

Senate

25/01 A meeting of the Senate was held at 2.15 pm on Wednesday 26 February 2025 via Teams.

Present:

Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
Dr Mona Ashok
Dr Caroline Baylon
Pamela Cottrell
Dr Chris Dalton
Dr Deepa Driver
Professor Richard Frazier
Professor Becky Green
Andrew Grice
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
Dr Richard Messer
Professor Peter Miskell
Professor Henny Osbahr
Dr Karen Poulter
Professor Trish Reid
Professor Rebecca Rist
Dr Sokratis Stergiadis
Professor Katja Strohfeldt
Brian Turner
Dr Hong Yang
Professor Parveen Yaqoob
Professor Dominik Zaum

Students:

RSU Activities
RSU Education
RSU President
RSU Welfare

RSU Inclusion

Built Environment UG Senior Rep – [Redacted, Section 40]

Law UG Senior Rep - [Redacted, Section 40]

Mathematical, Physical & Computational Sciences UG Senior Rep - [Redacted, Section 40]

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 highlighted to the Senate two new standard agenda items that would be included at each meeting – Quality and Standards for assurance to the Council, and Report from the Council to the Senate – this would ensure that items were specifically considered by the Senate ahead of Council.

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

Emeritus Professor Keith Watson – Keith was a leading figure in Comparative and International Education. He was a Lecturer, then Reader in the former School of Education based at London Road in the 1970-80s, then at Bulmershe from the 1990s. He was promoted to Professor in 1990 and retired in 2001.

Professor Nicola Verdon – MERL Advisory Committee member and former member of staff from the Rural History Centre to 2004.

James Milford – James was a founding member of the Meteorology Department being appointed as the first Lecturer in the Department in September 1966. James' specialism was in Agrometeorology. James retired from the Department in 1994.

25/02 Minutes of the last meeting

The Senate approved Minutes 24/37 to 24/52 of the last formal meeting held on 20 October 2024. All relevant matters had been passed in full to the Council at its meeting on 20 November 2024.

Items for Presentation and discussion

25/03 Awarding Gap

The Senate received a presentation from Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Miskell and Dr Anne-Marie Henderson (Director of CQSD) on the awarding gap.

The presentation highlighted:

- The Context – awarding gaps and the University's wider approach to Access and Participation; Data – gaps and how wide; Actions – what the University was doing, and was it working? How collectively progress could be maintained

- [Redacted, Section 40], Director of Fair Access and Participation at the OfS – *it isn't enough for the sector to narrow gaps in outcome and attainment. We need to understand how we did it, and how we can replicate it*
- What are Access and Participation Plans (APPs) and why do they matter – University requirements are set out under OfS Conditions of Registration A1 (have in force an access and participation plan approved by the OfS in accordance with the Higher Education and Research Act 2017) and A2 (take all reasonable steps to comply with the provisions of the plan. Access was defined as: how we ensure that students from disadvantaged backgrounds are not unfairly excluded from HE. Participation was defined as: how we ensure that those students are able to fully benefit from their university study (emphasis on 'getting on' not just 'getting in')
- Objectives and Targets had been defined.
 - IS1 – through targeted initiatives with partner schools, support removal of attainment gaps at KS4 for Black students and those in IMD Q1. Target by 2028 to improve the percentage of KS4 target students who see increases of 10 percentage points or more in metacognition, confidence and resilience skills as a result of interventions, from 49% to 60%
 - IS2 – Ensure that the student population reflects the year 12/13 population within the University's catchment region (SE England, London and the Southwest) by 2030. Target was to reduce the gap between entrants in IMD Q1 and Q5 from 27.7 pp to 10pp by 2028
 - IS3 – Ensure that underrepresented students remained on course and complete their studies with equivalent success to the wider student population by 2030. Target was for parity in continuation rates between Black and White undergraduate cohorts by 2030 and parity in continuation rates between young and mature cohorts by 2030
 - IS4 – Eliminate degree outcome gaps that correlate with ethnicity and socio-economic disadvantage by 2030. Target was for parity between Black and White cohorts by 2030, ABMO and White cohorts by 2030, and parity between IMD Q1 and Q5 cohorts by 2028
 - IS5 – Eliminate the gap between IMD Q1,2 and IMD Q3, 4, 5 with respect to positive Graduate Outcomes data by the end of the period of the Plan. Target to achieve parity in progression between IMD Q1 and 2 compared with IMD Q3, 4 and 5 from a gap of 5.4 pp
- Awarding Gaps at Reading – the average awarding gap between White finalist (88% receive a first of 2:1) and Black finalists (63% receive a first or 2:1) was 25 pp. The gaps were only partially explained by factors such as entry qualifications and socioeconomic status
- Continuation Rates at Reading for 2021/22: Black 84.5%, Mature 87.3%, IMDQ12 88.5%, BAME 88.7%, Disabled 91.3%, White 91.8%
- Indices of Multiple Deprivation – highlighted how over the last 5 five the gap between the most disadvantaged in society and most advantaged was not shifting
- Widening participation student distribution – the Schools with the highest numbers of Black, BAME and IMD12 were: Henley Business School; Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy; Law; Biological Sciences
- What works, according to the literature: inclusive curricula, inclusive academic support, assessment practices, data driven intervention, building belonging, student partnership, and policy change
- What works, according to our students: assessment feedback is a key opportunity area, flexible learning options to allow students to manage around busy schedules, unpacking 'how to play the game' helps

- Approach – the foundation of the University's approach was driven by data and evidence, the student voice, and evaluation and impact. Following that an approach of inclusion for all through considered and holistic programme design and assessment, equitable and transparent policies, community and a sense of belonging, high expectations for all. Then prioritise targeted areas – evidence led with a focus and attention on academic areas with high gaps, as well as bursaries. Finally, individual support particularly wellbeing and hardship
- How were Schools leading work on this: Law were leading on co-creating solutions with global majority students; HBS had undertaken major data analysis to pinpoint needs and academic coaching pilot for students who had failed semester 1; PCLS had introduced a comprehensive and ambitious Awarding Gap Plan
- Impact and assessing progress – considerable focus was being given to assessing impact and evaluation. Results from the first round of evaluations showed:
 - Awarding gap representative role – positive progress in raising awareness, analysing data and strategic planning. Moderate evidence of concrete action, with activity levels varying by Schools
 - Peer Assisted Learning – positive impact on students sense of belonging, academic confidence, and academic skills which had translated to higher scores in some areas (e.g. HBS) but not others (e.g. Pharmacy)
 - Decolonising the Curriculum – a moderate degree of curricula reform, but limited evidence that the approach was being broadly integrated
 - Bursary Support – for 2018/19 to 2020/21 cohorts, the financial support provided was considered effective in retaining students

Senate raised a number of questions and comments on the presentation:

- Professor Reid enquired whether the Learning Analytics project would be able to provide more granular detail/data. Professor Miskell confirmed that the Learning Analytics project had received approval and that work had started. At present the project was in scoping phase. The biggest challenge at present was how the system would integrate into existing systems and processes, such as academic engagement. The logic in investing in the project was that it would help to focus and target resources more effectively to students at risk.
- Professor Green enquired around the focus on UG data and whether PGT students were being considered. Dr Henderson confirmed that OfS were only interested in UG students, therefore the work was targeted towards this group of students.
- Professor Green noted that it would be helpful to also include work on PGT students. From her experience the students who tended to drop out were female, Black students who were often having to commute to campus. It was important to recognise that attendance and engagement were not the same thing – Black Board could be used to provide useful data on how students were engaging. Professor Miskell confirmed that the Learning Analytics project would consider attendance data, Black Board data, submission data – the new system would allow a nuanced picture by subjects areas/patterns of engagement/areas of risk. The system would allow for the inclusion of PGT students.
- Professor Frazier noted that the Schools with high levels of widening participation students were those that had high SSRs which created additional challenges – the introduction of the new Learning Analytics system could not come soon enough as Schools needed assistance around how to target specific support.

- Dr Henderson confirmed that good practice was circulated to Schools via their Awarding Gap Representative; CQSD were also working to give visibility to this area.
- Dr Ashok highlighted to the Senate the work that had been undertaken within Henely Business School on gathering data – the process had been shared with CQSD
- Professor Green noted that it was difficult with large class sizes to identify which students were struggling – was cohort size something that would be considered?
- Professor Reid observed that often it was viewed that students were the problem when numbers on programmes were high. This was not the fault of students and it was important that leadership committed to recognising these issues and that the University values that all students succeed regardless of background.

The Senate recorded its thanks to Professor Miskell and Anne-Marie Henderson for their work in this area. Clearly this work was ongoing and the Senate would be interesting to see how work progressed at a future point.

25/04 End of Project Report for PRP

The Senate received the end of project report closing the Portfolio Review Pathway and project work, which had been delivered over the past four years to support the University's strategy and to help address long-standing challenges within the portfolio including student feedback on workload and assessments, complexity and exceptionalism and inefficiencies in how the T&L portfolio was delivered. The paper provided a summary of the purpose of the project, the actions undertaken, the benefits achieved so far and plans for maintaining and embedding the benefits into the future. A fuller version of the report was linked to in the Senate papers.

In-year evaluation and support for embedding change would continue through 2024/25, and formal project support would stop in September 2025.

The Portfolio Review Pathway (PRP) was set-up as part of the Strategic Foundations Programme established in 2021, and had been overseeing a centrally driven programme of portfolio review. PRP began its work in February 2021 and had delivered on key changes to the academic year structure and to programme and module design and delivery, which came into effect in September 2024. Throughout the 3-year project there had been a focus on sustainable programme and module delivery and a reduction of those programmes and modules that had not been recruiting well.

The Pathway had formed an important piece of work to create a strong foundation for the implementation of the University's strategic plan and to address both existing challenges and future opportunities.

Over the three academic sessions (February 2021-September 2024), the Portfolio Review Team had been working in partnership with staff and students with a view to:

- Facilitate strategic decision-making in relation to the portfolio, reducing the portfolio of programmes and modules by a third at Institutional level (33%) and identifying ways to review the portfolio on a regular basis, to achieve greater parity in School-to-School expectations on staff workload and financial contributions.

- Reduce complexity and volume within the portfolio and reorganise teaching and assessment across the academic year, helping to alleviate the burden on professional services and improve academic and professional services staff workloads to create capacity for innovation and future growth where appropriate.
- Improve the quality of the student experience and increase student satisfaction through clearer and more equitable expectations, realistic choice, reduced, effective and engaging assessment that is proportionate and more evenly distributed across programmes, improved timing and quality of teaching and assessment, and digitally enhanced learning approaches.
- Reduce the demand on and make better use of resources, in particular realising longer-term efficiencies in relation to the physical estate and timetabling.

It was noted that there were many positive elements and lessons learned that should be set out as a blueprint for future large projects at the University and it would be important to ensure these are brought into future project planning, including:

- Governance structures – the structure of the project governance included levels of decision making appropriate to the activities needed, including a strategy group, workstreams and work packages, these groups included colleagues in core roles across academic and professional service teams. This supported wide engagement, collegiality and consideration from different areas of the university, but also an agile approach and built in ownership for BAU changes from the start.
- Communications – the use of multiple communications channels was a key success for the team and specifically the targeted and regular briefing sessions that were run. These gave opportunities to update colleagues with progress, next steps and actions, and to receive feedback from teams on any areas of the implementation that were challenging.
- Project management – a key to the success of the project had been bringing together project managers and project officers from different parts of the institution, providing key strategic oversight as well as business continuity and specific skills from across project teams in PSO and DTS. Another key aspect to the success of the project was effective leadership, and a Project Sponsor who was actively driving the work and decisions forward with the team.
- Change Management – was a vital part of this project, cutting across many areas of the University.

Whilst reflecting on some of the lessons learned it was important to note the following:

- Resource – this major strategic project was undertaken without any significant assigned budget. Whilst the University had managed to successfully implement the project objectives, this had not been without some extreme pressures on colleagues who had delivered on their areas of the project work alongside BAU. For a project of this size and scale, a more formalised budget and appropriate resource needed to be carefully considered at the outset.
- Staff workloads – a lot was expected of colleagues with some difficult deadlines and the impact of this on colleagues stress levels should not be underestimated. Schools who delegated the work to a group of colleagues were much better able to manage this than Schools who assigned just one or two individuals to the project work and this was an important lesson to take forward in future large project work.
- Communications – whilst there were many positive aspects to the communication plans and execution, how information was cascaded information from those in team leadership roles to other colleagues needed further consideration in future projects. Feedback also indicated that although colleagues felt well-informed, they did not feel they had opportunities to contribute to

the project and their input was not always listened to. Given the size, scope and pace of the project it was not always possible to hold extensive consultation. Alongside this, one of the drivers for the project was to reduce exceptionalism and bring in a set of principles that all programmes must follow, this reduced the scope for colleagues to 'shape' the changes to their programmes. Further consideration on how to ensure this message was clear and transparent, and that feedback was followed up in both directions (not just top-down), would be an important consideration in future large projects.

- Dependencies – whilst all dependencies were managed successfully, this did highlight a disconnect in some situations, with colleagues in one area of the University undertaking work which had a direct impact on the ability to implement the Portfolio Review Project. These were particularly complex situations involving cloud migration and full system changes. A more strategic approach with both sides joined up and agreeing timeframes early on would be welcomed in future large projects.

Key achievements and realised benefits were highlighted in the full report provided to the Senate, included:

- Over 330 programmes and 2000 modules (UG and PGT – excluding Henley Greenlands) had been redesigned by Schools to align with the PRP programme and module principles and approved and published in line with the project timeline.
- The new Academic year structure had been communicated and programme changes to all of our impacted students - over 6000 UG and 850 PGT students and offer holders.
- A very successful module selection process was run for in 2024/25, with anecdotal evidence of fewer queries and errors in students module selections. The team had also focused on reducing the number of capped modules, reducing this from 220 in 2023/24 to 56 in 2024/25.
- The Semester-based timetable had been built for 2024/25 from scratch – timetabling over 48000 activities and 90000 teaching hours, these numbers were comparable to last year and the timetabling team had commented that this was the 'best timetable they have produced in relation to making best use of our space'.
- Over 30 RISIS system enhancements, reports & changes had been implemented. Many of these would help support better data gathering and analysis, to further enhance student support and portfolio management in the future.
- Between 2021-2023 the project resulted in an overall reduction of Programmes by 35% from a 2018/19 baseline, supporting objectives to create a coherent and sustainable portfolio by reducing programmes and modules that were not recruiting well.
- A 17% reduction in the number of active modules supported efforts to streamline students programmes – offering suitable *and* realistic optionality, which enabled an effective timetable, exam and assessment processes and provided a coherent programme for our students. The reduction in the overall numbers of modules meant that each module had more students enrolled on it, which allowed the University to provide its teaching and learning more efficiently, and support student community building.
- The percentage of students with a unique pathway had been reduced from 25% to 14.8%

The Senate noted that the University was in the early stages of reviewing the benefits of the PRP and that it would be evaluated more formally in early 2026 as part of a post project review process.

Senators raised the following questions and comments on the report:

- Professor Green noted the advantages outlined but asked whether staff wellbeing/workload and the new structure of the academic year would be reflected in the review. Professor McCrum replied that full closure report contained detail on the plans for evaluation – those impacts, including workload and structure of the academic year, would be included as part of that fuller evaluation.
- Professor Green stated that it would be interesting to see the impact on time available for research and annual leave as a number of colleagues had reported that they felt unable to take any time away, particularly those with T&L roles requiring them to be around for graduation, confirmation/clearing, and resits. Professor McCrum noted that colleagues would be impacted in different ways by changes to the structure of the academic year but it was important to bear in mind that the number of weeks available had not reduced and vacation periods had been kept the same length.
- It was noted that final BOSSEs of the year would take soundings from SSPGs.
- Professor McCrum reminded the Senate that the report was concerned with the end of the formal part of the project. Monitoring, benefit tracking/evaluation would continue as work was incorporated into business as usual. The APVC's would continue working closely with SDTLs to monitor activity.
- Professor Frazier noted that the communications and engagement, especially the breakfast sessions had been well received. However, in terms of workload more could have been done to around resourcing the project and cross-School working could have been better facilitated. Professor McCrum agreed that it would have been desirable to have had a dedicated budget to allow for backfill.
- It was noted that the work of the PRP would be aligned with the 5-Year Planning Process.

The Senate and Professor McCrum recorded its thanks to all those who had been involved in the project.

25/05 Academic Quality and Standards – Annual Learning and Teaching Report

The Senate received a number of items within the UBTLSE (Minute 25/08) report explicitly concerned with Academic Quality and Standards.

One of those items - the Annual Learning and Teaching Report (ALTR) – was submitted for comments but also approval ahead of submission to the Council on 10 March 2025.

The Annual Learning and Teaching Report (ALTR) provided Council with assurance that the University was maintaining appropriate academic standards while enhancing the student academic experience and outcomes. It supported Council in fulfilling its responsibilities for teaching and learning under Ordinance A2 and demonstrated that the University met the expectations of the Office for Students (OfS).

The Senate noted that:

- The University exceeded the OfS numerical thresholds for continuation, completion, and progression across all levels of study, except for [Redacted, Section 43].

- Some demographic and disciplinary subsets ('split indicators') were below the OfS numerical benchmarks, prompting targeted actions to address specific areas of concern.
- National Student Survey (NSS) 2024 results showed continued improvement, with the University outperforming both benchmark and sector averages across all sections. Strengths included Organisation and Management (+9.1pp above the sector) and Student Voice (+6.5pp above the sector). Assessment and Feedback, which had historically been a weaker area, was now +2.8pp above the sector.
- The proportion of undergraduate students achieving a First or 2:1 had continued to decline, aligning with pre-pandemic levels. However, awarding gaps for BAME and disadvantaged students remained a concern and were being addressed through the Access and Participation Plan and associated work.
- Appeals and complaints from students had returned to pre-pandemic levels.
- HBS's apprenticeship provision remained robust, [Redacted, Section 43].
- Changes under the Portfolio Review Pathway, including semesterisation, programme rationalisation, and redesign were fully implemented in September 2024.

The UBTLSE report also covered other items explicitly connected to assurance of academic quality and standards, namely the University Annual Quality Assurance Review, the Degree Outcomes Statement, the report on Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies, and the report on Boards of Study and Student Experience.

The Senate unanimously approved the report for submission to the Council, confirming that the ALTR and other relevant items in the UBTLSE report provided assurance and evidence that the University was maintaining quality and standards in learning and teaching.

25/06 Report of the Vice-Chancellor

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

Community:

- The reappointment of Professor Elizabeth McCrum as PVC Education and Student Experience for a further six years
- Retirement of a new Chief Financial Officer was in hand
- The upcoming retirement of Dr Richard Messer
- That Professor Roberta Gilchrist would be stepping down as APVC Research (Heritage and Creativity)
- Departures of Dr Tim Lees and Professor Allan Laville
- The reappointment of Professor Carmel Houston-Price as Head of School of Psychology and Clinical Language Sciences
- A reminder to consider nominations for Honorary Degrees ahead of the centenary year
- Events marking LGBT+ History and International Women's History Month

Excellence:

- The National Student Survey 2025 was now open, inviting final year undergraduate students to give feedback on their time at Reading. The survey was open until 30 April 2025.

- The Collaborative Awards for Teaching and Learning was now open for applications.
- The Global Sustainability Leaders scholarships had launched. Over the next 5 years, the University would be investing £34 million to support up to 400 scholarships per year (300 in the first year from September 2025) with £6,000 maintenance funding for each year of their academic studies. This ambitious scheme was aimed at developing the next generation of sustainability leaders, by providing them with the time and opportunities to develop their skills and knowledge in sustainability alongside their core subject, whilst the University would benefit through welcoming larger numbers of high-quality students.
- Institution-wide workload Project established. A new strategic project had been launched to develop an institution-wide workload model for academic staff. The project aimed to enable the fair distribution of work and appropriate allocation of resources, supporting academic excellence, staff wellbeing and strategic decision-making, in line with strategic objectives around improving ways of working and supporting resilience and growth into the future. It was expected to be completed within two years, with the first full implementation of the new model in 2026/27.
- The Governance Review sought to streamline the way decisions were made within Schools and Directorates.
- A Learning Engagement and Analytics Project had been established. Its aim was to enable the University to make best use of its information, systems and resources to support students' engagement with their studies, and to improve student outcomes (particularly in relation to continuation).

Engaged University:

- The European Centre for Medium-Range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) lease agreement was signed just before Christmas between the University and the Government Property Agency (GPA), meaning the University had now handed over the site at Earley Gate, Whiteknights Campus, and construction has started. The target completion date was early 2027, with ECMWF staff expected to move in later in 2027.
- Activity was now stepping up in respect of the University Centenary in 2026. Work was well underway on the University archives. Interest from staff, students and alumni had been strong with almost 70 applications to the Centenary Grant scheme.
- University of Reading Community Festival returns on Saturday 17 May 2025 on Whiteknights.
- Nominations were open for the third celebration of volunteering.

Items for report and approval

25/07 Report of the University Executive Board

The Senate received for information the Research and Innovation Strategy to 2030.

It was noted that it was vital for the University to have a research strategy for the following reasons:

- Ensure that research efforts and resource allocation aligned with institutional mission, priorities and values.

- Ensure that resource was allocated effectively to areas of strength and emerging opportunities to maximise research output, impact, reputation and rankings.
- Funding bodies and potential partners looked for institutions with clear research directions and strategic goals. A well-defined strategy therefore enhanced competitiveness for funding, collaboration and partnerships.
- A good strategy would help to foster collaboration across disciplines, leading to innovative solutions to complex problems.
- A strong strategy would attract top researchers, ensuring a thriving research community, which could in turn have a positive effect on student recruitment.
- A research strategy aligning with societal needs and global challenges would position the University positively in terms of purposeful, coordinated efforts leading to lasting impact.
- A strategy provided a framework for continuous improvement and adaptation to changing research landscapes, leading to institutional success.

The current research and innovation (R&I) strategy was formulated in 2019 and had been used extensively to support initiatives and guide decision-making. However, it was now out of date and there had been significant developments in some areas, which were either not reflected in the strategy or did not have the prominence that they required, such as research culture, innovation and knowledge exchange, strategic partnerships, sustainability, researcher development and support for digital research.

It was noted that there was extensive consultation with staff on the draft UoR R&I strategy. This took the form of focus groups for HoS, RDLs and IDRC Directors and professional services staff who supported research. There were also two focus groups open to any staff who wished to contribute, which were well-attended. All of the focus groups were facilitated by trained professional services colleagues, which provided a degree of independence.

The Senate noted the plan.

25/08 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 5 November 2024, 13 January and 5 February 2025.

The report contained updates on:

- Section 17 of the Assessment Handbook (Awards: Bachelors) – exceptional arrangements
- Assurances on Quality, including:
 - Annual Learning and Teaching Report
 - University Annual Quality Assurance Report 2023/24
 - Degree Outcomes Statement 2024
 - Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)

- Boards of Studies and Student Experience
- Key decisions and changes to policies
- External Examiner nominations
- Exceptional Circumstances Process Review
- Online Examinations
- Portfolio Review Pathway
- School Teaching Enhancement Action Planning
- Graduate Outcomes 2021/22
- Student Digital Experience Insights Survey
- Teaching Excellence Framework and Learning Gain
- League Table Summaries
- Sector bodies and national initiatives
- Teaching and Learning Funds, Awards and Fellowships

The Senate was asked to:

- a) note the contents of the report;
- b) approve the inclusion of a new exceptional arrangement in the Annex to Section 17 of the Assessment Handbook (Awards: Bachelors);
- c) consider the matters detailed under 'Assurances on Quality' and identify for Council how these reports provide assurances as to the quality of our provision; and
- d) approve and commend to Council the Annual Learning and Teaching Report (Spring 2025).

The Senate approved the inclusion of new exceptional arrangement in the Assessment Handbook. The Senate had approved and commended to Council the Annual Learning and Teaching Report (see Minute 25/05).

25/09 Report of the University Board for Research and Innovation

The Senate noted that the scheduled meeting of the University Board for Research and Innovation on 22 January 2025 was cancelled. In lieu of the UBRI report from this meeting the Senate noted a summary of key items considered by the University Committee for Research and Innovation. In particular:

- University research strategy. Following feedback and consultation through autumn term with stakeholders across the University, the Committee finalised the University research and innovation strategy for 2030.

- Research Theme strategies and priorities - The Committee had discussed Theme level research priority documents. Themes would be drawing up action plans to support the priorities.
- Research Division operating plans and strategy - The APVCs for Research reported back on general issues raised by Research Divisions in their operation plans and in the planning meetings. Key themes were the following: Improved grant capture through targeted support; Approach to reviewing REF outputs and strategic use of PRO (Prepublication of Research Outputs) to develop early-stage outputs; Developing research leave schemes; Supporting research impact.
- Strategy to support digital research - The Committee received an update on progress with development of the strategy to support digital research. Following a wide consultation, including surveys and focus groups, a vision for the strategy has been developed, with the final Strategy to be agreed in Spring 2025, following further consultation with the Committee for Research Infrastructure.
- Research culture - The Committee reviewed and gave feedback on the institutional research culture statement and the plans underpinning the research culture programme.
- Interdisciplinary Research Centres (IDRC) review - The Committee was currently undertaking a review of the University's IDRCs (Centre for Book Publishing, Samuel Beckett Research Centre, CELM, Centre for Health Humanities, CINN, IFNH, and Walker Institute). Phase 1, now complete, was a broad review of the centres, drawing on self-evaluation, data on outputs, income and finances, and structured interviews. The second phase would cover identifying good practice at other institutions; reflection on measures of success; and consideration of the broad approach to interdisciplinarity in sustainability and climate-based research as a flagship area of research for the University.
- REF 2029 - The Committee, along with other colleagues involved in REF work, held a session reviewing the risks associated with the University's preparations for the REF. The outcomes would inform a revised risk register to be taken forward by the REF Planning Group.
- Research equipment and infrastructure benchmarking project - The Committee commissioned a report, which had now provided some valuable information on the current state of play with the University's research infrastructure, including return on investment and contribution to research outputs/income and engagement. It set out a series of recommendations about future governance and management of our research infrastructure.

25/10 Report of the International Global Engagement Strategy Board

The Senate noted that there was no report on this occasion, following changes to its terms of reference IGESB would now report to the Senate by exception.

25/11 Report to the Senate from the Council

The Senate noted that the Council had ultimate responsibility within the University's governance structure for academic quality and standards, and for student experience. It sought assurance from various sources, but most especially the Senate, in order to fulfil that responsibility.

Two changes had been made to the Senate agenda in order to help with providing reassurance. The first was that as a matter of routine, there would be an agenda item for discussion of any matter within the Senate papers that particularly related to academic quality and standards.

The second was that the minutes of any discussion held at Council on matters of student experience, academic quality and standards would be shared with the subsequent meeting of Senate. In this way, Council and Senate could gain a better understanding of each other's ways of working, and, in time, help improve reporting between the two bodies.

The Senate received an extract from the last meeting of the Council held on Tuesday 21 January 2025, noting discussion on AI in Teaching and Learning, RSU Priorities, and the awarding gap.

Items for note

25/12 Chair's Action

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

- Appointment of Professor Louise Hague to the Senate Agenda Group
- Appointment of Dr Marrisa Joseph to the University Research Ethics Committee
- Appointment of Dr Sarah von Billerbeck to the Workload Model Steering Group
- Amendments to the Ordinances to reflect the change in names of HBS Departments

25/13 Retirement of Professors

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

[Redacted, Section 40]

25/14 Reports of Examiners for Higher Degrees by thesis

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

25/15 Dates of next meeting 2024/25

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

Thursday 19 June 2025 at 2.15 pm (in person)