

ACADEMIC ASSEMBLY

Tuesday 29 April 2025 / 10 East 0.18/Teams

MINUTES



818 Welcome and Quorum

REPORTED

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted a quorum was present. A particular welcome was extended to Professor Phil Taylor who was attending his first meeting of the Assembly in his role as Vice-Chancellor.

819 Declarations of Interest

REPORTED

No declarations of interest were made.

820 Membership and Terms of Reference

REPORTED

The Chair reminded attendees of the role and membership of the Assembly

821 Minutes of the Previous Meeting - AA24/25 - 04

DECISION

The minutes of the meeting of Academic Assembly held on 30 October 2024 were approved as an accurate record.

822 Actions and Matters Arising - 05

REPORTED

It was noted that there were two outstanding actions on the Assembly's action log, one looking at expanding the membership of the Assembly and one to host a session looking at the Climate Emergency. The Chair would look into both and report back at the next meeting of the Assembly.

823 Relevant Decisions of Senate

REPORTED

It was noted that the minutes of Senate meetings were available on the University webpages. The following Senate approvals were brought to the attention of members:

NOVEMBER

- Approved the Scholarly Publications: Self-Archiving and Copyright Statement.
- Recommended proposed changes to Ordinance 22.3 to Council for approval (approved by Council on 21 November 2024).
- Approved a revised reporting process for Research Institutes.
- Recommended the Degree Outcomes Statement to Council for approval (approved by Council on 21 November 2024).
- Approved the disestablishment of the Curriculum Management Academic Working Group.
- Approved the Digital Accessibility Policy.
- Approved changes to the Terms of Reference of AEIC, Honorary Degrees Committee, EQSC and UDSC.
- Recommended to Council for approval changes to the Terms of Reference for EDIC (approved by Council on 21 November 2024).
- Approved changes to the Online Unit Evaluation question for Distance Learning units.
- Approved recommendations from the Honorary Degrees Committee.

JANUARY

- Recommended the Elections Framework to Council, including a recommendation to adopt a single transferable voting system for elections.
- Approved the recommendation to form a Senate Appointments Committee.
- Approved the policy on the Institutional Response to Armed Conflicts, subject to the suggested revisions.
- Approved changes in membership for the Peter Troughton Staff Research Prize Committee.
- Approved the Progression arrangement with the University Thammasat, Thailand.
- Approved the MSc in Applied Psychology (Conversion).
- Approved sabbatical years for Benjamin Orford Thompson, Isabella Downer and Sanya Jethwari to allow them to take up their SU Officer posts for 2025/26.
- Approved changes in the criteria for honorary degrees and President's Awards.

- Approved recommendations from the Honorary Degrees Committee.

824 Elections - AA24/25 - 06

REPORTED

The Chair extended their congratulations to the following members of the Assembly who had been elected to sit on Senate for the 2025/26 Academic Year:

- Professor Sarah Bailey, Department of Life Sciences
- Professor Marion Harney, Department of Architecture and Civil Engineering
- Professor Adrian Evans, Department of Electronic and Electrical Engineering
- Professor Ian Crawford, School of Management
- Dr Maria Garcia, Department of Politics, Languages & International Studies
- Dr Ben Ralph, Department of Computer Science
- Dr John Troyer, Department of Social and Policy Sciences
- Dr Teslim Bukoye, School of Management
- Dr Fei Qin, School of Management

825 Vice-Chancellor's Statutory Address

REPORTED

The Chair welcomed the Vice-Chancellor to present their Statutory Address to the Assembly. The Vice-Chancellor presented the Assembly with an update on the work being done around the University Strategy and KPIs, noting that this was a work in progress and feedback from colleagues was welcomed.

There were a number of challenges across the Higher Education Sector both nationally and globally, including global conflict and concerns around financial sustainability in the sector. The University was still pushing to make a positive impact not only on a national and global level but regionally. It was noted that the University was in a relatively good position financially, due in part to the diversification of its international student recruitment which meant it had not felt the same impact as other institutions when student numbers from particular countries had declined. The University would need to make significant investment in its estate over the coming years which would make a financial impact.

The University had a 19% research intensity however the research recovery rates were currently only 59%. The University had seen its best year for research related income, with awards of £59 million but work was now needed to increase the recovery costs and there would be a consultation across the University to look at this.

While there had been an increase in the fees charged to home students over the past academic year, there had also been an increase in the National Insurance contributions the University had to pay which had cancelled out the uplift seen from the fee uplift. It was noted that the

Government also expected the increased fees to coincide with improved access for disadvantaged students and other requirements which the University would need to complete more work on.

It was noted the University was a not for profit organisation and so any surplus which was made was not a true surplus but an increased margin which would be reinvested into the institution. Prior to the COVID 19 Pandemic the University had achieved a 4% surplus but this had decreased with the impact of COVID and other factors. To carry out the necessary investment into the University's physical estate they would need to achieve a surplus of 5% and so the University was going through a planning exercise to look at how to invest in the most optimal way to benefit everyone in the University community and business continuity.

The current University strategy was due to run until the end of 2026. The Vice-Chancellor noted the feedback they had received was that the pillars of the strategy were reasonable but they were not unique to Bath, more detail was needed to show what the University was uniquely offering. Work was also needed to look at the prioritisation of areas of the strategy. The University had finite time and resources and they would need to focus on particular projects and be able to decline others. The Vice-Chancellor was working with colleagues to develop a strategic plan which would sit below the existing strategy to highlight the unique aspects of the institution. It was a work in progress but three strategic priorities were emerging. The University's international reputation was not as good as it could be and, while the focus shouldn't be on rankings, the University should be appearing at a position which reflected the work being done. Looking forward, one of the main aims of the strategic priorities was to build on the University's existing strengths, not just looking at what was currently done well and continuing it but building upon it to see further improvement across the institution.

Based on these strategic priorities a series of KPIs had been drafted. They were currently struggling on finding the right measure to look at staff wellbeing. There were ways of measuring this but they were not the best fit for the institution and feedback on this was welcomed. Combined with the KPIs work was being carried out on the institutional risk register. This would not simply be defensive, it was likely the University would want to engage with some level of risk in order to drive forward.

The University was actively working with B&NES and industry colleagues to see how it could lead innovation within the city. This would make a significant impact to the city as well as the University.

DISCUSSION

The funding of research was discussed. The current system saw colleagues apply for grants with a research proposal and the external funders would decide if and how much they would fund and then the University would need to subsidise the rest. This could be seen as the University investing in research however it was important to know where the money came from as it was relying on the margins from other activities to subsidise it. It was queried whether there needed to be some form of communications exercise around this so colleagues could see where the financing was coming from. The Research Innovation Services (RIS) Team had created a document looking at a group of external funders and the different levels of recovery costs. Colleagues were encouraged to cost their projects correctly, there was a misconception that lower grants would be awarded funding but the priority of external awarding bodies was the excellence and potential impact of the research.

It was queried if there was a clear prioritisation of functions for the University if impacted by a lower margin than anticipated. It was confirmed that this was being looked at and would be developed further as the strategic plan and KPIs were finalised. Previously these priorities were not clear and publicised but it was felt important that moving forward they were agreed by the Executive and written down.

It was noted that all research carried out was important and encouraged however if the research carried out greatly diverged from the pillars of the University's strategy it may not receive significant investment from the University.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The plans for the Sulis club were queried. There were not yet fully articulated plans for the space. There were a number of options which could be taken including accommodation which the University had the planning consent for but there was nothing yet confirmed.

It was noted that Postgraduate Taught courses differed in their success. Each year a number of programmes would be suspended or closed. These decisions were made based on a variety of factors, including costs, student satisfaction and student numbers. Work was taking place to review the University's programmes and ensure they were operating well. They were not directly looking for a financial cost saving but looking at the opportunity costs and where and how resources could potentially be reallocated. It was noted that all staff had a high workload and it was important for the University to undertake projects like this to address not only resourcing but staff wellbeing.

The University's risk appetite was queried. This would change over time and the University would not be reckless when it came to risk but it was felt important not to be risk averse and to look at mitigations to ensure that where the University was taking risk it was measured and considered.

The Assembly noted it was positive to see the ambition for the future but clarification was sought whether the University level KPIs would result in achieving the high level national and international rankings. It was confirmed that work was being done to ensure they were aligned but not prescriptive. All ranking systems were flawed in some way and if the University was too prescriptive to solely meet these then it would negatively impact on staff and students.

The Chair thanked the Vice-Chancellor for their address.

826 Programme of Meetings for 2025/26

REPORTED

The draft programme of meetings for 2025/26 was noted. Members of the Assembly would receive invitations during the Summer from the Governance Partner to the Assembly.

827 Any Other Business

REPORTED

There was no further business to discuss.

Attendees

Attended

Sabina Gheduzzi, Chair

Phil Taylor, Vice-Chancellor

And 73 others (23 in person, 50 online)

In Attendance

Katie Anderton, Governance Partner

Jason Harper, Head of Library Research Services

Helen Rhodes, School of Management Librarian

Katrin Roberts, Humanities & Social Sciences Librarian

Ian Blenkarn, University Secretary & Registrar

Ruth Robins

Lauren Howells

Helena Barrell

Laura Andrews



Academic Assembly

29 April 2025

**Statutory Address/Strategic
Discussion**

**Professor Phil Taylor
Vice-Chancellor and President**





Challenges for the Higher Education Sector

Financial sustainability (tuition fees, NI increases, capital investment...)

Global (recruitment, reputation, conflicts/disasters...)

Diversity and inclusion (community, widening participation...)

Impact and contribution (economic, social, environmental...)





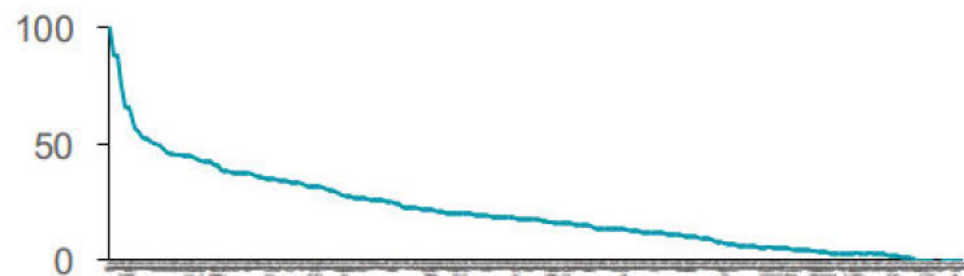
External operating environment (1 of 2)

OfS expects nearly 75% of HEIs to report a deficit in 2025-26, adding up to c. £1.6bn for the sector

Over-dependence on 1 country...

% overseas students coming from the provider's largest country, by HEI

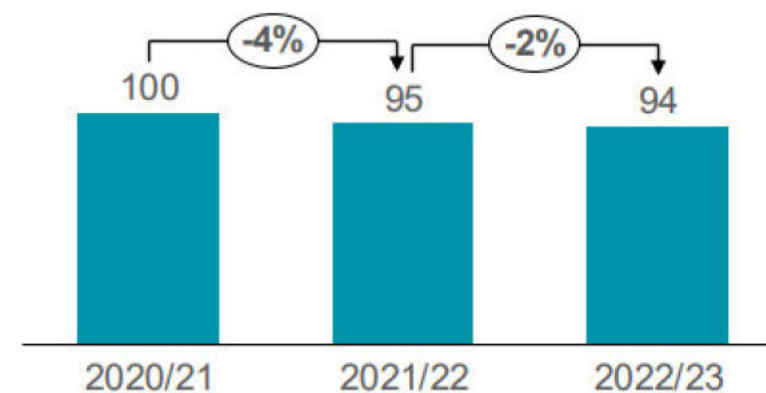
% Total Overseas FT Students



Source: HESA, OfS

...and decreasing research recovery rates

TRAC income and full economic costs by activity, England and N.I. HEIs, '19/20 – '22/23 (£m)





External operating environment (2 of 2)

UK Government's HE reform agenda



Improving
access and
outcomes for
disadvantaged
and mature
students



Make a stronger
contribution to
economic growth



Play a greater
civic role in local
communities



Raise the bar
further on
teaching
standards



Efficiency and
reform for better
long-term value



Current Strategy





Our Emerging Strategic Priorities



Global impact with excellence

To deliver our mission and vision, we must become increasingly focussed on global impact.

Our aim is to be on a trajectory towards the top 100 universities in the world.

This will require focussed & action-led strategies to attract global talent, form meaningful partnerships and activate our alumni and supporter networks.



Foundations for the future

Big ambitions need firm foundations.

To prepare for the next 60 years and beyond:

We need to generate enough margin for sustainable investment in our people, capabilities, physical and digital infrastructure.



Building from Strengths

While we invest time and resource in the areas where we need to shift the dial in performance...

...we need to protect and continuously improve our core strengths.

Our national reputation, strengths in the quality of our education, student experience and employability, and our connection to place all provide strong roots from which to grow.



Global excellence with impact

We will focus on growing our global impact, putting ourselves on a trajectory towards being in the **top 100 universities in the world by 2030**.

We are already an inclusive, international community of students, staff and alumni. Our ambition is to increase our impact and reputation by forming meaningful international partnerships, attracting global talent and activating our valued network of supporters and alumni.

Themes from the engagement sessions:



The need for greater focus: in terms of partnerships, markets and our strengths.



Need honesty about performance gaps, where these exist, coupled with support.



Need to better articulate how Bath is distinctive in a compelling, authentic and consistent way.





Foundations for the future

We will begin to lay the foundations for success for the next 60 years and beyond.

We need sustainably investment in our people, capabilities, systems and processes and physical and digital infrastructure to compete on a national and global stage.

In order to do this, we need to generate enough margin to make these investments (5% historic cost operating surplus) which means operating as effectively and efficiently as possible. This will enable us to support and develop our talented people, to upgrade our spaces in a targeted way and to pursue digital projects that will help us deliver our mission.

Themes from the engagement sessions:



The need for
agility and to
reduce
bureaucracy and
silos



Sustainability is
key:
environmental,
social and
financial



Good organisational
design with clear
responsibilities and
accountability will
empower our people to
deliver





Building from strengths

While we invest time and resource in the areas where we need to shift the dial in performance the most...

...we need to protect and continuously improve our core strengths.

Our national reputation, strengths in the quality of our education, student experience and employability, and our civic role all provide strong roots from which to grow.

Themes from the engagement sessions:



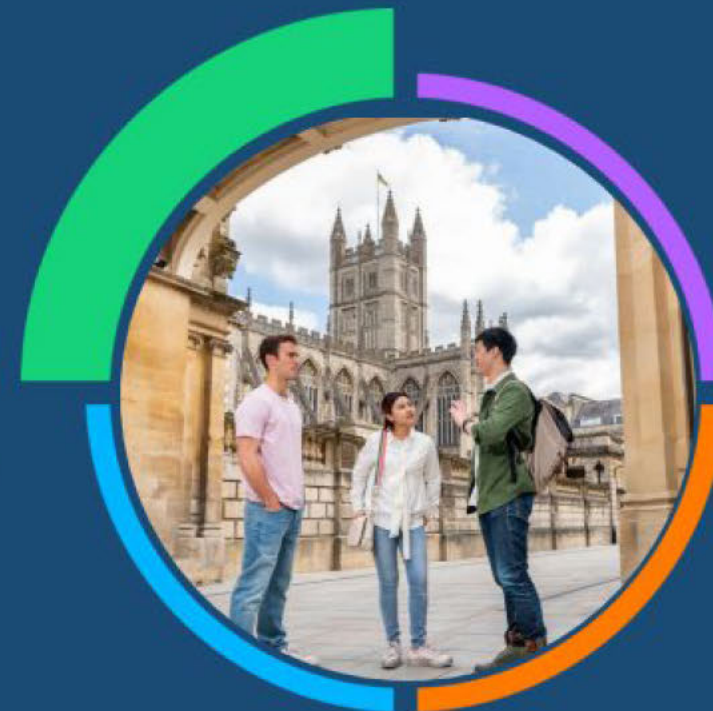
National
reputation



Quality
education and
employability



Our location and civic
roots in Bath and region





Note: work in progress

Our emerging strategic priorities and goals...

PRIORITIES

Global Excellence with Impact
to enhance our international distinction across select focus areas with the following two strategic goals



Foundations for the Future
enabling us to achieve global excellence in education and research



Building on our Strengths
to protect and enhance what makes us distinctive



GOALS

- 1 Greater and more targeted **INTERNATIONALISATION**, to further improve the quality of our education and research, open our students to more opportunities
- 2 Greater positive **IMPACT** on the world through our knowledge exchange activities by delivering **INNOVATION** solutions through an additional, innovation practitioner workforce embracing external organisations / partner-pull needs
- 3 World-leading **QUALITY** education and research in selected areas, leading to differentiation and competitive advantage
- 4 Welcoming and supporting a **DIVERSE AND INCLUSIVE** staff and student community, with high levels of **WELLBEING**, to increase creativity and innovation and improve decision-making, through access to a wider range of skills, experiences, ways of thinking, behaving and communicating
- 5 Physical and digital **INFRASTRUCTURE** aligned to our education and research focus areas, to ensure that our staff and students have the tools and space that enables them to achieve global excellence
- 6 Focussing on **FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY** to be able to make required investments in our people and our physical and digital infrastructure to ensure that we do not just survive, but thrive
- 7 Protecting our **COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE**, from national reputation, quality education, student experience and employability to our vital regional and local civic role






Note: work in progress

...and corresponding KPIs

PRIORITIES

GOALS

KPIs & 2030 TARGETS

Global Excellence with Impact 	1 INTERNATIONALISATION	1. Increase proportion of internationally co-authored papers to 67%
	2 INNOVATION & IMPACT	2. Grow international students to 35%
	3 FOCUSSED QUALITY	3. Grow HEIF qualifying income streams to £25m
Foundations for the Future 	4 WELLBEING, DIVERSITY & INCLUSION	4. Improve QS World University Ranking to Top 100
	5 INFRASTRUCTURE	5. Grow proportion of entrants who were eligible for Free School Meals at KS4 to 10%
	6 FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY	6. Increase the proportion of students with medium-very high life satisfaction to 88%
Building on our Strengths 	7 COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE	7. Decrease office space to 8.3 m2 per staff FTE
		8. Reduce non-residential scope 1 and 2 carbon emissions to 25 kg CO2e / m2 of GIA
		9. Grow EBITDA to 15%
		10. Deliver research intensity of 18-22%
		11. Grow TRAC research recovery rates to 65-70%
		12. Maintain positive graduate outcomes at 2.5 above the benchmark
		13. Maintain Top 10 in national league tables



Institutional Risk Register

Catastrophic		• Financial Performance			
Major		• Workforce Transformation	• Student Recruitment • Governance, Risk & Compliance • Digital Transformation • Organisational Resilience & Business Continuity		• Cyber Security
Significant		• Learning & Teaching Excellence	• Physical Infrastructure Capacity & Capability	• Global Reputation & Impact	
Moderate			• Research & Innovation Quality & Impact	• Environmental Sustainability	
Minor					
<div> <div>Rare</div> <div>Unlikely</div> <div>Likely</div> <div>Very Likely</div> <div>Almost Certain</div> </div>					



THANK YOU

ANY QUESTIONS ?