Academic Assembly

29 April 2026 / CB 1.12 and MS Teams

MINUTES

845 Welcome and Quorum

For Noting

REPORTED

The Chair welcomed members and attendees and made a formal note of attendance to ensure that quorum was maintained throughout the meeting.

Apologies had been received from the following members: Steve Wharton, Philip Rogers, Manuel Barcia, Cassie Wilson, Alex McMillan, Rhod Woodhouse, Zhening Liu, Lucy Clarkson, Layla Branicki, Miranda Armstrong, Ngoc Vo, Julian Torres Talayero, Mercy Martins, Susan Bernal Lopez, Maddy Warmer, Chris Bailey, Andres Sandoval-Hernandez and Vaggelis Giannikas.

The meeting was confirmed to be quorate.

846 Declarations of Interest

For Noting

REPORTED

No declarations of interest were made at the meeting.

847 Minutes of the Previous Meetings - AA25/26 - 05 and 06

For Approval

DECISION

Academic Assembly **approved** the minutes of the previous meetings of Academic Assembly held on 22 October 2025 and 10 December 2025, subject to appending the text of the motion to the minutes of the meeting held on the 10 December.

848 Actions and Matters Arising - AA25/26 - 07

For Noting

REPORTED

Academic Assembly **noted** the action log. An update was given on the two outstanding actions:

1) Explore expanding membership to a subset of Professional Services colleagues - it was advised that Professional Services staff should be invited to join AA meetings 'in attendance' as and when topics were of interest or of relevance to them, rather than to change the membership. This would enhance engagement without altering constitutional arrangements. A paragraph had been added to the new Standing Orders (to be discussed under item 851) to read: '2.2 The Chair may invite individuals to attend for specific items where their expertise or responsibilities are relevant to the business of the Assembly. Attendance at all or part of an Academic Assembly meeting for anyone other than members of the Academic Assembly is by invitation only, subject to the approval of the Chair.'

2) Organise an Ask Me Anything (AMA) session on the topic of the climate emergency - a meeting request for this online session would be circulated to Academic Assembly members soon. The AMA session would take place before the end of the current academic year.

Both actions were considered closed.

849 Relevant Decisions of Senate - AA25/26 - 08

For Noting

REPORTED

Academic Assembly **noted** the relevant decisions of Senate made since the October 2025 meeting of the Assembly.

The Chair highlighted the following decisions outlined in the paper:

4.1 Agreed to recommend to Council that the Academic Assembly (AA) resolution be endorsed, and that Council be invited to consider the points raised alongside the ongoing institutional work on TRAC costings, facility support arrangements, and communication of financial modelling (January 2026).

4.3 Approved the academic year chart for 2027/28, noting that the proposed dates had been developed with reference to anticipated school term dates across the local region and UK bank holidays (January 2026).

5.1 Agreed to recommend to Council revisions to the existing Disabled Students Policy for approval by Council (April 2026). The changes would ensure that the University was breaking down barriers for students whether their disability was declared or not.

5.4 Endorsed the Research Excellence Framework (REF) Code of Practice (April 2026).

5.5 Approved clarifications to the wording of QA16 Assessment, Marking and Feedback that a 15 working day period (with working days defined as per the Academic Year Chart) for feedback on summative coursework is a firm requirement rather than guidance (April 2026).

5.6 Decided Option 3 as to the calendar exclusions from the 15 working day requirement: 'For the purposes of providing feedback only, for courses following the Academic Year Chart, 'working days' refers to Monday to Friday excluding public holidays, University holidays, Christmas vacation and Easter vacation' (April 2026). Staff would need to maintain clear communication with students where the 15-day deadline was breached.

5.10 Agreed with the recommendations of UEB in relation to strategic course decision-making (currently exercised by Academic Programmes Committee as a delegation of Senate). 1. That the purpose of strategic course decision-making (including new course approvals, substantive changes and withdrawals) is reclarified as per the proposed definition; 2. That roles and responsibilities are aligned with the reclarified purpose, moving the responsibility for strategic course decision-making (business decision-making) from Academic Programmes Committee (as a delegation of Senate) to a sub-group of Planning Board (as a delegation of UEB, providing regular reports to Senate). Senate should retain responsibility for all academic decision-making (with some responsibilities delegated to Courses and Partnerships Approval Committee as appropriate) (April 2026).

5.11 Recommended support for the development of an improved supportive mechanism for addressing poor doctoral supervision (April 2026).

850 Election Results - AA25/26 - 09

For Noting

REPORTED

Academic Assembly **noted** the members of the Assembly who had been elected to sit on Senate for 2026/27.

851 Academic Assembly Standing Orders - AA25/26 - 10

For Approval

DECISION

Academic Assembly **approved** the changes to the Standing Orders of Academic Assembly.

852 Vice-Chancellor's Update - AA25/26 - 11

For Discussion

REPORTED

Academic Assembly received the Vice-Chancellor's Update (see Appendix 1 for a copy of the presentation slides).

The update covered the following areas:

- League tables and benchmarks. Bath was a Top 10 UK University and sports was still considered to be important. The University ranked 132nd in the QS World University Rankings, up 18 places from last year. Bath also jumped around 70 places to 56th in the QS World Rankings for Sustainability 2026.

- Our impact. As a not-for-profit organisation, the University had made a positive impact. A celebration was due to take place in May with Olympic medal winners and teams. The University had also made a good civic impact. Improvements could be made in employability for international students looking for work outside of the UK. The statistic of 92% of the University's research rated world-leading or internationally excellent was based on the research submitted to REF, rather than the University's full research portfolio.

- Carbon emissions. The University had realised that the 2030 target of net zero was no longer feasible and was building a credible carbon reduction plan, with the aim of potentially reaching net zero by 2040. There had been an increased carbon footprint but with reduced emissions. Electricity on campus was now bought from renewable energy.

- Civic Role. Universities West was a new collaboration between the University of Bath, Bath Spa University, the University of Bristol and the University of West of England, allowing for more effective collaboration within the region.

- International. The University was a core member of CERN and there had been an increase in international co-authored publications. Membership of the Young European Research Universities Network (YERUN) allowed for a connection with Europe and the influencing of European funding policy. A new partnership with Study Group would see the introduction of foundation pathway courses in preparation for undergraduate degrees. This would also form an input stream for international students.

- The University's 60th anniversary year. Meaningful activities would look at what the University had achieved and how we were moving forwards. A series of Adelard lectures were scheduled, with recordings available online. The annual anniversary rugby match would take place in October, with the addition of a women's rugby match for the first time this year.

- New strategy. A listening exercise had fed into strategy development and decisions would be announced soon. Strategic plans would be reviewed annually and would remain agile. The Strategy 2036 was due to be launched in October

- External context. The University didn't have a good year for international student recruitment the previous year and the situation was worse in the current year, giving the trajectory of a going out of business curve. This was happening to other universities earlier and faster and Bath had time to look at ways to encourage new revenue into the organisation. This involved the need to be frugal and think carefully about research.

DISCUSSED

Discussion following the Vice-Chancellor's update covered the following points:

- Focused research in this time of financial difficulty and the need to think about the quality and impact of research, rather than volume. Currently, 40% of the £10m spent on research was funded by the University. There was the need to focus research on areas of established strength or areas of emerging strength where there was the potential to be world-class and to stop investing in research that didn't reach high quality and high impact outcomes. The University would continue to support all researchers through the hours allocated as part of the workload allocation model; however, external funding

would be required for research that was not considered a focus area.

- The pros and cons of belonging to the Russell Group (RG) and whether this was part of the University's strategy. It was confirmed that the University outperformed the bottom third of the RG in both education and research, so there was no quality reason why Bath couldn't be a part of the group; however, it was currently a closed shop. Benefits included early access to information and meetings with politicians, funders, industry and international groups. There was, however, the risk of being associated with a group whose approach had sometimes proven detrimental to its relationship with the Government. It was also confirmed that there was no evidential benefit of belonging to the RG in terms of student conversion and that Bath had a stronger recruitment brand for many of its courses than some universities within the group.

- The extensive connections with CERN in both Science and Engineering and the varying links, including student placements.

- The inconsistency between the reduction in international recruitment income and the financial reports showing a better performance against targets over the past 3 years. It was confirmed that scheduled future funding was a factor in this. Firstly, unlike other universities, Bath had not invested in its infrastructure for a long time; buildings were falling apart, labs were not safe and the University's digital infrastructure was behind. As a result, there would be a large bill over the next 10 years to fix this and surpluses were required to fund this spend. Secondly, a lot of the surplus was due to projects that had failed to get underway due to a lack of capacity and therefore the expenditure had not yet been incurred. With student recruitment, losses were locked in for 3-4 years, creating a slow burning decline. The international market was not necessarily dying, it was just changing, as fewer students were relocating to the UK to study and were instead studying remotely within their home countries. The University would therefore need to think about how it could do more online, in country, or with foundation pathways. A focus on conversion of students was also considered to be important.

- The need to be more agile with the launch of new programmes and programme changes. It was recognised that the PGT product offer in particular needed to be updated. The University was looking to streamline the approval process for new courses. The University Secretary was also in the process of redesigning the governance and committee structure which would give clarity about what committees were empowered to do. One of the key priorities was to speed up decision-making.

- Building alumni funds as strategic funds. It was recognised that there was less philanthropy in the UK compared to the US. The Director of Advancement had been working hard to raise funds. The challenge was finding donors who did not have a specific view on how their money was invested. The Advancement Office (AO) was also looking at friend raising and creating a network of people, including alumni, who may be willing to make smaller donations to support the University's areas of strategic priority. The potential to encourage legacy gifts in wills was also raised.

- Looking at other models of learning e.g. 2 days on campus study programmes. The University was in the early stages of considering other models in conjunction with pressures around climate change, the University's travel plan, difficulties getting to campus and financial pressures on students meaning they need to work other days of the week to fund themselves and may benefit from a compressed timetable. There was some nervousness about losing high quality interactions and consideration would need to be given to ways of making the experience for students on campus exciting when they did attend in person.

853 Programme of Meetings for 2025/26 and 2026/27

For Noting

REPORTED

Academic Assembly **noted** the upcoming extraordinary meeting of Academic Assembly in 2025/26 and the draft programme of meetings for 2026/27

- Friday 29 May 2026, 10:00 (online)
- Wednesday 21 October 2026, 2:15 (hybrid)
- Wednesday 28 April 2027, 2:15 (hybrid)

854 Any Other Business

For Discussion

REPORTED

No other items of business were raised at the meeting.

The meeting closed at 2.40pm

Attendees

Members Attended

Noaman G Ali (online)
Adnan Al Dalaty
Kamal Asadi (online)
Jenny Baker (online)
Richard Ball (online)
Leda Blackwood (online)
Paola Bruscoli (online)
Teslim Bukoye (online)
Juliana Calabria-Holley
Michael Carley (online)
Emma Carmel (online)
Jos Darling (online)
James Davenport (online)
Jonathan Dawes (online)
Marina De Vos (online)
Elies Dekoninck (online)
Dimo Dimov
Ana Cecilia Dinerstein (online)
Sian Ephgrave (online)
Adrian Evans (online)
Maria Garcia
Alinka Gearon (online)
Sabina Gheduzzi (Chair)
Monica Greco
Tim Harrell (online)
Mary Hayden
Alan Hayes
Andrew Heath
Jo Hyde
Nigel Johnston
Robert Kelsh (online)
Patrick Keogh (online)
Inge Kersbergen (online)
Jasmine Khouja (online)
Dimitris Koutsouras (online)
Liz Kullmann (online)
Banafshe Larijani (online)
Frances Laughton (online)
Katharina Lenner (online)
Matthew Lloyd (online)

Thomas Mansell (online)
Anita McGrogan (online)
Ben Metcalfe
Sandhya Moise (onlne)
David Moon
Marcus Munafo
Roman Pavlyuchenko (online)
Fei Qin
Ben Ralph
Megan Robb (online)
Jana Sajdakova (online)
Paul Shepherd
Martyna Sliwa (online)
Paul Snow (online)
Phil Taylor
John Troyer
Kei Tsutsui (online)
Oliver Walton (online)
Jiawei Wang (online)
Qingping Wang
Jane White
Tim Woodman (online)
Kate Woodthorpe
Alexandra Ziemann (online)

In Attendance

Laura Andrews (Governance Partner)
Richard Brooks
Katrin Roberts (online)

Apologies

Miranda Armstrong
Chris Bailey
Manuel Barcia
Susan Bernal Lopez
Layla Branicki
Lucy Clarkson
Vaggelis Giannikas
Zhening Liu
Mercy Martins
Alex McMillan
Philip Rogers
Andres Sandoval-Hernandez
Julian Torres Talayero
Ngoc Vo
Maddy Warmer
Steve Wharton
Cassie Wilson
Rhod Woodhouse