Senate

26/16 A meeting of the Senate was held at 2.15 pm on Wednesday 17 June 2026 in Chancellor's Building G06.

Present:

Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
Oceiah Annesley
Dr Will Bailey-Watson
Dr Caroline Baylon
Professor Anastasia Christakou
Laura Clayton
Dr Emma-Jayne Conway
Dr Chris Dalton
Dr Chris Daw
Professor Richard Frazier
Professor Becky Green
Professor Louise Hague
Dr Craig Hughes
Professor Carmel Houston-Price
Martina Hudson
Professor Yelena Kalyuzhnova
Dr Stephen Kastoryano
Tiam Koravand
Dr Shu-Ling Lu
Professor Sarah Marston
Dr Rachael Neal
Professor Henny Osbahr
Sally Plank
Dr Karen Poulter
Dr Jo Anna Reed Johnson
Professor Sokratis Stergiadis
Elyn Thompson
Professor Anne Verhoef
Vin Wijeratne
Ella Withington
Aaron Woodcock
Professor Parveen Yaqoob
Professor Dominik Zaum
Louise Sharman (Secretary)

In attendance:
Fiona Blair and Vicky Pearson (External Relations) for Minute 26/03
Ellen Owen, UCU

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 Registrar Trevor Bottomley – former University Registrar who retired in 1992
Emeritus Professor Geoff Wadge – who made a significant contribution in the field of volcanology and atmospheric science. He joined the University in October 1985 and retired in 2021

The following colleagues had died in service:
Professor Anthony Powell, Professor in Inorganic Chemistry, Department of Chemistry
Dr Tania Korin, Technical Manager in Technical Services

26/17 Minutes of the last meeting

The Senate approved Minutes 26/01 to 26/15 of the last formal meeting held on 25 February 2026. All relevant matters had been passed in full to the Council at its meeting on 9 March 2026.

Items for Presentation and discussion

26/18 University Strategy Development

The Senate received a presentation from the Chief Operating Officer and Director of Communications and Engagement on the University Strategy. The Senate noted that Council were exercising their responsibilities in leading the refresh of the University Strategy. Engagement on the development work was proceeding at pace with input being sought from a number of areas – the feedback from Senate would be included in the next iteration of the document, ahead of Council on 1 July 2026, along with comments from Senior Leadership Group, students, and RSU. It was noted that the wording presented was not final.

The presentation highlighted to Senate:

- That since the last meeting work had focussed on stakeholder feedback, vision development, objectives and key results development
- Key points for discussion at Senate were:
    - Did the draft Vision Statement reflect the key elements expected for our ambitions and identity for the next 15-year period?
    - Did the Objectives and Key Results address the key areas of change that the University needed to undertake to achieve the Vision and its world-leading ambitions?
- Staff and Student Feedback: People supported the ambition and consistently valued high-quality education and research, but staff were not yet confident we could deliver it, and students were not yet convinced we were distinctive where it mattered most
- There was a need for a clearer, more focused positioning – one that strengthened confidence in delivery and articulated what makes Reading distinctive, whilst remaining credible and sustainable over the long term

- Key headline findings were:
    - Strong engagement with the ambition to be globally leading ('Top 100')
    - Community key driving principle of University identity, with inclusiveness paramount
    - Amongst staff, trust in the strategy about institutional ability to deliver
    - Focus on working environment, leadership and capacity as foundational enablers –impact on core work of research and teaching, and staff and student experience
    - Support for environmental sustainability was strong but nuanced
    - Staff understood the need for trade-offs, students don't
    - Tone, language and emotional resonance mattered
- Draft Vision: "To be a values-driven global leader in research and education, shaping a more sustainable, prosperous and inclusive future for people and the planet."
- The vision was given context by a descriptor of how we deliver our ambition: "We achieve this through clear focus on our strengths, a commitment to student outcomes, and responsible use of our resources, and by working together as a confident and compassionate community – supporting and challenging one another to succeed, engaging deeply with our partners, and translating what we do into meaningful and lasting benefits for the people and places we serve."
- Draft Objectives and Key Results:
    - Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) set out where we need to make change to realise the University Vision and ambitions
    - A mix of timeframes - some OKRs would have shorter delivery timeframes (2-3 years) some would require a longer approach over the full 15-year strategy period
    - Key Results would be reviewed annually – and be adapted as the landscape or parameters change
    - Objectives would normally be in place for the initial Strategy Period (2026-2030), when they should be reviewed and adapted if needed
    - KPIs remained an important part of the Strategy progress monitoring. They monitored the health and performance of key university operations. KPIs were currently in development
- Draft OKRs:
    - Drive a sustained increase in research intensity and enhance global and local research impact
    - Deliver an outstanding and distinctive education and student experience that was responsive to the evolving needs of students and employers
    - Establish Reading as a globally recognised leader in environmental sustainability
    - Strengthen civic, regional and global influence through strategic partnerships, policy engagement, and public impact
    - Embed a high performance, equitable, and continuous improvement culture with colleagues across all parts of the University
    - Strengthen institutional agility, governance and strategic delivery, with a core focus on modernising institutional operations and infrastructure
    - Ensure financial and operational sustainability through improving our margins and maximising the value realised through informed and timely resource and investment decisions
- Next steps were:
    - A draft of the Strategy development will be presented to Council on 1st July.

- Development of Thematic Strategic Plans – Leads would be in touch with colleagues over the coming weeks to discuss objectives and priorities across thematic areas i.e.: Research, Education, and International
- Further work will take place over the summer to refine the Strategy ahead of final approval by Council in September

In respect of 'Did the draft Vision Statement reflect the key elements expected for our ambitions and identity for the next 15-year period?' the following comments and questions were raised:

- 'To be' was too passive, the wording should be more confident e.g. 'we are'
- 'People and planet' – what did that mean? This did not coalesce with the words that preceded it
- Most HEIs were values-driven, how could Reading differentiate itself? The University should hold principles that drive it to action
- It should create curiosity in the reader
- Why was excellence/outstanding/inspirational missing? Most HEIs included these statements, the current wording tried to capture the sentiment by proxy
- It should capture to 'what end'
- There was broad support for being values driven, inclusive and sustainable
- Collaboration was missing
- Being inquisitive was missing

In respect of 'Did the Objectives and Key Results address the key areas of change that the University needed to undertake to achieve the Vision and its world-leading ambitions?' the following comments and questions were raised:

- Was there confidence that the University could deliver what was set out?
- AI should also be a core graduate attribute
- The objectives would each have a different UEB owner, who would have individual responsibility for delivery, but there would be a need to work horizontally across the matrix
- TEF was not mentioned, this was as equally important as REF
- Some of the objectives were framed as quite long-term, others more shorter-term, this needed more consistency – the objectives should initially be about building the foundation for the first phase of the strategy
- Some of the objectives were drafted as though the University knew how to get to them, others were drafted more as an end point – this was acknowledged, the Thematic Plans (to follow) would explain how the objectives would be achieved
- Thematic Plans and Enabling Strategic Plans would also be produced
- It would be helpful to set out how the various elements of the Strategy would fit together
- The attributes would not be in the final documentation – they were a stepping stone to understanding the type of institution the University wanted to be

The Senate thanked Laura Clayton, Fiona Blair and Vicky Pearson for the presentation. The Senate noted that feedback would be incorporated into the next iteration of documentation to be submitted to the Council on 1 July 2026.

[Vicky Pearson left the meeting]

26/19 Internationalisation and Global Engagement Update

Pro-Vice-Chancellor Dr Caroline Baylon gave a presentation to the Senate on Internationalisation and Global Engagement. The presentation highlighted:

- The Internationalisation and Global Engagement Framework
    - Aimed at Internationalising the University Strategy: "Joining the dots", prioritising and optimising, maximising returns, making the most of our existing assets
    - A regional approach to global engagement
    - Two main institutional KPIs: International student growth and improving global reputation
    - Three strategic initiatives: UoR Global Academy; Regional Engagement Hubs; Global Rankings
- Global context and strategic environment:
    - International student demand trends: price sensitivity, regionalisation
    - Geopolitical and Policy Landscape – greater volatility in key market due to changes in immigration policy in the UK; major and unpredictable geopolitical shifts
    - Competitive landscape: highly aggressive market that require differentiation and agility
    - TNE and large-scale partnerships: rapid expansion of branch campus, in particular India. Extremely welcoming policy in China for joint institutes and programmes.
    - Financial and operational pressures within the sector – "race to the bottom", unprecedented practices
- KPI performance highlights - International student population growth – UK campuses
    - International Foundation Programme: Sept 2025: Global Academy Launch; First full intake – September 2026
    - There were now 250 Foundation students at UoRM
    - Undergraduate – 2023/24 678, 2024/25 721, 2025/26 601
    - Postgraduate Taught – 2023/24 1050, 2024/25 1105, 2025/26 754
- International student population – global campuses and partnerships:
    - TNE partnerships – re-prioritised, new operational structures, incentives
    - China MoE Approved partnerships- soon to equal c. 5000 students – All now financially sustainable, new operational models
    - Henley Africa – growing influence in the continent, c. 2500 students, structural changes, financially sustainable. Possible future expansion to deliver UoR-wide programmes
- UoRM Transformation Success:
    - New Provost and APVC ASEAN: December 2024
    - New Strategy, Restructure, programme review, market repositioning
    - Rapid growth in student numbers, including regional:
        - 2025/26 combined intake: 647
        - 2026/27 Expected student population: 1700- 1800
    - Southeast Asia Regional Hub launching 1st August 2026
- Global rankings and international reputation:
    - UoR remained top 200 in QS WUR THE WUR
    - Aim to improve position significantly in the next 15 years
    - New University Rankings Board including specific task groups
    - Top 50 in THE Impact and QS Sustainability Rankings

    - Major focus for improvement: UoR out of top 250 for both employers and academic reputation. Improvements over the past year
    - New global Brand activation programme
- Global Engagement Hubs: Internationalisation and Global Engagement (IGE) Strategic Framework set out plans to: *"leverage existing global assets – campuses and other TNE operations – to create multifaceted regional Hubs working with the local community to further develop breadth and depth in our global engagement."*
- The South East Asia Hub would launch 1 August 2026; [Redacted s43]
- Supporting the new University Strategy:
    - Continuity: Continued optimisation of Global Campuses and operations; Global Hubs development; Internationalisation and student experience; Global Brand and reputation; Global and Sustainability rankings performance
    - Change: Ensuring our PS structure are fit for the future; Recruitment recovery plan; Global Alumni and philanthropy activation; International Research collaborations; Exploring strategic partnerships/Campus [Redacted s43]; Global portfolio financial sustainability review

The following questions and comments were raised on the presentation:

- Global campuses were also facing their own challenges – were lessons being learnt from across the sector on growth at pace internationally, and the UK's ability to be agile enough to support those operations? Lessons had been learnt from across the sector. The University would aim not to be too reliant on particularly countries/regions and would ensure that its global activities were able to operate on their own
- What was the process and timeframe for exploring strategic partnerships? It was noted that the University had processes for such developments, but that often these needed to be driven quickly. Some activities had been able to start in less than 12 months
- There were considerable costs for Schools in the UK to cover activity overseas – would the operating model to be changed to ensure that costs were recovered? It was confirmed that the operating models would be changed
- In regard to improving ranking position through reputation what measures were being considered. It was noted that academic reputation and employer reputation were the two main measures – the aim was to improve these over time through a programme of engagement

The Senate thanked Dr Baylon for the presentation.

[Fiona Blair left the meeting]

26/20 Report from the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience on Quality Assurance and Standards

The Senate received a report from UBTLSE (also see Minute 26/23) explicitly concerned with Academic Quality and Standards.

It was noted that UBTLSE considered reports relating to the maintenance of quality and standards in teaching and learning on a regular basis. Senators were asked to review the items contained in the report as they formed part of the evidence base upon which Senate could provide assurances to Council that the University's provision remained in line with the expectations of the Office for Students (OfS) and other key regulatory bodies. The report contained Assurances on Quality, including:

- Degree Outcomes Statement 2025
- Domestic League Tables 2026
- Student Complaints, Appeals and Regulations policies
- Sector bodies and national initiatives (for information)

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

26/21 Report of the Vice-Chancellor

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

Centenary and our community - Recent findings from the British Social Attitudes Survey 2026 showed a clear shift in public confidence, with young people now among the least likely to see higher education as valuable. This signalled what many describe as a "broken social contract between universities and the public." At a time of falling confidence, universities must demonstrate the real value of higher education for individuals and society. The centenary activities were helping to tell that story, showing how universities like Reading contributed to knowledge, opportunity and public good. The two-day Community Festival welcomed around 10,000 visitors and created a strong sense of pride and connection with local communities. Saturday brought thousands to campus, whilst Sunday's RAG Parade animated the town centre and ended in Forbury Gardens.

International Partners Day - The first International Partners' Day brought senior delegates from universities, embassies and international organisations to Reading. The programme reflected the University's global outlook, with discussions on climate resilience, sustainability, research partnerships, student mobility and innovation.

Learning Garden Launch- The new Learning Garden opened this month as a major centenary legacy project, transforming the historic walled garden into a dedicated space for outdoor learning and climate education.

Centenary Grant Projects - Several Centenary Grant Fund projects this semester highlighted the creativity and community spirit of the centenary year.

Excellence

Food and Nutritional Science Working Group - Strengthening the University's academic offer remained central to our strategy, and the enhancements in Food and Nutritional Sciences reflected this ambition. A dedicated working group had been established to reinforce the area as a strategic priority, aligning recruitment with research strengths and deepening industry engagement so that teaching and partnerships continued to deliver real-world impact.

Academic Workload Model - Work continued with the Academic Workload Model, with a new framework shared with Heads of School for consultation. Engagement and model-testing had revealed significant variation in School data and the need for greater automation. Specialist technical resource would now build an interim system aligned with wider projects such as timetabling. Detailed tariffs would follow in the autumn, with implementation planned for 2027.

Developing the University's Global Presence [Redacted s43] Work was now underway to assess the academic, regulatory, operational, financial, and governance considerations associated with such an initiative through a comprehensive feasibility and due diligence process. This exploratory phase would inform whether a future proposal was developed.

Sustainability

Student recruitment and financial challenge- Whilst the University remained on track to meet UG recruitment targets for the 2026 intake, the University, along with many institutions across the sector, continued to face a challenging international recruitment environment, particularly for PGT programmes, where applications and conversion rates, especially from China, had fallen sharply. This was expected to result in a significant shortfall against the 2026/27 financial forecast, with modelling indicating a gap of £8–10m. The Board had agreed additional non-pay savings, a 20/80 split in staff-cost reductions across academic and professional services, and an immediate recruitment freeze for professional services roles with limited exemptions. These steps would help stabilise the University's financial position while wider transformation work continued.

Alignment of Professional Services - Work continued to strengthen the alignment of professional services across Schools and Directorates. The programme aimed to create clearer structures, reduce duplication and ensure teams were organised to better support academic delivery and strategic priorities.

Items for report and approval

26/22 Report of the University Executive Board

The Senate received from UEB the Governance Review. It was noted that the Governance Review was being submitted through a number of different stages and different governance routes.

The Senate, for its part, were asked to:

1. Note the adoption of the DARE decision-making framework (approved by UEB) and the role profiles for Chairs and Committee Members endorsed by UEB, subject to further feedback.

2. Note the taxonomy of governance groups (approved by UEB).

3. Note the revised Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Teaching & Learning and Student Experience Committee (Annex B) and the feedback received from UBTSLE.

4. Note the revised Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Research & Innovation Committee (Annex C) and the feedback received from UCRI.

5. Approve the revised Terms of Reference (ToR) for the Internationalisation and Global Engagement Committee.

The original objectives of the Governance Review and its five high-level guiding principles were approved by UEB in May 2025 and Council in June 2025.

UEB had approved (May 2026) the adoption of the DARE decision-making framework (developed by McKinsey), as a practical alternative to the conventional RACI model, as a tool to bring clarity, agility and accountability to organisational decision-making. Specifically, the DARE framework clarified who the decision makers were, which the RACI framework did not. Input was broad, but ownership and accountability were clear, and decisions were faster and better informed.

- D = Deciders. The individuals who have final authority and are accountable for the decision outcome. This clarity prevents decision paralysis and ambiguity over who has authority.

- A = Advisers. Experts or stakeholders who provide input, guidance and challenge assumptions, but do not vote on the final decision. Ensures that decisions are informed by the right expertise.

- R = Recommenders. The individuals responsible for undertaking the analysis, developing options and making fact-based recommendations to the decider.

- E = Executors. Those responsible for implementing the decision once it is made and delivering the outcomes. Links decisions directly to delivery, ensuring follow-through.

In line with the DARE model, the Chair of a Board, Committee or Sub-Committee was the ultimate decision maker with accountability both for ensuring decisions were made and for those decisions, as well as for ensuring that the Committee and other sources could provide the required advice and recommendations to enable informed decision-making. Role profiles for Chairs and governance group members had been approved by UEB (June 2026). Work was planned with HR to develop a transition plan, to support colleagues with the changes this approach entailed.

The following questions and comments were raised:

- There was broad support for reviewing the governance structures and the work that had been undertaken
- There was a concern that Heads of School would not be represented on some of the Committees, yet they would be responsible for implementation – was this a risk? Should there be a number of Head of School representatives on each of the committees?
  It was noted that the committees would regularly review their terms of reference and membership at the start of each session and would ensure there was appropriate membership representing the

relevant University communities. For some committees, for IGESC there had long been a practice to rotate memberships. At some points it might be necessary to invite other colleagues into discussions at an earlier stage without necessarily becoming a member of the committee – it was about having the right people in the room at the right time for decision making

- Committees were not communication tools – there was a need to address communication routes and engagement more broadly
- Was there a risk that the new Strategy would encourage unwanted behaviours, for e.g. T&L and R&I not talking to each other – how would the University ensure that all parts of the Strategy spoke to each other? Good governance was paramount for the effective delivery of the new Strategy – each Objective would have a UEB owner who would be responsible to the Council for its delivery
- There was a commitment to reviewing structures more frequently than had previously been the case

The Senate, for its part, approved the revised terms of reference for committees reporting into it. It was noted that terms of reference and membership would be kept under more regular review.

26/23 Report of the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience

The Senate received and noted the Report of the meetings of the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (UBTLSE) held on 10 March, 14 May, 2 June 2026.

The report contained updates on:

- Key decisions and changes to policies
- Examiner nominations
- GenAI in Teaching & Learning
- Portfolio Review Programme (PRP)
- PGT Vacation Period
- OfS Statement on Expectations on Disability
- Student Contracts
- UBTLSE Terms of Reference
- Education for Environmental Sustainability
- Micro-credentials
- Learning Engagement Analytics Project (LEAP)
- Assessment and Feedback
- Professional Services Programme

26/24 Report of the University Committee for Research and Innovation

The Senate received the report of the University Committee for Research and Innovation held between 10 March and 2 June 2026. It was noted that the strategic meetings had covered the following areas:

- Academic workload model
- International Universities Climate Alliance
- Research Communications and Engagement
- Open Research action plan update

The Senate noted that UCRI had changed its operations ahead of the Governance Review, in particular: reducing the number of research related sub-groups; shorter more frequent Committee meetings; rotating the focus from strategic to operational every two weeks; publishing highlights after each meeting; being transparent about decisions taken.

The Senate approved for onwards transmission to the Council the Annual Statement on Research Integrity.

26/25 Report of the International and Global Engagement Strategy Board

There was no separate report on this occasion. This item was covered under Minutes 26/19.

26/26 Student Recruitment and Admissions Update

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

26/27 Report from outgoing RSU Officer and introduction to new Officers

Members of Senate thanked the outgoing Officers for all their work and wished them well in the future. The outgoing officers reflected on some of their achievements over the last year including: revival of Spark and the Centenary edition; RSU Pantry; Refurbishment of the Cave; free condoms and period products; student-led commercial events; polling station on campus; inter faith provision; working class centenary project; Global and peer partnerships; Black History Month; Student Representation; Digital navigation and accessibility; empowering disabled students; Games Knight; cost of living campaign

The Senate noted the role description for the incoming RSU Officers.

26/28 Report of the Joint Standing Committee of Council and Senate on Honorary Degrees

The Senate received and approved the report from the Joint Standing Committee of Council and Senate on Honorary Degrees.

The Senate noted that a greater diversity of nominations had been received.

The Senate, for its part, approved the nominations for onwards transmission to the Council.

26/29 Report from the Council

The Senate received an extract from the Council held on 9 March 2026 for its information.

Items for note

26/30 Reports of Examiners for Higher Degrees by thesis

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

26/31 Examinations for Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates

The Senate authorised the Vice-Chancellor to approve May/June/July 2026 examination results on its behalf.

26/32 Chair's Action

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

- That approval for an exceptional arrangement (Part 3 only classification) to be added to Section 17 of the Assessment Handbook, Annex 1
- [Redacted s40]
- [Redacted s40]
- Award of Emeritus and Honorary Fellow titles to colleagues having left since the last meeting
- Award of an Honorary Doctorate of Psychology at the University of Reading Malaysia – the Vice-Chancellor outlined to the Senate the background to this item

26/33 Appointments to Committees and other bodies

In respect of appointments, the Senate noted that:

- There was one vacancy available from 1 August 2026 for members of the Senate to join the Joint Standing Committee on Honorary Degrees Committee
- There were two vacancies available from 1 August 2026 for members of Senate to join the Senate Agenda Group
- There is a vacancy available from 1 August 2026 on the University Research Ethics Committee
- To reappoint [Redacted s40] to the Student Appeals Committee for a further term to 31.7.2029

- To reappoint [Redacted s40 (7 names)] to SSCER for a further period to 31 July 2029
- To reappoint [Redacted s40] to UREC for a further period to 31 July 2029

26/34 Election of a staff representative to the Council

The Senate noted that Professor Richard Frazier's term of office as Senate representative on the Council would come to an end on 31.7.2026. Senators continuing on Senate in the next academic year would be eligible to stand for this position. Further details would be circulated outside of the meeting

26/35 Other Retirements

The Senate approved that each of the following be accorded the title of Honorary Fellow for a period of five years with effect from the date indicated:

[Redacted s40]

[Redacted s40]

[Redacted s40]

[Redacted s40]

[Redacted s40]

26/36 List of meetings in 2026-27

The Senate received the final version of the list of meetings for 2026-27 for its information.

26/37 Dates of next meeting 2026/27

Wednesday 28 October 2026 at 2.15 pm (in person)
Wednesday 6 January 2027 at 2.15 pm – reserve meeting (online)
Wednesday 24 February 2027 at 2.15 pm (online)
Wednesday 28 April 2027 at 2.15 pm – reserve meeting (online)
Thursday 16 June 2027 at 2.15 pm (in person)