

## Senate

21/43 A meeting of the Senate was held via Teams, on Wednesday 3 November 2021 at 2.15 pm.

Present:

The Vice-Chancellor (Chair)

Dr Tabarak Ballal  
Professor Adrian Bell  
Professor Cindy Becker  
Dr Rebecca Berkley  
Dr Katrina Bicknell  
Professor Helen Bilton  
Professor John Board  
Professor Ingo Bojak  
Professor Phil Dash  
Professor James Devenney  
Dr Yota Dimitriadi  
Professor Peter Dorward  
Ilan Dwek  
Professor Mark Fellowes  
Dr David Field  
Professor Richard Frazier  
Professor Clare Furneaux  
Dr Francesca Greco  
Professor Becky Green  
Paul Inman  
Dr Chris Jones  
Professor Rodney Jones  
Dr MARRISA JOSEPH  
Dr Daniela La Penna  
Dr Allan Laville  
Dr Tim Lees  
Professor Elizabeth McCrum  
Dr John McKendrick  
Dr David Marshall  
Professor Annalisa Marzano  
Dr Mary Morrissey  
Professor Simon Mortimer  
Dr Jeanne-Louise Moys  
Professor Keiichi Nakata  
Professor Adrian Palmer

Professor Helen Parish  
Professor Julian Park  
Dr Karen Poulter  
Dr Sharon Sinclair-Graham  
Professor Amy Smith  
Professor David Stack  
Professor Vesna Stojanovik  
Professor Katja Strohfeldt  
Dr Maria Vahdati  
Professor Carol Wagstaff  
Dr Shixun Wang  
Dr Hong Wei  
Dr Karin Whiteside  
Professor Adrian Williams  
Professor Paul Williams  
Dr Hong Yang  
Professor Parveen Yaqoob  
Professor Dominik Zaum  
Dr Ruvi Ziegler

**Students:**

Bethany Nugus, RUSU Education Officer  
Ben Knowles, RUSU President  
Amy Sheffield, RUSU Activities Officer  
Grace Loweth, RUSU Welfare Officer  
Rusafa Karim  
Oscar Minto  
Drew Taylor

**In attendance:**

Ms Louise Sharman (Secretary)  
Dr Richard Messer  
Tony Oliver (interpreter)  
Mrs Sally Pellow

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed members to the Senate and outlined the format of the meeting.

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

Emeritus Professor Malcolm Stansfield - In 1959, Malcolm completed his PGDip in Agriculture at the University and joined the Farm Management department as a Lecturer. Malcolm was later promoted to Senior Lecturer and Director of the University's Farm Management Unit. Malcolm retired from the University in 2001

Guy Haworth - Guy joined the School of Systems Engineering in 2003 and left the University in 2015 with the closure of the School of Systems Engineering but remained an Honorary Fellow.

Dr John Foley-Fisher - John joined the University in 1963 and worked as an Assistant Lecturer within the Department of Applied Physical Sciences, before being promoted to Lecturer in 1965 and then the Deputy Director of the Engineering Laboratory in 1982, followed by Senior Lecturer in Engineering in 1988. John retired from the University in 1992.

21/44 The Minutes (21/16 – 21/40) of the meeting held on 24 June 2021 were approved.

21/45 Membership of the Senate in 2021/22 (Item 4)

The Senate received a list of its membership for the session 2021/22 and noted Ordinance A3.

Items for presentation and discussion

21/46 Community and Global Engagement (Item 5)

The Senate received a presentation on Community and Global Engagement from Pro-Vice-Chancellor Paul Inman who highlighted a few key points, in particular:

- Global and community engagement should not be pitted against each other.
- One of the key principles of the University Strategy was Engagement – this would bring together global and local engagement.
- All Staff Talks had been held on global engagement.
- The University had over 4,000 international students from over 140 countries. A considerable amount of diversity was hidden in the figures, for e.g. HBS accounted for around half of international student numbers.
- Global Engagement Strategic Priorities were to:
  - Build potential in our top performing academic units by investing in excellence. Concentrating resource on the areas of the University with most potential to impact on our global standing.
  - Develop a range of professionally focused PGT programmes with employability at their heart.
  - Scale up the approach to International Foundation Programme (IFP) and other 'bridging' provision on campus and overseas with partners.

- Implement country-focused student recruitment strategies and delivery plans. Become more strategic in the use of scholarships and bursaries.
- Further invest in a Global Partnerships Office to bring together a larger number of international education professionals utilising market intelligence to contribute to new partnership working in South Asia, Africa, the Middle East and Europe (probably Southern Europe).
- Open up a number of offshore transnational education (TNE) partnership hubs to draw in students from the wider South and South-East Asia regions including one to be established on the University of Reading campus in Malaysia.
- Devise marketing, branding/identity campaigns to improve greatly the international focus and appropriateness of our promotional texts. Using world-leading research reputation as the hook.
- Review balance of UK staff and in-country staff in the University's Global Recruitment office with a view to opening offices in key regions, which would manage relationships with agents and maybe process applications.
- Launch of a programme of University-wide Global Engagement initiatives promoting the development of intercultural skills. e.g. Turing student mobility programme and a Global Citizen Award.
- Develop a menu of distance/blended programmes, to build on the experiences of delivering learning during the pandemic. Look to Africa as a market for this activity working with Henley Africa.
- A considerable amount of work was also underway in respect of community and local engagement. A visible piece of work was to build on the Community Action Partnership (CAP) – coordinating the University's and RUSU's engagement with the external community, for e.g. Student Community Champions, a listening exercise to identify how to share knowledge and resources, CAP Teams Channel.
- The Community Fund had awarded £50k to support projects with the local community.
- The University had confirmed its intention to become a University of Sanctuary. The CARA Fellow had now been appointed.
- Community Engagement Strategic Priorities were:
  - Strategic Civic Engagement - at a very senior level. Influencing local political decisions. Working with local authorities, public services, schools etc. To develop strategic relationships with civic partners that enable each party to achieve mutually agreed goals
  - Business Engagement co-ordination - Local Enterprise Partnership, Multinational companies with HQs locally, SMEs, TVSP etc. The University would deploy its resources and expertise in close alignment with strategic partners and engage with a wide range of businesses to enhance their prospects and those of students.
  - Co-creation of a Community Knowledge and Services Hub with local organisations and community groups, enabling access to University knowledge and services in education, learning and research - a clear 'front door' to the University.
  - Expansion of a Community Volunteering Programme which enhanced staff and students' interpersonal and professional skills; benefits the University via innovative new ways of working and helps community groups through skills/knowledge transfer and the opportunity to build meaningful relationships

- with each other and with the University.
- Enhancing Local Democracy by creating opportunities for local people to be more actively involved and represented in University decision-making. At the same time encourage University staff and students to become actively involved in local democracy and the governance of local organisations.
- Create a lifelong learning programme for Reading based on a clear understanding of local needs. This would involve strategic alignment of work with ‘feeder’ institutions – schools, colleges, U3A, etc. The backdrop to this was England’s plummeting participation in learning by 25–64-year-olds (the largest drop in Europe). At a time of massive technological change, the case for workforce retraining and upskilling grows.
- Mitigation of studentification in local Reading neighbourhoods – fostering positive relationships between students and neighbours and managing complaints about student behaviour in local neighbourhoods. News of disputes between local neighbourhoods and students travels fast these days on social media and could quickly inflict reputational damage to a university.
- Special Strategic Projects. To engage in a range of initiatives that encouraged active University/Community collaboration and co-creation. For instance, creating a programme of partnerships and opportunities to link University expertise on environment and sustainability with local community stakeholders. The recent Climate Education Summit run by the University was a good example of the type of project it could lead on.

In response to specific questions:

- Where there were staff mobility programmes in place with time-limited funding were colleagues encouraged to make use of these? Pro-Vice-Chancellor Paul Inman encouraged colleagues to make use of these mobility programmes but in regard to the particular case raised it was agreed to take discussion out of the meeting.
- Details on the University of Sanctuary were posted in the Team chat. It was noted that Reading was a City of Sanctuary.
- The University had signed up to CARA for a further 3 years.
- Was there a back-up plan for Turing? Pro-Vice-Chancellor Paul Inman confirmed that the Government had confirmed that the Turing Scheme would be extended for a further three years; more details were expected to follow. The Turing Scheme was complex; further consideration was being given to this matter.

#### 21/47 ECWMF Business Case (Item 6)

The Senate received the business case for the relocation of ECWMF to campus. The paper was a draft ahead of the Council meeting on 24 November 2021.

The Vice-Chancellor reminded the Senate that under the Phase 1 agreement with UCU and the Staff Forum it had been agreed that all proposals in excess of £10M would be shared with UCU, the Staff Forum, and the Senate ahead of submission to the Council. The views of the Senate would be shared with the Council.

Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Zaum and Professor Paul Williams (Research Division Lead for Weather Research) presented the business case.

By way of a summary it was noted that the relocation of the HQ and the core science activities of the ECMWF to the University's Whiteknights Campus had been under discussion for almost 10 years between Government, ECMWF, and the University. Whilst a concrete proposal was on the table and under discussion by all parties three years ago, Brexit and the tender by ECMWF to host its EU-funded programmes (Copernicus@ECMWF) delayed a decision. Following the unsuccessful application of the UK to host Copernicus@ECMWF in December 2020, the then Science Minister reiterated the UK's offer to build a new HQ for ECMWF on campus. Since then, work had resumed, with Government (BEIS and the Government Property Agency) to develop a proposal (financial, architectural, and scientific) for approval by ECMWF Council in December 2021.

Bringing ECMWF onto the Whiteknights campus was a complex project, which offered very significant returns, but also involved significant investments. Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Zaum highlighted three key points to the Senate:

- The Department of Meteorology and ECMWF had grown in collaboration with each other over a number of years with a significant number of collaborative projects and co-authored research papers. The move of ECMWF to campus would create the largest cluster of weather and climate research and operational forecasting in the world. The breadth and depth of this climate and weather research structure would be a strong attractor for research talent, research opportunities and investment, as well as bringing huge reputational benefits. ECMWF was a key international partner with members in 35 countries in Europe.
- This was a complex project in terms of:
  - The need to influence various Government departments in what was a competitive bid – the final decision on the proposal would be taken by the ECMWF Council in December 2021.
  - The significant estates work that would be required including the move of Art and site preparations.
  - The need to build research synergies to maximise research opportunities – the proposal included a 15-year plan for investment into climate and weather science.
- The wider environment in which the University was operating. As COP 26 was showing climate change was the defining theme of the age. Sustainability was critical to the University's strategy and links would be built through a number of academic areas- Law, Politics, Maths, Agriculture, Food. The recent Comprehensive Spending Review was positive in terms of the settlement for research but it was expected that universities would need to leverage more funding from business in the future.

Professor Williams reported that colleagues in Meteorology were hugely excited at the prospect Of ECMWF moving to campus and how it would revolutionise research making Reading the leading place in the world for meteorological and atmospheric science. He outlined to the Senate three examples of current collaborations with ECMWF:

- A project to improve flood forecasting up to 15 days ahead.
- A collaboration to understand uncertainties around moisture in the upper atmosphere and how this could worsen weather forecasts – the work would aim to improve forecasting of damaging Autumn and Winter storms.
- Work on icing and how this could impact the aerodynamics of aircraft flight.

Members of the Senate enquired as to the options for the move of the School of Art and the impact on the student experience. The Vice-Chancellor responded that Senate were being asked to approve the academic proposal for the ECMWF business case. Once a decision had been taken by the ECMWF Council then a clear plan would need to be put in place for the move of Art and other ancillary works. It was noted that preparation work was in hand to look at options for Art and that the School had been involved in discussions. Any move was likely to result in improved facilities in the longer-term but some negative impact in the short-term, but as yet there was no agreed proposal or timeframe for the move. It was estimated that the cost of the move was likely to be in the order of £6.6M.

The Senate was unanimous in its support of the business case for the move the ECMWF HQ to campus but reinforced the importance of a good settlement for the School of Art as part of the project.

The Senate recorded its thanks to all those involved in the preparation of the business case and to Professor Williams and Professor Zaum for the presentation.

#### 21/48 Review of the Senate (Item 7)

At its last meeting the Senate had noted that there would be a review of the effectiveness of Senate in 2021/22, undertaken by the Senate itself.

Professor Frazier informed the Senate at it was a matter of good governance that the effectiveness of the most senior committees of the University were reviewed regularly. The last review of the effectiveness of the Senate was in 2016/17.

The Senate Agenda Group had produced draft terms of reference for the review along with an outline of membership and members of the Senate were asked to comment on the proposed remit.

The Senate approved the establishment of the review. Volunteers to join the review were asked to contact the Secretary.

#### 21/49 Report of the Vice-Chancellor (Item 8)

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

a) Start of the Academic Year – the University was busy with many students and colleagues on campus. For students starting University this year Study Smart had been promoted. The transitions working group had developed a new online toolkit which shared information and good practice for colleagues on how to support students as they joined the University.

The on-campus vaccination bus had vaccinated 300 people; early indications from a vaccination survey of returning students suggested that more than 90% had had one or both doses of the vaccine. This was in line with what UUK has reported for the sector.

The covid dashboard was reporting around 20 new cases a week amongst staff and students. Whilst there might be some underreporting to the University (particularly of staff cases with rates so high in secondary schools), the University's rates were far lower than the 200 weekly cases this time last year. The NHS PCR testing centre at the Great Hall at London Road had now closed. The University had offered free space for a new NHS PCR testing station near the Pepper Lane entrance on Whiteknights campus.

The assumption for the Spring Term was that all students would be back on campus by 10 January 2021.

b) Black History Month - October saw the return of Black History Month with a range of activities and events including an open call for nominating Black Excellence. A key theme for the month, was that learning from the past should be a priority throughout the year, not least given the findings of the recent race equality review with 20 recommendations to tackle racism. Pro Vice Chancellor Paul Inman had been appointed as UEB champion for Race.

c) New Chancellor - The process to appoint a new Chancellor was underway. The full job description was shared with staff and comments were invited from all colleagues by mid-October.

d) Undergraduate admissions update - This year, high tariff institutions accepted many more students, in part fuelled by the increase in A/A\* grades. Clearing proved to be highly competitive, but despite these challenges, the University held its own and would either meet or be close to targets.

e) Graduate Outcomes 2018/19 - Reading had performed strongly in the recent survey of Graduate outcomes. Whilst the positive destinations (graduate level/professional work, post-graduate level study, or a combination of these) score dropped by almost three percentage points, Reading's position in the sector was the highest ranked for at least eight years and in the top quartile of the sector.

f) Research Income - The COVID pandemic and changes in government policy had impacted research income. Against an initial target of £40m in grants won, the University secured £38.3m in 2020/1, a decline of approximately 5% from the previous year. This was not unexpected given the 15% decline in applications in 2019/20. Research income and awards won had also been significantly affected by the government's decision to cut Overseas Development Aid (ODA), and UKRI's decision to cut funding by £120m. For the University this meant the loss of around £1M in research funding.

g) League tables - The Times Higher World University Rankings were published in September with the University again ranking in the 201-250 band globally and equal 29th for UK institutions. The Guardian University Guide Rankings were also published in September with the University ranking 61st in the UK out of 121 institutions.

h) Partnership with Cambridge Education Group - The University had signed a new contract with Cambridge Education Group (CEG), extending the partnership for a further five years and expanding it.

i) Shinfield and Arborfield estate - Conversations continued with Wokingham regarding the potential development of land in Shinfield and Arborfield, including around Thames Valley

Science Park and the Hall Farm site – a consultation from WBC was expected in the next week. In addition, a scoping exercise would be conducted (led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Parveen Yaqoob) to identify strategic opportunities to enhance the scale, impact and sustainability of our food and agriculture research.

j) Cine Valley - Proposals for an 18-stage film studio and associated workshops at the Thames Valley Science Park were given the green light by Wokingham Borough Councillors in a planning meeting on 13 October.

k) UCU Ballot - Earlier this month the University received formal notice from the University and College Union (UCU) that it intended to ballot its members for industrial action regarding the proposed changes to the USS (Universities Superannuation Scheme) pension arrangements. The UCU ballot would run from 18 October to 4 November 2021.

l) Community Action Partnership - The Community Action Partnership (CAP) was a collaborative forum bringing together colleagues and students interested in community action. The aim of the forum was to coordinate the University and RUSU's engagement with the external community, to inspire and share best practice and is an important element of our strategic principle to be an Engaged University.

m) Community Fund awards - The new Community Fund had awarded £50,000 to 12 projects run by professional and academic colleagues supporting the local community in Reading.

In response to specific questions it was noted that:

- The MRT would be considering COVID mitigations for the Spring and Summer Term. Plans had been put in place should the Government decide to move to its Plan B – this would include considerations around mask wearing.
- The Vice-Chancellor was on a task and finish group with UUK which was talking with the DfE on various options in regard to the cost of the Student Loan book. As yet nothing was known around Government plans in regard to changing the student loan system.
- Consideration was being given to finding space for CEG on campus.

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

21/50 Report of the University Executive Board (Item 9)

There was no report on this occasion.

21/51 Report of the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (Item 10)

The Senate received the Report of the meetings of the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (UBTLSE) held on 6 July, 14 September and 5 October 2021.

The Senate noted updates on:

- Key decisions and changes to policies

- Annual Statement from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator 2020
- Review and Update of Student Policies and Procedures
- Portfolio Review Pathway
- Risk Registers
- Periodic Review
- NSS 2021
- UKES 2021
- PGT Taught Experience Survey
- League Tables
- Quality Assurance Review
- Examiner Nominations
- Extenuating Circumstances Redesign Project
- Academic Tutor System Project
- Student Attendance & Management Support
- Curriculum Framework
- Student Voice and Partnership
- Student Academic Transitions
- Sub-Group on Education for Sustainable Development
- Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs)
- Sector bodies and national initiatives
- 2021 University Teaching Fellowship winners

It was noted that proposals around Blended Learning and Programme Expectations would be submitted to the Senate in January 2022.

The Senate approved the proposed amendments to the Assessment Handbook in relation to Degree Classification Rules.

#### 21/52 Report of the University Board for Research and Innovation (Item 11)

The Senate received the report of the University Board for Research and Innovation held on 27 October 2021.

In particular, the Senate noted that the Board:

- Had received an update on recent research-related performance data, including the THE World University rankings, and research grants data
- Discussed the final output from the Individual expectations framework, part of the workload and expectations pathway
- Received an update on progress with the Concordat to support research integrity and the Concordat to support the career development of researchers
- Received information on the UKRI's Open Access research policy and noted the establishment of a working group
- Received a paper on the use of responsible metric and open research in recruitment and promotion processes and recommended the establishment of a working group to take forward
- Received details of the Research England funding allocations for 2021/22
- Received an update on the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021

It was highlighted that the UCRI Away Day had looked at the research plans and research strategy post REF.

There was an increasing focus on research culture (research integrity, open research, collegiality, supporting career development, recognition and reward); consideration would need to be given as to how this fits within the University Strategy. Government had announced specific funding in the QR allocation for research culture.

21/53 Report of the Global Engagement Strategy Board (Item 12)

The Senate noted that there was no report on this occasion.

21/54 Enrolment Analysis 2021 (Item 13)

The Senate received and noted an analysis of enrolment for 2021. Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Fellowes highlighted to the Senate the following:

- The challenges faced in recruitment during the pandemic including the impact of grade inflation and the activity of competitors.
- Across all levels of study, to date the University had seen a -6%/-337 decrease in Home enrolments as compared to the final autumn enrolment position in 2020 and an increase of +8%/+124 enrolled International students.
- Overall International enrolment was up compared to last year – which was positive given the recruitment challenges this year and fears over whether international students would be able to travel to the UK. International PGT enrolment had increased by 17%. There had been a small decline in the number of international undergraduate students the University had enrolled compared to last year.
- IFP enrolment had improved compared to last year, exceeding its target.
- Undergraduate enrolments were very slightly down compared to 2020 with -0.2%/-9 decrease in enrolments overall.
- PGT enrolments overall were down by -6.8%/-148 enrolments, though as noted above the University has done better than expected with international enrolments at this level. Unfortunately the University was down -18.5% on home PGT enrolments this year compared to 2020.

The Senate recorded its thanks to all those involved in student recruitment.

### **Items for note**

21/55 Report of the Senate Standing Committee on Examination Results (Item 14)

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

21/56 Report of the Student Appeals Committee (Item 15)

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.

21/57 Report of the Standing Committee on Academic Engagement and Fitness to Study (Item 16)

The Senate received the Report of the meeting of the Standing Committee on Academic Engagement and Fitness to Study held since the last meeting and noted the outcomes of the Committee's decisions.

21/58 Items approved by Chair's Action (Item 17 a)

The Senate noted the following items had been approved by Chair's Action: the appointment of Professor Bicknell and Professor Smith to the Honorary Degrees Sub-Committee to 31.7.24.

21/59 Retirement of Professors (Item 17 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 Martin Bell (31.7.21)  
Professor Ken Dark (17.9.21)

21/60 Other Retirements (Item 17 c)

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:

Ian Jones (31.8.21)  
Lucy Browne (31.8.21)  
Dr Katherine Hyde (31.8.21)  
Anne Vicary (17.9.21)

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*Student representatives withdrew from the remainder of the meeting*

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## RESERVED BUSINESS

20/61 The reserved minutes (21/41-21/42) of the meeting held on 24 June 2021 were approved.

21/62 Reports of Examiners for Higher Degrees by thesis (Item 20 b)

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