

Senate

21/1 A meeting of the Senate was held via teams, on Wednesday 3 March 2021 at 2.15 pm.

Present:

The Vice-Chancellor (Chair)

Professor Adrian Bell
Professor Cindy Becker
Dr Rebecca Berkley
Dr Katrina Bicknell
Professor Ingo Bojak
Professor Carmel Houston-Price
Professor David Carter
Dr Yota Dimitriadi
Professor Peter Dorward
Professor Mark Fellowes
Dr David Field
Professor Richard Frazier
Professor Clare Furneaux
Dr Francesca Greco
Professor Becky Green
Professor Andrew Godley
Professor Louise Hague
Professor Chris Harty
Professor Carmel Houston-Price
Ms Rebecca Jerrome
Professor Rodney Jones
Dr Daniela La Penna
Dr Allan Laville
Dr Tim Lees
Professor Elizabeth McCrum
Professor Gail Marshall
Professor Simon Mortimer
Professor Steve Musson
Professor Julian Park
Dr Karen Poulter

Professor Jane Setter
Dr Mark Shanahan
Ms Stephanie Sharp
Professor Simon Sherratt
Professor David Stack
Professor Vesna Stojanovik
Professor Katja Strohfeltd
Dr Maria Vahdati
Professor Sue Walker
Dr Hong Wei
Professor Emily West
Dr Karin Whiteside
Professor Adrian Williams
Professor Paul Williams
Dr Hong Yang
Professor Parveen Yaqoob
Professor Dominik Zaum

Students:

George Ingram, RUSU Education Officer
Bandy Karki, RUSU Welfare Officer
Rachel Osborne, RUSU President
Alex Rose, RUSU Activities Officer
Rachel Wates, RUSU Diversity Officer

In attendance:

Ms Louise Sharman (Secretary)
Ms Sam Foley
Dr Richard Messer
Mrs Sally Pellow

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed members to the Senate, including Professor Green who was joining Senate.

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

Sohna Young joined the University in 2003 as a cleaning operative, mainly working on the Whiteknights campus. Sohnna worked during the day from 6am-12pm in Minghella and Edith Morley and would then return in the evening to work in the Carrington building from 5pm-7pm.

Susanna McFeely. In May 2009, Susanna started at the University, joining the Institute of Education (IoE) as Quality Assurance Administrator. She went on to move into the role of Administration Manager for the IoE in September 2010 and then in February 2016, Susanna moved into the new Support Centre operation, as Head of the Edith Morley and London Support Centres within Student Services.

Don Porter joined the University in 1979 in the Centre for Applied Language Studies (CALS); the precursor to ISLI. He brought the Test of English for Academic Purposes to the University and was the main driver behind the revision of the test in during the 1980 and 1990s. He retired in 2000.

Emeritus Professor John R.L. Allen joined the University in 1959 to a research fellowship in sedimentology. This was followed by a lectureship in 1961, a promotion to Reader in 1967, and a further promotion to Personal Professorship in 1972. He became the first Director of the Postgraduate Research Institute for Sedimentology (PRIS) in 1988. He retired in 1993.

21/2 The Minutes (20/56 – 20/70) of the meeting held on 4 November 2020 were approved.

Arising on the Minutes, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Professor Zaum, reported that in December it had been agreed to move Copernicus to Bonn, Germany. The Government had reiterated its commitment to building a HQ for ECMWF on campus and discussions continued with BEIS and the Government Property Agency. It was expected that a proposal for the HQ would be made to ECMWF in June for a decision by their Council in December 2021.

Items for presentation and discussion

21/3 Presentation from the Dean for Diversity and Inclusion – Embedding Equality, Diversity and Inclusion into every aspect of the University (Item 4)

The Senate received a presentation from Dr Laville (Dean for Diversity and Inclusion) and Dr Dimitriadi (Co-chair of the Staff Disability Network); the presentation outlined:

- The approach to EDI ownership including – UEB Diversity and inclusion leads, with champions for gender, pregnancy/maternity, family/parenting, LGBT+, race, religion, disability, age; the Dean for Diversity and Inclusion position; the Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Board; D&I Advisors in HR; Athena Swan Silver Team; Action Plan Groups for LGBT+ and Disability and Neurodiversity; Race Equality Action Team; D&I leads within Schools and Functions; Networks including LGBT+, BAME, Disability, Parent and Family; and embedders leaders for e.g. RUSU Diversity Officer.
- Progress on Gender – the University had been successful in its Athena Swan Silver

application. Feedback on the award focused on: leadership visibility; job shares at senior levels; strong SMART action plans; intersectionality; and the extensive consultation that had taken place.

- The journey to date on race – including: progressive and ongoing work as part of a 3-year Race Equality Action Plan formally launched in 2018/19; the Race Equality Review Team; BAME Network; the University Review on Race Equality. The aims of the Race Equality Review 2020 included: active listening to diverse voices; work around four themes (Representation; Student experience and attainment; Staff experience and progression; Culture). It was expected that the Review Report would be published this month.
- LGBT+- the University had been in Stonewall’s Top 100 for 2 years in a row. The Staff feedback survey had generated an 85% response rate (sector average 42.5%). The University was above the sector average for senior visibility and leadership. Further work would be undertaken around: monitoring; bi awareness; and the student journey.
- Disability – work was continuing on the attainment gap. The University had signed up the Disability Confident Scheme and had launched the Disability and Neurodiversity Action Plan Group. Future work planned included: disability awareness training and intersectionality.
- Best practice – consideration was being given to a number of charter marks. The reports from the Race Equality Review and the Disability and Neurodiversity Review would help inform the next set of University targets. Resource would be allocated carefully to best effect.
- Students – it was important to consult with students on EDI matters and lived experience to improve the student experience. Work continued with RUSU to share objectives and joint events had been held. Three UROP projects had been undertaken on different aspects of the lived experience.
- An eight-step path had set out everyone’s collective role in EDI.
- COVID-19 – had impacted minority and marginalised individuals. A Tackling Gender Inequalities post COVID-19 Group had been established, as well as work to look at the impact that the pandemic has had on those colleagues with childcare responsibilities.
- Staff Disability Network – consisted of 12 members from academic and professional services; the Network had an internal and external facing profile and were part of the National Association of Disabled Staff Networks. The term disability was defined by the Equality Act as physical or mental impairment that had a substantial and long-term effect in everyday life activities. Neurodiversity had been included to recognise colleagues with long term health conditions and mental health experiences who might not identify themselves necessarily with the term disabled. It was recognised that the language of disability was not straightforward as labels could have negative connotations or be presented in negative terms. Only 2.6% of University staff identified themselves as disabled (sector average 4.14% academics, 5.8% support staff). The Network’s long-term vision was by 2026 to be sector average in representation of disabled staff and to be an employer of choice for talented disabled people. The Network also aimed to: provide mutual support and a collective voice for disabled staff within the University; highlight the positive contributions made by disabled staff; dispel any misconceptions about disability in the workplace. A three-level approach was being taken with information in/information out/information sharing.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked Dr Laville and Dr Dimitriadi for the presentation. It was noted that

the Disability Survey was still open if colleagues wished to submit as response.

The Senate noted that the impact of COVID-19 on progression had been included with the personal circumstances section of the Personal Titles process this year.

21/4 Report of the Vice-Chancellor (Item 5)

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

- a) **Major Recovery Team and Forward planning** – The University continued to report very low levels of COVID within the community and report them via the dashboard. The testing centre at the SportsPark at Whiteknights continued to operate albeit on a smaller scale with the Case Management Team following up on positive cases.
- b) **Roadmap implications** - Further to the Government announcement on Monday 22 February, colleagues were working through the detailed government guidance to finalise which placement, practical and studio-based activities which could not easily be replicated online would be taught face to face from Monday 8 March. For all other students, as previously confirmed, all remaining scheduled teaching sessions would continue to be delivered online only for the rest of the Spring Term. All existing restrictions and Health & Safety control measures continued to apply, including timetabling campus teaching sessions to accommodate the current 2 metre distancing for the rest of the Spring Term. All colleagues and students on campus were also strongly encouraged to take regular Lateral Flow Tests to minimise the risk. Work was in hand to explore potential options for the Summer Term and Graduation this year, working closely with Reading University Students' Union (RUSU) Sabbatical officers within the context of the new guidance.
- c) **Autumn term** - The Major Recovery Team's main focus was planning for the Autumn Term which would start as currently timetabled. It was likely that the University would continue with a blended approach. RUSU had conducted a survey of approximately 750 students on their views of the teaching and other support during the pandemic.
- d) **Open letter to Government** - As a follow up to the open letter, challenging the Government to do more to support students during this pandemic, the Vice-Chancellor had the opportunity to do various media interviews. In these it was recognised that students were missing the university experience that many were expecting, particularly on the wider social experience associated with campus life, and that they deserved recognition for this but, equally, universities had delivered the promised education and were in no position to make tuition fee rebates. Whilst the Minister had announced an additional £50m for hardship funding, a response was still awaited around use of the apprenticeship levy.
- e) **Freedom of Speech** - The Government had launched a new policy over freedom of speech in universities. The guidance included a new free speech condition placed on higher education providers in order to be registered in England and access public funding. The regulator, the Office for Students, would have the power to impose sanctions, including financial penalties, for breaches of the condition.
- f) **New senior appointments** - Professors Roberta Gilchrist and John Gibbs had been appointed as the Research Deans for Heritage and Creativity; and Professor Carol Wagstaff as the Research Dean for Agriculture, Food and Health.
- g) **USS** – an email had been circulated earlier in the day to colleagues in respect of USS. The USS Trustee has now set out possible total contribution rates (i.e. the combined employer and employee contributions) in three scenarios ranging from 42.1% to 56.2%; (the current total contribution rate was 30.7%). The contribution rates for current benefits put forward by the USS Trustee were unaffordable not just for employers but for

scheme members as well. An increase to these levels would risk even more colleagues opting out of the scheme. In addition, the last year had shown that the sector was strong and resilient even under the most difficult and unprecedented of circumstances and it could be argued that the USS Trustee recommendations undervalued the collective and enduring financial strength of the participating employers. Universities UK would be holding further discussions with the USS Trustee and the Pensions Regulator, encouraging them to provide clear reasoning for such high contributions and urging them to further consider the value of the measures employers had already offered to take in order to support the scheme. An all-staff briefing on pensions would be held on Friday 19 March 2021.

Items for report and approval

21/5 Report of the University Executive Board (Item 6)

There was no report on this occasion.

21/6 Report of the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (Item 7)

The Senate received the Report of the meetings of the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (UBTLSE) held on 3 and 30 November 2020, 5 and 25 January 2021, and 23 February 2021.

The Senate noted updates on:

- Teaching, Learning and Student Experience Risk Register
- Response to the pandemic and future planning
- Arrangements for examinations and assessment in 2020/21
- Assessment-related measures to mitigations the impact of the pandemic (2020/21)
- Post-Results EC process
- Portfolio Review Pathway
- T&L Appraisal
- Curriculum Framework
- Student Voice & Partnership
- TEF Strategy Group
- University Annual Quality Assurance Review Report 2019/20
- Graduate outcomes 2017/18 Cohort – sector-level comparison
- UG and PG student surveys
- Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies
- Sector bodies and national initiatives
- PLaT Project Scheme award winners 2020/21

The Senate approved:

- For submission to the Council the Annual Learning and Teaching Report for Spring 2021.
- The appointment of Internal and External Examiners for 2020/21.
- the new Enhancement-Led Quality Assurance processes policy, with effect from 2021/22.

21/7 Report of the University Board for Research and Innovation (Item 8)

The Senate received the report of the University Board for Research and Innovation.

In particular, the Senate noted that the Board had:

- received a presentation on research-related Diversity & Inclusion data.
- received an update on the research-related aspects of the University's Strategy implementation, in particular the expectations and workload pathway.
- received details of how the University had allocated c. £1.1m from UKRI's World Class Labs Initiative.
- endorsed the process whereby Research Deans had determined Theme winners of the Research Output Prize for Early Career Researchers. The winners would be presented at Court in March.
- received an update on the University's future relationship with the European Centre for Medium-range Weather Forecasting. The University was supporting a post and studentships to cultivate further research collaboration.
- noted good progress with the University's REF submission. The submission would be on 31 March 2021. A presentation on the REF could be given to a future meeting if required.

In addition, it was noted that it had been agreed that research leave would no longer be suspended in 2021/22 but would be prioritised for those colleagues whose research was impacted by the pandemic.

21/8 Report of the Global Engagement Strategy Board (Item 9)

The Senate noted that there was no report on this occasion. Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Paul Inman) had indicated that he wished to give a presentation to a future meeting.

Items for note

21/9 Report of the Senate Standing Committee on Examination Results (Item 10)

The Senate received and noted a report from the Senate Standing Committee on Examination Results summarising cases since the last Senate.

21/10 Report of the Student Appeals Committee (Item 11)

The Senate received the Report of the meeting of the Student Appeals Committee held since the last meeting and noted the outcomes of the Committee's decisions.

21/11 Report of the Joint Standing Committee of Council and Senate on Honorary Degrees (Item 12)

The Senate, for its part, approved the Report of the meeting of the Joint Standing Committee of Council and Senate on Honorary Degrees.

21/12 Retirement of Professors (Item 13 b)

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

Professor Peter Stoneley (31.1.21)

21/13 Other Retirements (Item 13 b)

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

Dr Graham Schafer (31.12.20)

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Student representatives withdrew from the remainder of the meeting
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RESERVED BUSINESS

21/14 The reserved minutes (20/71 - 20/72) of the meeting held on 4 November 2020 were approved.

21/15 Reports of Examiners for Higher Degrees by thesis (Item 16 b)

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