SENATE

Wednesday 31 January 2023 2:15pm

Council Chamber | Senate

Attendees

Attended

Ian White, Chair

Jimena Alamo

Steve Brammer

Teslim Bukoye

Zoe Burke

Julian Chaudhuri

Duncan Craig

James Davenport

Fiona Gillison **– Online attendance**

Sarah Hainsworth

Sophia Hatzisavvidou

Alan Hayes

Titus Hiller

Jo Hyde

Tim Ibell

Nigel Johnston

Peter Lambert

Guy McCusker

David Moon

Lucy Noble

Ben Ralph **- Online attendance**

Kate Robinson

Paul Shepherd

Amber Snary

Danae Stanton Fraser

Cassie Wilson

Jane White – **Online attendance**

Lorraine Whitmarsh

Deborah Wilson

Jun Zang

In Attendance

Christopher Bonfield, Director of the Centre for Learning and Teaching

Marion Harney, Associate Dean (Education), Faculty of Engineering and Design

Ryan Lucas, Students' Union Education Manager

Rachel Sheer, Director of Academic Registry

Apologies

Ian Blenkharn

Adrian Evans

Andrew Heath

Jura Neverauskaite

Fei Qin

Edmund Thompson

Secretariat

Andrew Browning, Secretary

Katie Anderton

Laura Andrews

Helena Barrell

Ruth Robins

15392.0 Welcome and Quorum

Purpose - For Information

The meeting was quorate.

15393.0 Declarations of Interest

Purpose - For Information

There were no declarations of interest.

15394.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting - S22/23 - 37

Purpose - For Approval

The minutes of the meetings held on 8 November 2023 and 8 January 2024 were approved by Senate.

15395.0 Actions and Matters Arising

Purpose - For Noting

There were no outstanding actions or matters arising.

15396.0 Institutional update - S23/24 - 38

Purpose - For Noting

The Vice Chancellor thanked staff members for the successful completion of Semester recognising that a huge amount of work was delivered. He also thanked everyone for the hard work that went into exams.

It was noted that Universities and their activities around pathway foundation years are being discussed in the media, particularly the Sunday Times, however after looking into this again Senate were assured that such practices do not happen at the University of Bath.

The Vice-Chancellor paid tribute to the University Community, with particular thanks to its international student community. As it was an election year it was the case that universities were facing criticism from all sides. While universities may be criticised, student communities should not be treated like commodities.

The Vice Chancellor noted that it was a privilege to meet student leaders and see the

impressive activities happening outside of academia. International students are important to the University community their contributions to our community are as important as ever. Personal thanks was also extended to the staff and SU for their engagement with students, which had allowed the University to avoid some of the issues that had been seen in the media.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) highlighted that the policy review of Student Complaints, Student Discipline, and Fitness to Study has undergone changes and will go live at the start of the semester.

It was noted that the Be Well survey took place in November 2023 and a dashboard had been launched which would enable the University to identify the appropriate data to pass on to colleagues in future years, both to academic and professional services to enable us to act on the comments received.

The University was notified by Student Minds that it had achieved the University Mental Health Charter. This was an ongoing award subject to certain conditions being met. It was emphasised that the University was aiming to achieve these conditions by the summer and would report back to Senate on progress.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Global) gave an update on the University's Access and Participation Plan (APP), which was approved by the Office for Students (OfS) in October 2023. Within the approval letter from the OfS the University was invited to reconsider its access targets. Since then the Vice-Chancellor, the Head of Widening Participation, and colleagues in the Widening Participation team had been having conversations with the Director for Fair Access and Participation at the OfS and a paper had been submitted that amended the University's access targets for free school meal receivers and AP1 and 2 targets. These would stay at the same level for the first few years and then increase. An extensive narrative had been produced, which focused on how these targets were appropriate and how to build on them. This had been approved by UEB and recommended to Council for sign off. This update would then return to Senate. It was emphasised that UEB and other stakeholders were supportive, and that we had done what was considered appropriate for the University and would continue discussions with the OfS.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research & Enterprise) paid testament to the hard work of colleagues that had seen the total value of the University's research portfolio increase to the highest it had ever been at £185 million.

Engagement with Centres for Doctoral Training was positive, with the Centre of Excellence in Water-Based Early-Warning Systems for Health Protection being awarded £8.4 million from Research England.

It was noted that the University's spin-out companies were performing well, particularly the Clean Food Group and Ensilitech.

Two colleagues who had received UK Research and Innovation Future Leaders Fellowships were congratulated; and Research and Innovation Services (RIS) were also thanked for their support.

It was noted that preparation for REF2029 was underway, with a consultation soon to begin on research culture to which all colleagues were invited to contribute.

A question was raised on point 10 of the report around the profile of the international academic community, and it was confirmed that this was an area of concern for the University, but that HR were working hard on the new technical detail that had emerged. It was suggested that there may be clauses that would allow special cases through, which would make the transition easier, however this had not yet been communicated to the sector.

15397.0 Semester One Review - S23/24 - 39

Minute by Laura Andrews

Senate noted the Semester One Review update, with particular reference to the smooth and successful launch of Year 1 of the Curriculum Transformation courses. Senate also noted the student experience data which showed that students had been active in many different areas, including sports and other activities. The University Librarian confirmed that they had some valuable data which could be added to this report in the future.

Senate members sought assurance that plans were in place to prevent the reoccurrence of the recent issue with the Economics exam paper which had included the answers leading to a whole cohort of students needing to resit their exam. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Global) confirmed that a full investigation was still underway, but that plans had been made to rectify the situation. 3/4 of the 400 students re-took the exam on Friday 26 January, with the remaining 1/4 of students planning to re-taking on a second planned date in early February. Communications between the department, students and Academic Registry had been managed well. Assurance was also given that action would be taken to mitigate against bias between students taking the first and second resit examination.

15398.0 Presentation - Lifelong Learning Entitlement, Freedom of Speech

Purpose - For Discussion

Lifelong Learning Entitlement

The Chief Compliance officer gave a presentation on the Lifelong Learning Entitlement ("LLE") and the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.

Senate were told that the LLE had received royal assent in September 2023 and established a lifelong learning entitlement pot which would provide four years of full-time funding tuition fees at level 4-6. This would become available for academic year 2025/2026 and at a modular level from 2028.

There would be a move from association of the payment of tuition fees from "years" of study to the payment being associated with credits. All of the government documentation regarding credits is based on the CAT system of 120 credits per academic year. The University is uniquely challenged as it uses the ECTS system of 60 credits per year. This would have an impact on the promotional materials that the University publishes as there would be a need for an explanation as to why 60 credits were being awarded and how they compared to the credits award on the CAT system.

Each course would have a credit cap and there would be a nationally standardised transcript. It was not yet clear how a repeated year would be recorded on the transcript. For five-year undergraduate masters courses additional credits would be required which could put the University at risk of loss of income.

There were potentially going to be implications for placement income and placement study abroad. Where there were "thin" sandwich courses the students may not be away on placement long enough to receive credits for such courses.

It has been indicated that higher education providers would need to invest c£100k in systems development to respond to the LLE. It is suspected that in the University's case this figure may be higher due to it using a different credit system and the need to convert these into ECTS credits for the purpose of recording on the national transcript.

Senate asked what impact the scheme would have on students who stepped out of higher education during their courses. The Head of Compliance said that they would still have a national transcript of the credits that they had accrued so far and would still have the remaining credits to potentially use in the future.

It was asked as to why the university doesn't switch to the ECTS credit system. The PVC (Education & Global) said that the time to have done that would have been when CT was introduced and before the courses were rolled out. He said that there should be a move in the future but at the start of the CT roll out was not ideal. The Director of Academic Registry said that there were not sufficient resources at the time of the CT introduction for the switch to take place but that this would need to be addressed in the future.

Freedom of Speech

The Chief Compliance Officer gave an overview of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023. This replaced the duties as they related to free speech under section 43 of the Education Act 1986. A key requirement of the new legislation was that universities now had a duty to "promote" freedom of speech. This requirement would become part of the OfS condition of registration.

University would be required to publish a code of practice before August 2024. There would also be requirement on Students Unions to publish their own codes of practice and they would also be monitored by the OfS.

The OfS would be developing a complaints scheme and they had already appointed a new Director of Free Speech. There would also be a prohibition of non-disclosure agreements being used in cases of sexual harassment and sexual misconduct.

The Director of Compliance said that the University required a new code of practice to be drafted. There was mention of academic freedom in the University's statutes and a statement on academic freedom had been developed by the Academic Assembly in 1988. There was a need to more fully articulate the University's values as they related to Freedom of Speech and have them set out in one document. A task and finish group had been established and the draft Code of Practice would be coming to Senate for their consideration before final approval was given by Council.

Senate noted the presentation on the LLE and Freedom of Speech.

The Chief Compliance Officer left the meeting

15399.0 Degree Outcomes - S23/24 - 40

Purpose - For Noting

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Global) presented the report. It was noted that a more detailed analysis of the degree outcomes for 2022/23 would be brought back to Senate later in the academic year and the granular trends can be discussed then.

Regarding a comment that degree outcomes are returning to pre-pandemic levels, it was asked whether the University could expect to see student performance surpass these levels, especially given the changes brought by the Curriculum Transformation project. It was noted that assurance should primarily be sought on whether the University is setting its assessments at the right level and properly supporting students to take those assessments. Ideally, the University would then try to keep the number of students achieving upper awards maintained within a broad level. It can be observed, however, that one department which has already launched its Curriculum Transformation courses has seen an increase in the number of upper awards achieved. It is likely to be a few years before the overall impact of the Curriculum Transformation changes can be seen.

15400.0 REF 2029 Rules and Framework - S23/24 - 41

Purpose - For Discussion

It was noted that more information had been published on the next REF exercise. A preliminary decision had been made, and it was now confirmed to be REF2029 due to the addition of a new element People, Culture, and Environment (PCE).

It was noted that the University had put itself forward to take part in the pilot as this offered the opportunity to receive more feedback. Participants in the pilot would be chosen from across the sector, not just the Russell Group.

It was noted that contribution to understanding will be weighted at 50%, which is a significant part of REF, and it is therefore important to continue focussing on this. RKEC had indicated that it would be important to look at quality not quantity, and that being rigorous would help.

The new rules put no minimum or maximum limit on the number of outputs attributed to individuals, demonstrating a move away from individuals and towards institutions. This however required department-wide outputs to achieve high PCE scores. It was noted that colleagues who had a substantial link with the University could be counted but PhD theses and outputs from colleagues without research elements to their contracts would not be counted.

The University was still modelling what best outcomes in Units of Assessment might be, but it was evaluated that this would be overall the same as REF2021.

The number of impact case studies the University was required to submit had been reduced, and the 2* evidence to underpin it was therefore not required. It was noted that the University would still consider 2* output due to potential slowness to change in those assessing REF.

It was noted that the rules would continue to update as REF got closer due to ongoing consultations and the resulting evolution of the rules. It was considered that the University was in a positive place, but that its ambition was to hit the top ten, which would be challenging and need us to be well-organised and prepared. It was considered positive that our research award income is tracking upwards, and every effort should be made to keep this increasing.

All colleagues who were taking a lead role in reviewing outputs were thanked, as this was helping to build a picture of the institution and identify any gaps. Those who responded to the email on the consultation of the six pillars on PCE were also thanked.

The Vice-Chancellor also thanked all those involved and recognised that a huge amount of work had already been done. Departments were also urged to consider 4* output, especially if they had already achieved all the 3* output necessary.

15401.0 Academic Year Chart 2025/2026 - 42

Purpose - For Approval

Senate **approved** the academic year chart for 2025/2026

15402.0 Student Policy Review - S23/24 - 43

Purpose - For Approval

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) presented the paper. It was noted that the Student Apprentices Regulations and their changes were welcomed by those who oversee the processes. Senate **approved** the changes to the Student Appeals Policy and Student Apprentices Regulations.

15403.0 Student Appeals - S23/24 - 44

Senate noted the annual report on Student Appeals from the 2022/23 Academic Year. They agreed to recommend to Council to approve the proposed Terms of Reference for the Student Appeals Panel.

15404.0 Academic Staff Committee - S23/24 - 45

Purpose - For Approval

Minute by Katie Anderton

The Interim Head of Governance Secretariat introduced the paper. Senate **approved** the changes to the Academic Staff Committee Terms of Reference.

15405.0 Senate Review of Business and Operations - S23/24 - 46

Purpose - For Discussion

The Interim Head of Governance introduced the Senate Benchmarking Report which had been prepared by Halpin, the external consultants. He also introduced the response to the paper which had been considered by the Senate Steering Group together with the proposed actions which had arisen out of the report.

The Interim Head of Governance said that the recommendations and suggestions which had arisen out of the report had been mostly operational in nature and were actions required to be completed by him and the governance team. He said that Senate would be updated as to the progress in completing those actions.

Senate noted the benchmarking report and endorsed the actions as set out in the response to the report.

15406.0 Independent Advisor Appointment - S23/24 - 47

Purpose - For Approval

Senate **approved** the appointment of Dr Abbie Jordan to the role of Deputy Independent Advisor.

Senate **approved** the continued appointment of Dr Aurelian Mondon to the role of Deputy Independent Advisor.

15407.0 Course Approvals - S23/24 - 48

Purpose - For Approval

Senate **approved** the MSc Artificial Intelligence for Engineering and Design to start in the 2024/25 Academic Year:

Senate **approved** in principle the CDT proposals detailed in S23/24 - 48B.

15408.0 Equality Diversity & Inclusion Committee - S23/24 - 49

Purpose - For Approval

The report from the meeting of the Equality Diversity and Inclusion Committee was noted by Senate.

15409.0 Collaborative Provision Register - S23/24 - 50

Purpose - For Noting

Senate noted the Collaborative Provision Register. It was highlighted to Senators that some of the collaborative provisions involve work with countries which are subject to export control regulations. Where there is a project element to a course then there is a need to consider whether one of the exemptions for the academic community applies or if export controls would be applicable. Consideration may be needed for some undergraduate and postgraduate masters courses as to whether their projects pose a risk and there was a need for action to be taken to consider this.

15410.0 Library Annual Report - S23/24 - 51

Purpose - For Noting

The Annual Report of the Library was noted by Senate.

15411.0 RKEC - S23/24 - 52

Purpose - For Noting

Senate noted the meeting of RKEC which was held on 28 November 2023.

15412.0 Report from Council - S23/24 - 53

Purpose - For Noting

The report from the meetings of Council held on 22 November 2023 and 8 January 2024 were noted by Senate. The Interim Head of Governance reminded Senate that there was a joint meeting of Senate and Council on 21 February and all senators were welcome to attend.

15413.0 Urgent Business and Delegated Powers - S23/24 - 54

Purpose - For Noting

Some members of Senate raised concerns that the approval of the creation and merger of three institutes could have been discussed at the meeting rather than approved by circulation. The Interim Head of Governance said that this had been considered urgent business due to the desire to make an announcement on the creation/merger of the institutes in the early new year. It was requested by Senate that in future items which were to be approved by circulation should state the rationale for the decision being required to be made by circulation. It was also suggested that some consideration be given as to how best to use Chair's action to make decisions between meetings.

15414.0 Boards of Studies

Purpose - For Noting

The minutes of the Boards of Studies were noted by Senate.

15415.0 Any Other Business

Purpose - For Noting

The Governance Team would be running their biennial Committee Effectiveness this year. This would not directly impact Senate; however, Senate sub-committees will receive more information of the review in March/April time and a report of the findings will come to the June meeting of Senate.