Academic Assembly
9 July 2026 / MS Teams
MINUTES

861 Welcome and Quorum

REPORTED

The Chair welcomed members and attendees to the meeting and confirmed that a quorum was present. The Director of Finance and the Director of HR were confirmed to be in attendance at the meeting.

862 Declarations of Interest

REPORTED

[redacted] confirmed that he would abstain from taking part in any votes.

863 Actions and Matters Arising

REPORTED

There were no actions or matters arising from the previous meeting of Academic Assembly held on 29 May 2026.

864 Suspension of the MAIT (MA in Interpreting and Translation) European programme

REPORTED

Miguel Fialho, supported by Galadriel Ravelli, both in the Department of Politics, Languages & International Studies (PoLIS), presented a case to reverse the decision to suspend recruitment to the MA Interpreting and Translating (European) programme, citing reputational risk, lack of consultation, and negative impact on students. A request was put forward to allow the course to run for the next academic year, allowing time for faculty staff to pursue alternative measures including cost saving measures and an expansion of the recruitment pool for the course.

The Vice-Chancellor explained the financial rationale and review process behind the decision. It was explained that the UK higher education sector was facing severe financial challenges, with declining international student numbers and increasing operational costs which could potentially

lead to a £30-£50m financial hole by the year 2030. The Vice-Chancellor detailed the university's need to make a surplus to invest in infrastructure and staff, and described the review process that led to the suspension, which involved a balanced approach and departmental input.

DISCUSSED

Discussion covered the following key concerns:

Transparency and inclusivity of the review process

Concerns were raised about the transparency and inclusivity of the review process, arguing that staff and departmental voices were insufficiently represented and that the process was perceived as opaque and rushed. It was felt that seeking approval by correspondence rather than scheduled meetings undermined democratic governance and a call was made for more participatory and transparent processes in future reviews. Senior Management responded by outlining the timeline and engagement steps, stating that the process included a year-long review which commenced with a faculty-led deep dive, followed by departmental task and finish groups, and culminating in recommendations to the Academic Programmes Committee (APC). They stated that the process included engagement with departmental colleagues and market intelligence analysis. The Vice-Chancellor also outlined the various forums where staff could contribute to decision-making, including department and faculty-level education-related committees, Senate, and APC. They noted that many course suspensions were initiated by departments themselves, reflecting local expertise and input.

Reputational impact

The negative consequences for offer holders and applicants was highlighted, some of whom had already paid deposits, resigned from jobs, or arranged accommodation. Members also raised concerns about potential legal, consumer rights, and reputational implications for the university, as well as the impact on staff facing redundancy.

Wider impact on the department

The historical cross-subsidisation between the MA Interpreting and Translating (Chinese) and (European) programmes was discussed, noting that the two programmes shared resources and contributed to each other's success. Concerns were raised that ending the European strand would negatively affect the Chinese programme and the broader languages offer.

The balance between financial and reputational considerations in decision-making

The Vice-Chancellor clarified that while financial performance was a major factor, decisions were not made solely on financial grounds. The university considered the size of the loss and the broader value of the activity, including reputational impact, but ultimately had to make judgement calls to ensure long-term sustainability. The Director of Finance clarified the financial metrics used in the review, distinguishing between negative contribution and net loss, and explained that the MA Interpreting and Translating (European) programme had one of the worst financial performances. A negative contribution meant that the courses' income did not cover its costs, such as teaching, before accounting for central costs like estates and IT. They stated that the MA Interpreting and Translating (European) programme had a minus 27% contribution and a 92% net loss, making it financially unsustainable compared to other courses.

OUTCOME

Miguel Fialho introduced a motion requesting that Council and Senate addressed concerns about the suspension decision and the broader decision-making process (see the motion, along

with further context, in Appendix 1).

A vote was made, with 52 in favour, 2 against and 15 abstentions, to approve the following motion:

The Academic Assembly asks that Senior Management commit to fostering a culture of transparency, accountability, and meaningful consultation in Education Portfolio Reviews by ensuring that decisions are based on a robust and transparent process, are not taken through rushed timetables or by correspondence, and that the membership, remit, evidence considered, and recommendations of any Task & Finish Groups established as part of such reviews are made publicly available to the University community;

To this end, the Academic Assembly requests that Senior Management:

- *publish the costed evaluation of all alternative proposals put forward during the Task & Finish Group considering the performance of the MAIT European programme and the subsequent decision-making process, including confirmation of whether and how each proposal was financially modelled;*

- *confirm whether the documentation provided to those involved in Education Portfolio Reviews explicitly identifies the potential risk of staff redundancy arising from a programme's rating and whether consideration of alternative measures to mitigate that risk is a mandatory component of the review process going forward.*

The Academic Assembly resolves that these concerns be reported to, and addressed by, the University Senate and Council, with particular attention to the timing and procedures of the decision-making process that led to the decision to suspend the MAIT European programme and place four members of staff at risk of redundancy, as well as the broader issues this case highlights with reference to the lack of a democratic and transparent approach to decision-making.

865 Programme of Meetings for 2026/27

REPORTED

Academic Assembly **noted** the programme of meetings for the 2026/27 Academic Year:

- Wednesday 28 October 2026, 2:15 (hybrid)
- Wednesday 28 April 2027, 2:15 (hybrid)

866 Any Other Business

REPORTED

No other items of business were discussed.

Attendees

Members Attended

Adnan Al Dalaty
Felia Allum
Fran Amery
Tom Arnot
Kamal Asadi
Elisabeth Attlmayr
Rohit Babbar
Chris Bailey
Sarah Bailey
Paul Bain
Mike Bird
Silvia Boeri
Mariana Bonnouvrier
Karina Bradshaw
Steve Brammer
Deborah Brewis
Andy Burrows
Ana Catalano Weeks
Steve Cayzer
Enrico Cecconi
Mihika Chatterjee
Antonia Coleman
Daniel Coren
Thomas Cottrell
Jos Darling
Sandra Daroczi
Chris de Leeuwe
Joe Devine
Benoit Dillet
Ana Cecilia Dinerstein
Christopher Eccleston
Juan Ferrero
Miguel Fialho
Gail Forey
Astrid Forsyth
Maria Garcia
Micha Germann
Sabina Gheduzzi (Chair)
Ivan Gololobov
Cara Green
Trevor Grimshaw
Stephen Hall
Peter Hall
David Hassell
Charlotte Hatcher
Momna Hejmadi
Paul Higate
Christina Horvath
Winifred Huang
Laurence Hurst
Louise Jarvis
Nigel Johnston
Simon Kaack
Richard Kamm
Milad Keshvari Fard
Thomas Kjeldsen
Helen Kowalewska
Yk Kumar
Peter Lambert
Jasmin Langdon-Daly
Katharina Lenner
Xu Lin
Karsten Matthies
Lewis McDonald
Polly McGuigan
Benjamin Metcalfe
Penny Miles
Elena Minelli
Sandhya Moise
Marcus Munafo
Shasi Nandeibam
George Newth
Pak Nung Wong
Mark Opmeer
Lucy O'Shea
Mathew Penrose
Fulvio Pinto
Ben Ralph
Galadriel Ravelli
Bruce Rayton
Nick Regan
Tim Rogers
Christian Rohrbeck
Milena Romano
Maria Sarigiannidou
Kaitlin Senk
Vanshika Sharma
Simon Shaw
Andrew Shea
Paul Shepherd
Özgür Şimşek
Jeyabal Sivaloganathan
Paul Snow
Phil Taylor
Jennifer Thomson
Ventsislav Valev
Karoline Von Oppen
Katerina Vrablikova
Jean-Philippe Walhin
Andrew Ward
Stephen Ward
Leslie Wehner
Haibao Wen
Steve Wharton
Deborah Wilson
Michael Woodley
Anna Young
Jun Zang
Anita Zeidler
Natasha Zhuravkina
Melle Zijlstra

In attendance

Laura Andrews (Governance Partner)
Karina Bradshaw
Richard Brooks
Hannah Poore
Martin Williams