST, there would remain a need for some teaching capacity for Chemistry, and an opportunity for research synergies.

Further, in light of the significant shared infrastructure for both teaching and research across Chemistry and, in particular, Pharmacy, it was unlikely that the indirect costs of Chemistry could be reduced sufficiently to ensure that closing Chemistry would not leave the University with a significant annual cost due to the loss of fee income. Given the current financial context, this option had been rejected.

Market analysis suggested there was significant potential for more applied Chemistry programmes. Integrating such programmes into Pharmacy, with significant expertise in such areas, could support the development of programmes that would be strong both in terms of student outcomes and experience, could recruit to be financially sustainable, and would have strong educational synergies with the Pharmacy education portfolio.

Independent from the research performance of individuals, narrowing the research in Chemistry that the University supported to an area where there were clear synergies and opportunities for scale from collaboration and alignment with Pharmacy was the best opportunity for this research area to prosper at the University.

To give effect to the University's earlier decision to no longer make a separate Chemistry submission to future REF exercises, and to support the student experience and outcomes on Chemistry programmes, it was proposed to:

- Consolidate the Chemistry programme offer and close the two MChem programmes and the MSc programme for recruitment with immediate effect, and teach out these programmes. Both programmes had very small numbers of students. The teaching out process would be overseen by an Associate Pro-Vice Chancellor for Teaching and Learning, to assure the continued academic quality and student experience for these programmes.
- Cease supporting research in Chemistry that did not align with Pharmacy/REF Unit of Assessment 3.
- Move the remaining six Chemistry programmes into the School of Pharmacy, under the oversight of the School Director of Teaching and Learning. Integrating these programmes with Pharmacy offered the opportunity to further evolve some of the existing programmes (Pharmaceutical Chemistry, and Chemistry with Cosmetic Science) towards more attractive programmes with stronger student demand, supporting student number growth and the financial sustainability of the programmes.
- To review the staffing required to teach the remaining Chemistry programmes and reduce staffing accordingly in accordance with the University's Restructuring Procedure.
- To close the Department of Chemistry, with effect of 1 August 2025.

Research Services had provided a list of all active grants in Chemistry. Nine grants were listed with an end date beyond 31 December 2024. Of these, six had an end date on or before 1 April 2025; one ran until 31 March 2026, and two until 2027. These grants would be carefully reviewed by the Project Group overseeing the implementation.

It was proposed that the School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy be renamed from 1 August 2025, with a new name identified in consultation with colleagues in the School.

#### Establishment of a Consultation Group

It was proposed that the restructuring process was overseen by the Consultation Group set up by Council in Summer 2024.

#### Space and Research Infrastructure:

SCFP currently housed the CAF, which was used by researchers from across the University, though the heaviest use was from the current Departments within SCFP. The CAF ran at a significant loss, which was mostly covered by the School at present. It was proposed that from 1 August 2025, the CAF, including executive support requirements, be moved into the Research and Innovation Directorate and managed as a central facility. Ahead of this, the Director of the CAF and the Head of the Research and Innovation Directorate would:

- review and rationalise the CAF facilities (in light of the changed requirements and in light of the use of current research infrastructure).
- develop a new funding model for CAF, that ensured that the costs from research use were fully allocated to the relevant School or project. Teaching related use of CAF infrastructure was expected to be covered by the contribution from fee income.

Should the outcome of this review have any staffing implications, these would be managed under the University's Restructuring Procedure.

It was proposed that a Feasibility Group be established to consider how the remaining research and teaching activities in Chemistry could be physically consolidated out of the current "research wing" of the Chemistry and Pharmacy building without compromising research contributing to UoA3, to ensure that the indirect costs of the remaining research and teaching activities were similarly reduced. The Feasibility Group would also consider future uses of the building, by the University or potential external tenants.

Senate were asked to comment on the recommendations which UEB intended to make to the Council:

- the closure of the Department of Chemistry with effect from 1 August 2025, in light of its poor performance against research benchmarks, including the last three RAE/REF exercises, and poor performance against NSS subject benchmarks over several years.
- the closure of the MChem and MSc Programmes for entry in 2025/26 and teaching out of the programmes; and to move the remaining Chemistry programmes to the School of Pharmacy.
- To enter into a formal restructuring process to review staffing with the aim to retain the Chemistry staff required to deliver the remaining programmes.
- To cease supporting Chemistry research not aligned with the REF Unit of Assessment 3/Pharmacy.

- With regard to Technical Services supporting Chemistry teaching and research, to review the requirements for support of Chemistry research and the teaching programmes that transfer to the School of Pharmacy.
- With regard to the Chemistry/Pharmacy building, that a Feasibility Study should consider how staff and research infrastructure required after the closure of the Department of Chemistry could be consolidated to ensure the most efficient use of the “Research Wing”, including possible use by external tenants.
- With regard to the Chemical Analysis Facility (CAF), that a review was conducted of the platforms and equipment used by Chemistry, to seek to rationalise the platforms managed by CAF in light of the changed research focus.
- That the Project Group, together with colleagues in the School, considers the appropriate new name for the School from August 2025.

UEB intended to recommend to Council that these changes were managed where appropriate through a single restructuring process.

The PVC Education and Student Experience, Professor McCrum, spoke to the report explaining:

- The report set out the recommendations from UEB to Council
- Senate was asked to comment and provide feedback on the proposal which would be collated and included with the recommendation to Council
- Senate’s attention was drawn to the paper circulated earlier that day by Professor Kuhnle on behalf of Dr McKendrick, the Head of the Department of Chemistry, and an email from 3 MChem students
- The case for closure of the Department was made on academic grounds in light of the performance in both teaching and research against benchmarks over a significant period of time. It was emphasised that the recommendations were not based on any single indicator
- The recommendations included:
  - To cease recruitment to the MChem and MSc programmes. The University would work hard to support and take seriously the experience of existing students.
  - The remaining Chemistry programmes would move to Pharmacy
  - To cease supporting research not aligned with REF Unit of Assessment 3
  - Staffing would be reviewed in accordance with the University’s Restructuring Policy
  - There would be a review of space and infrastructure
  - To review the requirements for Technical support for research and teaching moving to Pharmacy
  - The establishment of a Feasibility Group to look at the use of the Chemistry/Pharmacy building. This was part of the wider work already being carried out to look at use of space across the University.
  - The CAF would move to a centrally managed facility within the Research and Innovation Directorate

In response, the Head of the School of Chemistry Food and Pharmacy made the following points, explaining that they were a mixture of his reflections and those on behalf of colleagues:

- Professor Zaum had met with colleagues from Chemistry and Pharmacy to discuss the recommendations and answer questions. He had also been very willing to meet colleagues individually.
- The Vice Chancellor's talk to staff in September had outlined that, in light of the under-recruitment and the impact this had had on the deficit, cost saving proposals would be brought to this meeting, potentially including a targeted voluntary redundancy scheme. However, this was the only proposal put forward to this meeting that could involve redundancies. The proposal did not outline any savings. It raised the question as to why this proposal was being prioritised given that it would be disruptive, would likely cause a dip in productivity and did not deliver a tangible saving
- The proposal might make sense if there had been under-recruitment in the current cycle but this was not the case. Applications had increased by 29% and recruitment for Chemistry in 2024/5 was over target.
- The report did not explain the rationale for why the proposal was brought forward now
- With regard to cost savings, the report alluded to potential savings through vacating the "research wing" of the Chemistry/Pharmacy building. This wing housed most of the staff and student office space and research labs catering to both Chemistry and Pharmacy research. Ten academic staff from Pharmacy had their offices, their PDRAs and PhD students and their research labs there.
- The building was problematic with a large backlog of maintenance issues. There were some large sums of money allocated to the building in the Estates Strategy. Lab space was generally most fit for purpose on the second floor following a recent refit. Any relocation out of the research wing would need investment in alternative space, unless it was planned to withdraw from chemistry based pharmaceutical research and teaching.
- Some of the NSS metrics arose from the building conditions which could not be blamed on academics and needed to be addressed in any event
- The recommendations regarding the CAF were welcomed
- The recommendations were presented as an academic performance case. It was acknowledged that from a teaching perspective the Chemistry NSS had been problematic, with issues around programme design, the return to in person exams following COVID, and timetabling. However, it was not the case that the Department had not taken steps to address this. The PRP process had been used to overhaul assessment and reduce the exams burden. The data put forward was on a now redundant model. The changes made had not yet a chance to be tested.
- The report assumed that the move to Pharmacy would improve student experience. Pharmacy was a complex department. It had one of the highest SSRs in the University with a complex suite of programmes and was currently in the middle of accreditation processes. There were a lot of placements, high contact hours and high student/staff ratios. There were questions regarding the capacity within Pharmacy to support the change.
- The recommendation, if accepted, would effectively trigger a need to restructure Pharmacy to accommodate the merger of programme and staffing line management. It would divert resources away from focusing on Pharmacy's own priorities around continuation improvements, clinical placement provision and research.

- Further, there could be negative impacts on Pharmacy student experience metrics and research that the report did not cover and needed to be unpacked.
- With regard to the REF, the decision that there would not be a Chemistry return to UoA 8 and instead Chemistry research would be returned to UoA 3 was not shared with Senate at the time of the decision. Further, the decision made by UCRI had not been supported by the Department or the Research Dean. That decision however had already addressed the risk of low ranking in future REF.
- Assurances were given at the time that Chemistry research would be retained and was valued. Less than a year later this proposal withdraws that commitment.
- In respect of research income for the REF, Chemistry had a much higher than typical use of central research facilities, ranking second out of 41 in terms of in-kind income in the last REF. This was one third of the REF reported spend. This type of research spend was not included in the metrics used in the report.
- The recommendations if accepted could have negative reputational impact and how the decisions were communicated externally would need careful consideration. The Royal Society of Chemistry had already been in contact and staff and students already perceived the proposal as closure. Once damaged, reputation was hard to regain. Chemistry was an integral part of the programme areas for NUIST. Careful consideration would need to be given as to how the decision was explained to the MoE in China to mitigate impact on recruitment to other programmes
- The proposal did not follow past practice when decisions around department closures had included reviews. A strategic alignment process to get areas back on track had recently been used. The report did not explain why a similar process had not been used here to inform recommendations. Such a process would be helpful before reaching an outcome.

[Professor Kalyuzhnova joined the meeting ]

Professor Green, as School representative on Senate, also made a number of points including:

- The VC's recent comments had informed staff that the University's priorities were financial and that academic departments could expect cuts for that reason. The recommendations put forward were not based upon financial considerations but on academic performance. No other matters had been put for before Senate based on financial consideration. It was therefore not clear what the case was for prioritising these recommendations over financially based recommendations.
- Starting academic restructuring with a STEM subject could have significant reputational impact and was likely to be widely and negatively reported.
- The recommendations were not timely and would impact recruitment and reputation
- Staff were working to address issues through the PRP process which would improve the NSS. These changes had been supported but the recommendations now pre-empted any improvement this work would bring about. There had been no review process and it was not clear from the report why this had not been carried out and there had been no discussion of alternative solutions.
- Staff were in shock. There had been no involvement in the decision not to review.
- With regard to the REF metrics, approximately 35 Schools submitted to the Chemistry UoA, relatively few compared to the number of Universities with Chemistry (91+). The Department of

Chemistry held a similar position to the University with regard to universities above them in the tables.

- The decreasing resources and staff in Chemistry over a number years had led to the Department being deliberately squeezed by the University. The issue of the REF had already been resolved by the decision to move to a different Unit of Assessment
- It was not clear why Chemistry had not been included in the recent University funded support from consultants with regard to the NSS
- Students would not see Chemistry moving to Pharmacy as not closing Chemistry provision.
- It was not clear what consideration had been given to the relationship with NUIST. Pharmacy did not align with how the partnership with NUIST worked
- Currently there were no synergies in teaching between Pharmacy and the six Chemistry programmes it was proposed to move. Resources in Pharmacy were already stretched and research was being compromised. It was likely that there would be a risk to Pharmacy and that the proposals would have impact negatively. Questions had been raised as to why it was necessary to involve Pharmacy.
- Significant impacts were expected for Pharmaceutical Chemistry as it was anticipated this would be grouped with the Chemistry programmes. Concerns had been raised that if Pharmacy could not “fix” the incoming Chemistry programmes, Pharmacy staff themselves would be put at risk. Assurance was sought that there would be a full risk assessment before Council including the potential risks to Pharmacy
- The financial case for closing Chemistry was weak. Closing a STEM subject was likely to impact reputation and affect recruitment more widely.
- The “research wing” of the Chemistry and Pharmacy building supported a number of academic and support staff. These were spread throughout the building, much of which was not and had not been fit for purpose for a long time. Consolidating activity into a smaller area would take considerable time and resource to make it fit for purpose
- Not taking account of the building, what resources did the proposals expect to save ?
- There was nothing in the proposals that could not be addressed or further addressed if the Department was retained.
- Reference was made to the UEA which had previously merged their Chemistry and Pharmacy departments. In that instance Chemistry had been retained in the name. The merger had had a massive impact not only on Chemistry but also on Pharmacy which had unusually gone into Clearing in that year.
- It was not clear what the advantages of the proposals were. Students wanted to come to a Chemistry department and without one, students would feel like they did not belong
- Professor Green had received a number of emails from Chemistry students who had asked that their comments be passed to Senate. These centred around the following points:
  - A belief that Chemistry staff would not want to work somewhere where there was not a Chemistry Department

- Students would have less exposure to pure chemistry research which would be a major impact to research project opportunities
- Students knew the Chemistry DDAT and DDTL because they support them in teaching. They felt they would be supported less by staff who they didn't know. Pharmacy already supported a high volume of students and consequently did not know them as well
- The size of the Chemistry Department and the level of support available at the University was an advantage
- Prospective students would re-evaluate coming to the University
- The decision did not make students feel valued
- Students had felt supported by Chemistry to date
- Chemistry staff had put their heart into helping students and this decision felt disheartening

Professor McCrum responded to the points made:

- The recommendations were made on academic grounds and were not primarily driven by financial considerations
- Academic standards needed to be maintained in research and teaching. The Department had been underperforming against benchmarks for some time. It was not a new or sudden issue. The University and Senate had a responsibility to address such issues.
- It was acknowledged that the Department had a small surplus on calculating contribution under the model as there was no contribution on Research Income. In TRAC terms, and including Chemistry's CAF costs, it had made a deficit. Other academic units also had TRAC deficits, and the decision was an academic one. but the CAF had a TRAC deficit. There could be opportunities for some savings in terms of space utilisation. The proposed Feasibility Group would need to consider all teaching and research needs
- The University was committed to improving the quality of teaching and research.
- The University would still be offering Chemistry programmes but from within a different Department.
- With regard to the metrics, full note would be taken of the comments that had been made and those comments would be passed on to Council in full.
- The Department had not been squeezed, it had one of the lowest student/staff ratios in the University. Similar levels of support had been provided to make improvements in teaching and learning.
- The use of consultants to support NSS returns had targeted areas where the most significant impact to the University's overall performance would be seen.
- It was acknowledged the recommendations did not wait for the outcome of the hard work colleagues had undertaken through the PRP process, but this work would be of help in future. Chemistry provision was not being closed and the remaining programmes would see the benefits of that work.
- The University remained committed to retaining accreditation and the partnership with NUIST. The University would carefully consider in detail any potential impacts.

- Resources from Chemistry would be brought into Pharmacy as well as the undergraduate programmes, which would help mitigate against increased workload
- The restructure would look at what would be the appropriate staffing in Pharmacy. It was not the intention to impact upon Pharmacy workload's but this could not be guaranteed. There was nothing in the proposal that put any staff in Pharmacy at risk.
- No decisions on staffing had been made. As set out in the proposals, this would be looked at under the University's Restructuring Policy. There would be consultation and opportunities to feed into the process.
- No decision had been made on a name for the new School. All suggestions would be considered
- UEA was not a good comparator. That institution had wider significant problems that had been well publicised

The RSU Education Officer advised that he had received several emails from concerned students asked the following questions :

- What specific measures were planned for supporting students in the MChem and MSc programs during the teach-out phase?
- How would the University communicate these changes clearly to affected students, and was there a timeline for these communications?
- For the ongoing Chemistry programmes moving under the School of Pharmacy, what considerations were being given to accreditation requirements?
- What resources and academic support services would remain accessible to Chemistry students, and were any additional supports planned to mitigate the impact of the transition?
- Had there been a formal opportunity for students to provide feedback on the proposal? If not, would there be any further consultations?
- For students applying or considering Chemistry courses, what guidance and reorientation options would the University provide to address any concerns

The RSU Welfare Officer questioned whether student feedback would be taken into consideration.

Professor McCrum responded

- In making the proposals, quantitative and qualitative evidence from students, including NSS data over several years had been taken into consideration. These data were part of the reason for the decision
- There had been evidence of ongoing issues with the Department that dated back a number of years relating to the quality of the teaching, the standard of assessment, the nature of academic support as well as organisation and management
- Careful guidance would be given to applicants. Programmes had not been falsely advertised.
- There would be opportunities for feedback as part of the consultation process including for course representatives and others to talk with Professor Zaum.
- There would be support for continuing students. Chemistry programmes would keep running. Part of the commitment was to improve the experience on those courses.

- The University had long experience of teaching out programmes and there was an established mechanism for doing this. There would be clear oversight of those programmes by an Associate Pro Vice Chancellor supported by the Associate Pro Vice Chancellor for Quality Assurance. There would also be ongoing dialogue with students on those programmes.
- The University was committed to working with the Accreditor, and had plenty of experience in that regard.
- Communications had already been sent to students and there would be more as the process progressed
- The University Council would make the decision as to whether to accept the proposals being made by UEB, taking into account the feedback received and the comments made by Senate.
- The University would be happy to receive the comments from students in full.

Members of Senate raised the following points, to which Professor McCrum responded:

- A member of Senate raised concerns about PhD students and the cessation for support for Chemistry research that did not align with UoA3. There were a substantial number of students working outside UoA3. In the absence of investment, how would the University help them to succeed.  
There were no mechanisms in place or contemplated in the report for alternative provision for students falling outside UoA3.  
Professor McCrum responded that it was intended that all students, including PhD students, would continue to be properly supported. The finer detail would be a proper matter for the Consultation Group.
- Another member of Senate was concerned about the way the matter had been communicated to staff which had resulted in a lot of upset and distress being caused. Staff had been completely unaware and the communication email referred to the closure of the Department and the risk of redundancy. This was completely unexpected for most staff especially after the assurance given by the VC at the all-staff-talk that any decisions would be done carefully.  
There had been no mention of the things that the CAF did. The report described the CAF as a loss-making facility meaning that reorganisation was needed without making reference to the contributions it made.  
The University was generally very good at managing change so it was hard to understand why it had chosen to behave in this way and destroy trust  
Assurance was sought for the record that the CAF remained an important and integral part of research facilities and that there be recognition of its contributions to teaching and research
- Professor McCrum responded that the University recognised the role that the CAF played, and committed to work with the CAF to make the changes required. Feedback on communication so far would be taken on board in order to make the process as open and transparent as possible. In particular the need for clear and transparent communications going forward had been noted.
- Another member of Senate commented that staff might now be cynical. Reference had been made to prioritising financial considerations but this report was based upon academic reasoning not finance. Were other departments now being looked at ? There was a wider impact and other areas would be concerned about the future

- Another member of Senate questioned the recommendations. Closure should surely be the last resort. It was not clear that that point had been reached. The case set out in the report was persuasive, but questions had subsequently been raised about the metrics and other metrics brought to Senate's attention causing further questions to be raised. Had the UEB decision been based upon a subset ?  
Much had been said about the disadvantages of accepting the recommendations, however it was far less clear what the advantages of the recommendations were. No case had been made for financial considerations and overall there did not appear to be a strong case for accepting the recommendations.  
With regard to academic excellence, it was not clear from the metrics that the picture was that bad or that nothing could be done. Things had been done and more could be done without closure. It did not appear that the point of no return had been reached and it wasn't clear why the decision could not wait for the outcome of the changes that had been made thus far.
- Another member of Senate questioned how, for continuing Chemistry courses, the student experience would change.
- Another member of Senate commented that 1 August 2025 seemed very close and queried how realistic it was to proceed with the proposals in that time scale. It was also queried whether it was realistic in practice to move the remaining Chemistry programmes into Pharmacy. Would Accreditation be affected ? the Accrediting bodies were very strict. Clarity on this should be sought before any decisions were made.
- Another member of Senate questioned whether the proposal was a closure, it seemed in practice to be something in between. She was not clear what the benefit of the proposals would be.
- Another member of Senate questioned what the risks were if action were not taken

Professor McCrum responded that:

- The key points to emphasise were:
  - the University was not looking at single metrics but rather at a patterns over time relating to teaching and research.
  - The metrics being used were the same for all Schools
  - Chemistry provision was not closing, all Chemistry programmes apart from the MChem and MSc, both of which had very small numbers would be moving into Pharmacy which would help make the changes needed.
  - Support for these programmes would be moved from Chemistry to Pharmacy
  - The University was committed to maintain Accreditation. It was not the only institution working on restructure with Accreditors
  - It was also committed to maintaining quality. It was acknowledged that much work had already been put in place to improve the student experience
- It was expected that these changes would provide the impetus to drive forward improvements in experience, outcomes and the quality of teaching and research, building on the work that had already been done.
- Without taking action, the necessary changes could not be made to improve quality standards and student experience. This was a big risk and would feed into League Tables and reputation

- The recommendation would be submitted to Council with all the comments that been made. If Council was supportive, the formal process would commence. This would include the Consultation Group which included a representative from Senate. The Group would look at what staffing would be necessary and would consider the criteria for selection.
- In answer to a specific question, Professor McCrum confirmed that it was possible there would be redundancies

The Vice Chancellor brought a wide-ranging discussion to a close. In response to some of the comments made, he confirmed that as a result of the University's financial position, savings would have to be found this year and beyond, and that would inevitably require change (for example the deferral of the pay award). Senate should still expect to see proposals coming forward driven by the financial position.

- However, regardless of the financial position, academic quality and standards had to be maintained. This proposal had been brought to Senate as it was part of the responsibilities of both Senate and the UEB to uphold those standards. There had to come a point where action was taken. The Department had not been delivering for students for some time and was not providing a good experience when other parts of the University had seen improvement. It was right for Senate to question whether the recommendations put forward were the right answer but, it was not right that another cohort should not be well taught, despite best efforts.
- The comments made had been carefully noted and would be recorded in the minutes. Draft minutes would be shared with members to give them the opportunity to comment on matters of accuracy. The final set of minutes would be shared in full with the Council.

[Dr Dwek left the meeting following this item.]

## **24/42 Report of the Vice-Chancellor**

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

Community:

- Retirement of Andrew Grice, Director of Finance on 30 April 2025
- Appointment of: Professor Suzanne Gray in Meteorology as APVC Research (Environment) in a job share with Professor Tom Oliver; Professor Carmel Houston-Price as APC Academic Workload; Professor Alan Howard APVC Quality Assurance
- Visit to University of Reading Malaysia
- Black History Month events
- The launch of the Global Arts Trail

Excellence:

- The University had been named Sustainable University of the Year 2025 in the Times and the Sunday Times Good university Guide. An improvement of 10 places to be ranked joint 24<sup>th</sup> overall in the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide. At subject level in the Guardian the University has six subjects in the top quartile: Graphic Design, Business and Management, Earth and Marine

Sciences, Nutrition and Food Science, English, and Geography. In the times there were 10 subjects in the top quartile. In global league tables the University remained in the top 200 for QS

- Colleagues were being invited to input into the development of the new Research and Innovation Strategy to run to 2030 by joining an upcoming focus group
- Revised guidance and an e-module training had been launched for implementing reasonable adjustments for students with disabilities
- Planning was underway for the Centenary, including the launch of a scheme to support centenary projects

Engaged:

- The Wokingham Local Plan Update had been voted through, including the recommendation to include Loddon Garden Village. The plan involved land belonging to NIRD, of which the University was a Trustee. Wokingham Borough Council were undertaking a public consultation on their plans.
- Launch of 'Time off to Make a Difference' – staff volunteering policy
- The next Community Forum to take place on 14 November 2024

### **Items for report and approval**

#### **24/43 Report of the University Executive Board**

There was no report on this occasion. The item on the Department of Chemistry was taken under 24/41.

#### **24/44 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 15 July, 10 September and 1 October 2024.

The report contained updates on:

- Admissions Policies: *Policy and Procedures for the Admissions of Under-18s onto Undergraduate Programmes* and the *Policy and Procedures for Inappropriate Applicant Behaviour*.
- Key decisions and changes to policies
- Examiner nominations
- OfS B3 Condition: Student Outcomes
- Annual Statement from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA)
- Annual Report on Harassment and Sexual Misconduct
- Reasonable Adjustments
- Strategic Priorities

- Portfolio Review Pathway
- Exceptional Circumstances Process Review
- Online Examinations
- Teaching Excellence Framework
- Risk Registers
- National Student Survey 2024
- Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey 2024
- Generative Artificial Intelligence Tools (GAIT)
- Student Voice and Partnership
- Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)
- Sector bodies and national initiatives
- 2024 University Teaching Fellowship winners
- 2024 Collaborative Award for Teaching Enhancement winners

The Senate noted and accepted the report which provided assurance that the University remained in compliance with the OfS Condition of Registration B3; and further noted and accepted that the report included information regarding TEF metrics and NSS data which was helpful in supporting broader compliance with Condition B.

The Senate approved amendments to the *Policy and Procedures for the Admissions of Under-18s onto Undergraduate Programmes* and the *Policy and Procedures for Inappropriate Applicant Behaviour*.

The Senate received and were satisfied with the Annual Report on Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

## **24/45 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 UBRI had:

- received the University's research governance structure and the Board's Terms of Reference and Membership
- received **updates from the PVC (R&I)** including:
  - Interdisciplinary Research Centre (IDRC) review
  - Research and Innovation strategy consultation
  - AgriFood Futures strategy update
  - Research committee framework and governance
  - Research and innovation performance data: awards and applications; global league tables; and Knowledge Exchange Framework

- received an update on the research culture programme of work.
- received an update on Funding body decisions and University plans for REF 2029
- received an update on progress with the University procurement of a Current Research Information System (CRIS)
- approved the criteria and process for this year's Research output prize for Early Career Researchers.
- approved the University Export Control Policy for final approval at UEB
- received the 2023/24 outturn and forward budgets and allocations for the Research Development Fund
- received a summary of the University's Research England funding allocation for 2024/25
- received summaries/minutes of recent meetings from the University Committee for Research and Innovation, the Committee on Researcher Development and PGR Studies, and the Committee on Open Research and Researcher Integrity
- noted the agreement by Chair's action of the increase to fees limits for research travel grants.

#### **24/46 Report of the Global Engagement Strategy Board**

The Senate received and noted the report of the Global Engagement Strategy Board held on 5 July and 16 October 2024.

#### **24/47 September 2024 initial Enrolment Analysis**

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

The paper provided an initial analysis of the University's enrolment position compared to target and compared it to the previous cycle. The data for the report was produced on 15th October three days before the original enrolment deadline and a week and a half before the end of enrolment for many programmes due to an operational change implemented this year. Due to the timing of the meeting a full analysis could not be produced in time for the paper deadline and so this interim paper was being supplied. There would be some students who enrolled after this date.

As the University was still in enrolment the tables presented data for 2024 split by those who were fully enrolled and those who had provisionally enrolled – which meant they have completed the online component but not the in person component. Position against target was given as a best case scenario (that all provisionally enrolled students fully enrol), and a worst case scenario (that we only have those provisionally enrolled students) for a complete picture.

It was noted that:

- [Redacted, Section 43]

- [Redacted, Section 43]
- [Redacted, Section 43]
- [Redacted, Section 43]
- [Redacted, Section 43]
- [Redacted, Section 43]
- [Redacted, Section 43]
- [Redacted, Section 43]

### **Items for note**

#### **24/48 Chair's Action**

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

- the appointment of Dr Sarah Marston and Professor Yelena Kalyuzhnova to the Joint Standing Committee on Honorary Degrees to 31.7.27;
- the appointment of Professor Gail Marshall to UBRI to 31.7.27;
- the conferment of the title of Honorary Fellow to Joan McCormack to 31.3.29;
- the appointment of Professor Craig Jamieson as a PhD adjudicator;
- approval of the award of DSc to Professor Adrian Williams.

#### **24/49 Appointments to Committees and other bodies**

In respect of appointments to committees, the Senate noted that vacancies were still available on the Arts Committee, University Research Ethics Committee, and the Senate Agenda Group.

#### **24/50 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:

[Redacted, Section 40]

[Redacted, Section 40]

[Redacted, Section 40]

**24/51 Reports of Examiners for Higher Degrees by thesis**

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

**24/52 Dates of next meeting 2024/25**

Wednesday 8 January 2025 at 2.15 pm – reserve meeting (online)

Wednesday 26 February 2025 at 2.15 pm (online)

Wednesday 30 April 2025 at 2.15 pm – reserve meeting (online)

Thursday 19 June 2025 at 2.15 pm (in person)