

SENATE

2 April 2025 / Council Chamber

MINUTES



15563.0 Welcome and Quorum

Purpose - For Information

Minute by Ruth Robins

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and confirmed that the meeting was quorate.

Apologies were received from Sarah Hainsworth, Duncan Craig, Lucy Noble, Fiona Gillison, James Davenport, Jimena Alamo, Steve Brammer, Nathalia Gjersoe, Zuber Lakani, and Fei Qin.

15564.0 Declarations of Interest

Purpose - For Information

Minute by Ruth Robins

Kate Robinson, University Librarian, declared an interest in Item 15572.0 Governance - Statutes and Ordinances.

15565.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting - S24/25 - 55

Purpose - For Approval

Minute by Andrew Browning

Senate approved the minutes of the previous meeting of Senate held on 29 January 2025.

15566.0 Actions and Matters Arising - S24/25 - 56 & 57

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Andrew Browning

Senate noted the decisions made by Senate which had been taken since the last meeting.

Senate noted the action tracker. It was asked whether the action relating to the reporting line for the Institute of Coding had been completed. The PVC (Research and Innovation) had given her apologies for the meeting and it was agreed that this would be followed up with her.

An updated role description for Senators had been distributed. The Interim Head of Governance asked that any comments or suggested amendments to this be communicated to the Governance Team.

15567.0 Institutional update - S24/25 - 58

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Ruth Robins

REPORTED

The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the following items:

- In light of the OfS fine levied on the University of Sussex for failing to uphold freedom of speech, the University was reviewing its procedures and documentation to see if any changes could be necessary.
- Congratulations were extended to the newly elected Students' Union officers. Changes to the Senior Leadership Team were also noted.
- Congratulations were extended to the Department of Mathematical Sciences, who had achieved Athena SWAN Gold accreditation.
- The University had been reaccredited as a University of Sanctuary.
- A member of the University community from Gaza had successfully applied for humanitarian protection.
- The University was considering how to engage productively with the SU's Together We Shape Tomorrow manifesto.
- The QS World rankings had been released with overall positive results for the University. Consideration would be given to how Sport might re-enter the Top 10.
- Congratulations were extended to Professor Min Pan who had received an ARIA grant, which was distinctive in the field for rewarding blue sky research.
- The NSS Survey was ongoing, alongside the University's inaugural Course Level Survey.
- The University had placed a bid for the next year of Turing Scholarship funding, which it was anticipated would benefit 80 students.

DISCUSSION

Consideration would be given to the timing of the Course Level Survey.

It was requested that Senate members highlight the Course Level Survey to students.

Action Assigned to - Phil Taylor | **Due by** - 4 Jun 2025

Update the information on the articulation agreement with Xi'an Jiaotong University to reflect that this is for undergraduate not postgraduate students.

15568.0 KPI Update - 24/25 - 59

Purpose - For Discussion

Minute by Katie Anderton

REPORTED

The Vice-Chancellor presented Senate an update on the development of the University's Strategic Goals and the associated key performance indicators (KPIs). The work in this area was ongoing.

DISCUSSED

There had been some changes made to the KPI presentation which had been circulated with the meeting papers so it was requested that the updated slides be distributed to Senators.

It was queried how ambitious the KPIs were in comparison to the University's current performance. It was confirmed that some of the targets had been needs driven, for example the proportion of free school meals students accepted, while others had been selected to drive overall improvement for the University. The Vice-Chancellor would be able to collate the institution's current performance against the KPIs and circulate to Senators.

Clarification was provided on the use of building on strength. There was clear practice of good and effective work taking place within the University and the aim was to build from this work to improve the standing of the University. The Vice-President (External Relations) had suggested the use of the term building from strength to clarify the nuance.

It was clarified that these University level KPIs would be externally facing, with a framework of other KPIs built underneath which would aid the University in meeting the overarching goals and avoid duplication. This included areas such as the University's placements which was seen as one of the main reasons our students enjoy such successful graduate outcomes.

It was queried why one of the KPIs related to decreasing the use of non-residential space while other KPIs related to the increase of students. The aim of this KPI was not only based on increasing the efficiency of the estate but ensuring that the University met its sustainability targets. As the KPI was based around a decrease in space allocation per member of staff there was the capacity for the estate to grow if required, however it was noted that there were a number of difficult decisions the University would need to take in relation to the refurbishment of existing buildings on the estate and space allocation would need to be taken into consideration.

The University had previously made a commitment to Net Zero by 2030, an aim which had been reduced in the current proposed KPIs. It was confirmed that Net Zero for Scope One and Two emissions was not currently achievable. There was not a credible plan in place to meet this aim by 2030. The aim of this KPI therefore was to ensure that the University could do something credible and valuable in this space while taking a pragmatic approach which brought into consideration the costs associated. This would be communicated out to the wider University community, however it was noted that these communications would need to be done sensitively and have an associated plan attached for the reduction of emissions.

It was noted that the KPIs proposed were quite generic to the Higher Education Sector and there wasn't a particular sense of the University within them.

Senators noted that there was not a sense of a defined start and end point for many of these KPIs and it was unclear where priorities lay or where there would be significant pay off for focusing on these areas.

It was requested that the acronym EBITDA have more explanation attached for the lay readers of the KPIs.

The lack of a staff wellbeing KPI was queried. It was noted that the current KPI looking at staff

had received some criticism during consultation and a more wellbeing-focused measure was needed, consideration of which was still ongoing.

It was noted that some of the KPIs proposed were conditional on external factors, including geopolitics.

It was important to note that while the University was successful and performed well in a number of areas it was not feasible to be world leading in everything. As such the University Executive would need to make difficult choices about where to focus resources and investment to become world leading in those spaces.

15569.0 Undergraduate Degree Outcomes - Degree Inflation - S24/25 - 60

Purpose - For Discussion

Minute by Helena Barrell

REPORTED

Senate received the report on Undergraduate Degree Outcomes for 2023/24. This paper provided an institutional and subject-level analysis, and Senate would receive another paper with information on student characteristics and benchmarking data at a future meeting.

The average awarding rates for 1st and 2:1 awards had remained stable at around 88% since 2022/23. The average awarding rate had decreased to pre-pandemic levels and was in line with the sector and comparator groups.

The report looked at how awarding rates varied between different departments and assessment types. The higher the average number of exams per student in a department, the lower the average 1st and 2:1 awarding rate. While this negative correlation was expected, there was value in considering whether the University was content with it. Departments would be asked to comment on the data as part of the Education Annual Review for 2025/26.

DISCUSSION

Senate queried the extent to which award regulations affected undergraduate degree outcomes. While no data on this was available, there was likely to be some correlation with both award regulations and the structure of each programme.

The correlation between the number of 1sts awarded and the quality of the student intake was questioned. It was difficult to show a correlation. There could be some variation between subjects.

Senate noted that students were becoming more informed about degree outcomes and discussed whether they might start to base their university choices on this.

HESA had not yet published sector data on awarding rates by discipline, but this would be submitted to Senate once available.

It was agreed that the figures for each department contained in the graphs would be circulated after the meeting.

Action Assigned to - Julian Chaudhuri | **Due by** - 4 Jun 2025

Circulate to Senate the figures included in the graphs in the Undergraduate Degree Outcomes report for each department.

15570.0 Quality Assurance in Undergraduate and Postgraduate Assessments - S24/25- 61

Purpose - For Discussion

Minute by Laura Andrews

REPORTED

Senate considered the assurances provided by EQSC on the effectiveness of processes for assuring academic quality and standards in assessment employed in 2023/2024 for undergraduate and postgraduate taught courses. The paper to EQSC summarised reports on the use of scaling, exam paper errors and independent observer reports. EQSC had identified no issues of concern.

DISCUSSED

A question was raised regarding the reason why Science had a higher number of scaled units than other faculties. It was confirmed that this was due to the type of assessment, with more numerical exams in Science.

15571.0 CT Evaluation Report - S24/25 - 62

Purpose - For Discussion

Minute by Ruth Robins

REPORTED

Curriculum Transformation was the biggest institutional transformational project to be undertaken.

The annual report had been produced in a format specified by the Strategic Projects Office. It covered the starting point, benefits of the project, and how progress would be measured.

DISCUSSED

Senate asked if the data could be normalised by credit as CT had led to units with more credits per unit, which could make a unit to unit comparison misleading as the entities which were compared were not the same. Current presentation of the data meant it was difficult for Senate to confidently analyse whether CT had achieved its aim of reducing the assessment burden on students. It was suggested that summary data could be normalised by credit and that this approach should be applied to all data presented to Senate to compare before and after CT.

It was confirmed that this report could be shared with Academic Representatives, with the understanding that it was commercially sensitive.

High stakes exams had been identified as a significant challenge or barrier for students in some departments. Senate asked if this information was fed into progression statistics or linked to

mental health challenges around progression. This was a national issue and was also linked to Covid. There was a need to balance this with academic integrity, with some universities moving back to in-person assessment due to issues arising from generative AI. Although some high stakes exams could lead to repeat years due to regulatory structures Senate was assured that high stakes exams did have a retrieval opportunity, which departments should support.

The lack of large teaching rooms could lead to pressure to move large classes online, which students were not in favour of and was also made more difficult by new UKVI regulations. This was being considered alongside the Estates Masterplan. Timetabling was a perennial issue; and the increase in timetabling exemptions would also need to be rationalised.

Information about the number of students who suspended their studies was not relevant for the CT report and would be reflected in the EQSC annual report.

Action Assigned to – Julian Chaudhuri | Due by - 4 Jun 2025

Consider how the data presented to Senate could be normalised by credit rather than shown in a unit to unit comparison.

15572.0 Governance - Statutes and Ordinances - S24/25 - 63

Purpose - For Discussion

Minute by Ruth Robins

REPORTED

The Interim Head of Governance presented the draft Statutes and Ordinances. These had been to the previous meeting of Council for comment. Senators were thanked for their comments and suggested amendments to the Statutes and Ordinances which they provided ahead of the meeting.

Clarification was given in relation to the definition of faculties. Senate were told that a definition had been set out in the Statutes which defined a faculty as being the most senior academic unit. Within the Ordinances the definition set out what was considered a faculty, which included the three current faculties and the School of Management. This would enable the University to change which bodies would be considered faculties without the need to go to Privy Council to amend the Statutes.

DISCUSSED

Senators asked if the Ordinances could contain the provision that was currently contained within the Statutes which allowed 20 academic staff to call a meeting of the Academic Assembly. It was confirmed that this could be reviewed.

Senate broadly welcomed the new Statutes and Ordinances commenting that it made the University more nimble in terms of its decision making and that it relied on Senate as one of the bodies within the University to act as a check and balance on the Executive. Senate also welcomed that the need to go to Privy Council to change the University's Statutes was also reduced.

It was commented that it was positive that all staff were covered by the provisions relating to academic freedom.

A query was raised by the University Librarian about how that role was described in the revised Statutes and Ordinances and it was agreed that this would be explored further between the University Librarian and the Interim Head of Governance outside of the meeting.

Senate welcomed the removal of operational details from the Statutes and the Ordinances including those which related to employment procedures.

DECISION

Senate endorsed the changes to the Statutes and Ordinances and recommended that these be approved by Council.

Action Assigned to - Ian Blenkarn | **Due by** - 1 May 2025

Statutes and Ordinances to go to the next meeting of Council on 1 May 2025 for approval.

15573.0 Governance - Elections Framework- S24/25 - 64

Minute by Katie Anderton

REPORTED

The Interim Head of Governance Secretariat presented the proposed Elections Framework. Senate were asked to recommend the framework to Council, including the Senate's preferred voting system which would be used for elections to Council.

DISCUSSED

Senators were supportive of the election framework and the plan to adopt a single voting system for all elections run for Senate. Currently members were elected to Senate via a First Past the Post system while Senate members were elected to Council via a Single Transferable Vote system.

It was noted that while it was preferable to have a consistent election process the types of election were different as Senators would be more likely to know all the candidates for the elections to Council while they may not know all the candidates running for Senate vacancies.

Senate questioned whether simplicity of the process or hearing a proportional voice of the community was more important when selecting an election process.

It was requested that the induction process to Senate was looked at as there had been varied experiences of this.

DECISION

It was decided that Senate would adopt a Single Transferable Vote system for all of its elections. Senate recommended the Elections Framework to Council subject to the amendments detailed above.

15574.0 Governance - Senate Appointments Committee - S24/25 - 65

Purpose - For Approval

Minute by Helena Barrell

REPORTED

Senate received a paper on the process for appointing members of Senate to sub-committees and joint committees. The paper proposed the setting up of a Senate Appointments Committee, which would follow a fixed process to fill all vacancies.

DISCUSSION

Senate noted that setting up a Senate Appointments Committee was the best way forward to ensure transparency and accountability. Once approved, it would need to be agreed who would sit on the new committee and how members would nominate themselves to join sub-committees.

It was customary at a departmental level for attendance at meetings to be noted. Senate discussed whether a similar mechanism could be introduced for checking absentees and noting attendance on sub-committees. Consideration to this would be given, but it was noted that there could be issues with collecting this type of information on individuals.

The workload allocation for Senate members was flagged as in need of consideration. The current amount allocated was not thought to be reflective of the work involved.

DECISION

Senate approved the recommendation to set up a Senate Appointments Committee.

15575.0 Inclusion of Academic Advisor Role in Academic Job Descriptions - S2425 - 66

Purpose - For Decision

Minute by Ruth Robins

Senate supported the inclusion of the Academic Advisor role in academic job descriptions.

15576.0 Policy on Institutional Response to Armed Conflicts - S24/25 - 67

Purpose - For Decision

Minute by Laura Andrews

REPORTED

Senate received the proposed policy on institutional response to armed conflicts and the procedures associated with delivery of the policy. The aim of the policy was to consider how the University can respond to global war and conflict in the future.

DISCUSSION

Senate members supported the policy and its alignment with the direction of the University. It was acknowledged that this was a positive policy and forward-thinking compared with other Universities. The SU thanked the steering group for producing a concise report.

DECISION

Senate approved the policy on institutional response to armed conflicts, subject to the suggested revisions, to be reported back to the next meeting of Senate.

Action Assigned to - Jane White | **Due by** - 4 Jun 2025

To consider the following changes to the proposed policy on Institutional Response to Armed Conflicts, to be reported back to Senate:

- What changes to the policy might be required should the UK become actively involved in a conflict
- Use of the word 'impartial' throughout the policy, to acknowledge that there are two sides to every conflict

15577.0 Prize Committee Membership - S24/25 - 68

DECISION

Senate approved the change of membership to the Patrick Troughton Research Prize Committee.

15578.0 APC/CPAC Summary Report - S2425 - 69

Purpose - For Approval

Senate noted the reports from Academic Programmes Committee and Courses and Partnerships Approval Committee.

DECISION

Senate approved the progression arrangement with Thammasat University, Thailand.

DECISION

Senate approved the new MSc in Applied Psychology (Conversion).

15579.0 SU Officers Elections - S24/25 - 70

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Ruth Robins

Senate noted the outcome of the SU Officers election 2025/2026.

DECISION

Senate approved a sabbatical year for Benjamin Orford Thompson, Isabella Downer, and Sanya Jethwari.

15580.0 Honorary Degrees Committee - S24/25 - 71

Purpose - For Decision

DECISION

Senate approved the recommended individuals for the award of Honorary Degrees.

DECISION

Senate approved a change in criteria for Honorary Degrees and President's Awards.

15581.0 Academic Appeals Report 2023/2024 - S24/25 - 72

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Ruth Robins

Senate noted the Academic Appeals Report 2023/2024.

15582.0 Report from Council S24/25 - 73

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Ruth Robins

Senate noted the report from Council of its last meeting held on 20 February 2025.

15583.0 EDIC Summary Report S24/25 - 72

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Ruth Robins

Senate noted the summary report of the meeting of EDIC held on 6 February 2025.

15584.0 RKEC Summary Report S24/25 - 75

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Ruth Robins

Senate noted the RKEC summary report that covered the meetings held on 28 January 2025 and 4 March 2025.

15585.0 EQSC Summary Report S24/25 - 76

Minute by Ruth Robins

Senate noted the summary report of the meeting of EQSC held on 18 February 2025.

15586.0 AEIC Summary Report S24/25 - 77

Minute by Ruth Robins

Senate noted the summary report of the meeting of AEIC held on 13 February 2025.

15587.0 Boards of Studies

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Ruth Robins

Senate noted the minutes of the Boards of Studies:

School of Management Unreserved and Reserved 15 January 2025

Faculties of Science and HSS Unreserved and Reserved 26 February 2025

15588.0 Any Other Business

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Ruth Robins

There was no AOB.

15589.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting - S24/25 R1

Purpose - For Approval

DECISION

Senate approved the minutes of the items of reserved business from the previous meeting of Senate held on 29 January 2025.

15590.0 Approval of Honorary Appointments S24/25 - RX2

Purpose - For Approval

DECISION

Senate approved the honorary appointments.

15591.0 Academic Staff Appeals Committee Report - S24/25 - RX3

Minute by Ruth Robins

Senate noted the report of Academic Staff Appeals Committee Report.

15592.0 Any Other Business

Purpose - For Noting

Minute by Ruth Robins

There was no AOB.

Attendees

Members Attended

Phil Taylor (Chair)

Teslim Bukoye

Zoe Burke

Julian Chaudhuri

Adrian Evans

Huw Ford

Sabina Gheduzzi

Dot Griffiths

Sophia Hatzisavvidou

Alan Hayes

Andrew Heath

Momna Hejmadi

Jo Hyde

Tim Ibell

Nigel Johnston

Frances Laughton

Michael Lewis

David Moon

Ben Ralph

Kate Robinson

Paul Shepherd

Amber Snary

Edmund Thompson

Jennifer Thomson (Online)

Deborah Wilson

Cassie Wilson

Jun Zang

In Attendance

Ian Blenkarn
Andrew Browning
Marion Harney
Rachel Sheer

Observers

Christopher Bonfield
Samuel Kilgour
Ryan Lucas

Apologies

Jimena Alamo
Steve Brammer
Duncan Craig
James Davenport
Fiona Gillison
Nathalia Gjersoe
Sarah Hainsworth
Zuber Lakhani
Lucy Noble
Fei Qin

Partial Attendance

Peter Lambert (Until Item 15573.0 Governance – Elections Framework)
Sandhya Moise (Until Item 15576.0 Policy on Institutional Response to Armed Conflicts)
Jane White (For Item 15576.0 Policy on Institutional Response to Armed Conflicts)
Ahmad Alkuchikmulla (For Item 15576.0 Policy on Institutional Response to Armed Conflicts)

Secretariat

Katie Anderton
Laura Andrews
Helena Barrell
Lauren Howells
Ruth Robins