

Senate

Date of Meeting: 2 October 2024 at 2.15pm in the
Council Chamber

MINUTES



15485.0 Welcome and Quorum

Purpose - For Information

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

There was a particular welcome to Sandhya Moise, Michael Lewis, Paul Shepherd, Alan Hayes, and Nathalia Gjersoe who have been elected or re-elected onto Senate.

There are currently still two remaining vacancies on Senate which will be advertised to Academic Assembly this month.

15486.0 Declarations of Interest

Purpose - For Information

There were no declarations of interests.

15487.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting - S24/25 - 01

Purpose - For Approval

The minutes of the previous meeting of Senate held on 5 June 2024 were approved.

15488.0 Actions and Matters Arising - S24/25 - 02

Purpose - For Noting

15459.0 Freedom of Speech - The Code of Practice has now been published and student regulation 18 updated. The incoming government has removed the requirements to have such a code of practice; however, the University needed to update its Policy and Procedures in this area and the changes had already been considered and approved by Senate and Council so they have been published and are now in force.

There were no outstanding actions.

15489.0 Institutional update - S24/25 - 03

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the following in giving the Institutional Update:

- The University had announced a partnership with B&NES Council to explore potential development possibilities at Bath Quays North.
- The role of Deputy Vice-Chancellor was now being advertised, and it was hoped an appointment could be made in December.
- The University had performed well in several UK ranking and reputation lists.
- The Student Support Roper Centre had re-opened after renovations in time for the start of the semester.
- The University's institutional NSS 2024 results were generally strong.
- The University was continuing to achieve research successes, with activities scaling up and an increased volume of high-quality, high impact research.

The Students' Union President also shared some highlights:

- The SU wished to recognise several individuals for their contributions at the start of the semester, including the EDI-DAG chair, as it was important to note the people who worked hard behind the scenes.
- The SU was pleased to see the implementation of the University's AI Policy.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education & Global) highlighted the following:

- Dr Jonathan Evans secured FAPESP funding to support research collaborations with partners in Sao Paulo, Brazil.
- The University had signed or renewed Memorandums of Understanding with the United Nations, the University of Duisberg-Essen (Germany), Thammasat University (Thailand), and the Mongolian Chamber of Commerce.
- The University had received 23% of its bid for funding from the Turing Fund. There had been more applicants than previous years, meaning everyone who applied had received less than expected. The project had been redesigned to focus on supporting students who were WP or SEND.

DISCUSSION

Senate noted that although the Government had withdrawn a commitment of £6million to fund the creation of a new National Academy focused on Mathematical Sciences, the Academy for the Mathematical Sciences would however continue to exist.

Senate requested an overview of the responsibilities of the incoming DVC, and clarity over any redistribution of responsibilities. The Vice-Chancellor said that he would provide this information to a future meeting.

Senate asked if there was sufficient analysis available to take informed decisions to address the disappointing PTES 2024 results. It was explained that the PVC(Education & Global) would make interventions in three subject areas, as it was believed that this could be better fixed with intervention within the department rather than at an institutional level. There was also an ongoing consultation with 16 universities to improve and update the PTES survey questions.

Senators stated that they found the collated information in the Institutional Update to be useful and it was agreed to continue with it as is for now.

Actions

DVC Responsibilities

Action Description - The Vice-Chancellor to share the DVC responsibilities and any potential redistribution of such either at a future meeting or by correspondence.

Due by - 6 Nov 2024 | Assigned to – Vice-Chancellor

Turing Fund Impact

Action Description - PVC-E&G to find out if this lower than expected Turing Fund share would impact students who had to go abroad as part of their courses.

Due by - 6 Nov 2024 | Assigned to – PVC (Education & Global)

15490.0 Update on Recruitment and Admissions - S24/25 - 04

REPORTED

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education and Global) and the Director of Student Recruitment and Admissions presented an update on the recruitment and admissions numbers for the 2024/25 Academic Year. The recruitment numbers had not yet been finalised as a number of students were still facing issues with visas, and there were students who had moved to campus but not yet officially registered. All Faculties and the School had met their targets for home undergraduate status students, while the Faculties of Engineering & Design and Science had also met their overseas undergraduate student target. The Student Recruitment and Admissions Team were still awaiting confirmation as to whether the School of Management had met their target. All the Faculties had met their home status postgraduate target but had fallen short of meeting the overseas postgraduate target, although there was still the potential that the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences could meet target in this area. The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education and Global) extended their thanks to the admissions team for their work to achieve these results as the University had performed extremely well in the admission numbers this year.

DISCUSSION

It was noted that while there were some students experiencing issues with their visas, the number was much lower than in the 2023/24 admissions cycle where there had been an increase in visa refusals. The immigration team continued to support those students who were experiencing issues.

There had been a change in the main countries from which the University were recruiting international students. It was questioned whether the University were looking to target countries which had historically had high admission numbers or if the marketing strategy would pivot to reflect the changes. It was confirmed that there would be elements of both strategies implemented. There had been a sector drop in the number of admissions to UK institutions from India, Ghana and Nigeria. While there was less exposure to the effects of this reduction at Bath in regards to Nigerian and Ghanaian students, there had been a shortfall in the number of Indian students typically recruited which had not been successfully mitigated elsewhere. As such the University was looking at building up their median and smaller markets, particularly in countries which had been affected by the recent visa issues relating to Canada. It was noted that the University was awaiting the outcome of the United States' presidential election and how this could affect international recruitment before confirming a strategy, but this strategy would need to be as agile as possible.

It was noted that a number of scholarships and discounts had been offered during the 2024/25 recruitment round for students coming from certain markets. A wider review would be carried out to see if there had been an impact or change in recruitment based on the receipt of these tactical awards.

15491.0 Response to Petition relating to Conflict in Gaza - S24/25 - 05

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Senate received an update on the actions which the University had undertaken to support all members of the University community that had been, and continued to be, affected by the ongoing conflict in Israel, Gaza and the wider region.

The actions were the result of discussions with colleagues and students over the past year and following receipt of a 'Letter of demands to University of Bath for Palestine Solidarity'.

An institutional policy to address support for victims of conflict had been drafted and would be brought to Senate in November for approval, alongside details of the associated, enabling procedures. The policy covered both acute response and ongoing responses to conflict and war, focusing on the duty of care to all members of the University community.

DISCUSSION

Senate welcomed the update and noted the response and ongoing actions by the University.

15492.0 Analysis of NSS - S24/25 - 06

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

Senate was provided with the University's results in the National Student Survey 2024 and the suggested actions to maintain or improve future performance. The scores continued to be strong this year, showing the University's dedication to supporting students. The results would also feed into lead table positions.

Benchmark scores were set by the OfS. In 27 of the areas scored the University was above the benchmark score, in 25 areas the University was on par, and in 2 areas the University was below the benchmark.

The aim was for the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education & Global), supported by Associate Deans, to lead targeted interventions in departments that had underperformed on either of the two survey themes that were used as strategic KPIs: i) Teaching on my course; and ii) Assessment and feedback. Outcomes from this would be reported back to UEB with actions in place for the next NSS, starting in February 2025.

DISCUSSION

Discussion points raised included:

- Whilst response rates from departments were down on previous years, they were still high for the sector.
- Best practice vs what was achievable with the growth in student numbers. It was acknowledged that the University already had the skillset and expertise to make the required improvements through management action, staff attitudes and pedagogy.
- Learning from best practice internally and the excellent workshops on offer from the Department for Health on assessment feedback and the CLT.
- The need to help students to better understand the criteria and acknowledge improvement.
- The need for a focus on continuous improvement overall, rather than unit-specific improvement.
- Expected progress in the area of student voice over the coming year and the role that the SU and Academic Representatives are taking in championing this.

15493.0 Presentation: Engagement /Attendance Monitoring

REPORTED

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Student Experience) and the Director of Education and Student Services presented Senate with an update on the current stance relating to Engagement and Attendance Monitoring of students. An item had previously been brought to Senate for consideration however there had since been changes to the wider Higher Education Sector which would impact on these original views.

Prior to the COVID 19 Pandemic the University had not had any form of formal engagement monitoring for students without a visa requirement. During the pandemic while students were remote learning the question was raised how staff would know if a student needed additional support and a process had been created which was monitored within the Faculty or School. However this process took significant effort to administer and was broadly inefficient.

There was an academic engagement and attendance monitoring process in place for students who held visas, and there was mention within the student regulations as to the requirement of students to engage in their studies however this was done primarily through a progression lens rather than taking into account a student's wellbeing. It was noted that there was limited insight as to how students felt about attendance monitoring due to the relatively fast turnover. A recent survey by WonkHE had reported that 80% of the student respondents would support the use of attendance monitoring for wellbeing.

It was noted that, in light of the outcome of the recent Abrahart case and the subsequent duty of care responsibilities of Higher Education institutions, there were likely to be some regulatory changes for universities, one area for which was likely to be attendance monitoring. The Student Loans Company were also looking to make reporting student attendance a requirement so it was advisable for the University to put a policy in place before it became necessary so that the focus could be placed on wellbeing.

DISCUSSION

The previous feedback which had been provided by Senate hinged on the tension between recognising students as adults and trusting them to know how best to engage with their learning, and monitoring their engagement as an institution. It was noted that the approach for this form of monitoring by the University would be coming wholly from a wellbeing perspective and would not be telling students how to engage with their studies. There would be the separate issue of the Student Loans Company but any reporting to them would be as a requirement and the University could not control the consequences related to this requirement.

The current method of attendance monitoring used across the University was very unsophisticated and they would benefit from moving to a standardised approach.

It was noted that while the intention for the monitoring may be from a wellbeing perspective, there may be other unintended consequences for students or it could be used for alternative methods. The current monitoring system for international students was very onerous, singling them out from the rest of their cohort and could put off some potential applicants. There was an argument that having a blanket policy for all students in relation to attendance monitoring would make the process more equitable.

It was noted that for Directors of Studies the end of semester examinations were a good time to engage with students and see how they were progressing, however this was not enough engagement and there was a requirement to do more from a wellbeing point of view. It was queried whether there was a way of reporting engagement through the University's existing online

tools such as Moodle. It was noted that Moodle was already being used.

There was question as to whether engagement and attendance were being conflated. While there was often a link between attendance and a student struggling it was noted that for some students they would continue to engage even if not attending lectures. It was proposed that the student's academic advisor could have some level of oversight of the student's attendance so they could provide some interpretation as somebody who had more of a relationship with the student.

DECISION

Senate provided their support for the trajectory of the work. The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Student Experience) and the Director of Education and Student Services confirmed they would continue their engagement with Senate and other stakeholder groups and work to create a proposal which would be brought to Senate, noting that no work in the area could happen overnight.

15494.0 Disabled Students Policy - S24/25 - 07

Purpose - For Approval

REPORTED

Senate received a report detailing updates to the Disabled Students Policy. The policy had been amended to remove inaccuracies and historical information. Next steps would include implementing procedures to support the policy.

DISCUSSION

Members queried why previous references to Library support had been removed from the new version of the policy. It was agreed that this would be looked into.

Concerns were raised that the growing number of students seeking help from the Disability Support Service was placing pressure on the team. It was noted that steps were being taken to alleviate this pressure in the short term by reorganising the support services. The longer-term work on inclusive education would also help by reducing the need for Disability Access Plans (DAPs).

Decision

Senate approved the revised Disabled Students Policy.

15495.0 Academic Programmes Committee - S24/25 - 08

Purpose - For Approval

REPORTED

Senate was asked to approve SouthWest Jiaotong University and Xi'an Jiaotong University as collaborative partners for undergraduate 2+2 articulation arrangements with the Department of Electronic & Electrical Engineering.

DISCUSSION

A concern was raised about OFS guidance on franchise collaborations of this nature, and it was explained that this advice had come out in parallel with the decision-making. It was agreed that this could be checked and then taken forward to APC and the Internationalisation Board, but that overall this did not feel significant enough to prevent progressing. There was generally less concern about export control with UG students, and the Department had experience of working with Chinese universities through other 2+2 courses.

It was explained that it was not unusual for Chinese universities to have more than one partner institution, and that Xi-an Jiaotong University's link with Liverpool was not the same.

Senate asked about viability, and it was explained that a number check had not been put in place as this was a pipeline into the University, but that APC would be taking a more stringent look at initial business cases and assessing numbers alongside other monitoring activities every 2-3 years before deciding whether to continue or stop.

It was additionally noted that students on 1+1 or 2+2 and similar arrangements tended to reflect positively in the NSS survey.

Decision

Senate approved the proposal for two new collaborative partners to create undergraduate 2+2 articulation arrangements with the Department of Electronic & Electrical Engineering.

15496.0 Courses and Partnerships Approval Committee - S24/25 - 09

Purpose - For Approval

Decision

Senate approved the Stage 2 proposal from HSS for a suite of MA Education campus-based full and part-time courses.

15497.0 Fitness to Practise Policy and Procedure Review - S24/25 - 12

Purpose - For Approval

REPORTED

The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Student Experience) presented the policy updates for approval. The changes to the policy had been made following the approved updates to other policies, including the Student Appeals Policy, to ensure the interactions between policies were correct and up to date with regulatory guidelines.

DISCUSSION

It was questioned why the Fitness to Practice process had only two formal stages, while the Health, Wellbeing and Support for Study process had three stages and whether this could disadvantage students who were going through the Fitness to Practice process. It was noted that the two processes were separate and so were not necessarily synchronised but student support underpinned the whole process. It was agreed that the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Student Experience) would confirm with the Student Support and Safeguarding team why this discrepancy in the number of stages existed.

It was questioned why, when work had been done to rename the Health, Wellbeing and Support for Study process, the Fitness to Practice process retained the use of the word fitness in its title. It was confirmed that the Fitness to Practice policy was associated with professional accreditation and the phrase Fitness to Practice was used within each discipline. As such the University policy aimed to prepare students for the professional environment, in part through having the same name as the professional processes.

DECISION

Senate approved the amendments to the Fitness to Practice Policy for implementation from October 2024.

Action

Report back to Senate the reasoning behind HWSS having 3 formal stages and FtP having 2

Due by - 6 Nov 2024 | Assigned to – PVC (Student Experience)

15498.0 Education Advisory Board - S24/25 - 10

Purpose - For Noting

The minutes of the meeting of the Education Advisory Board which took place on 8 July 2024 were noted by Senate.

15499.0 Education Quality and Standards Committee - S24/25 - 11

Senate noted the report from EQSC.

15500.0 Boards of Studies - S24/25 - 13

Purpose - For Noting

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

15501.0 Report from Council - S24/25 - 14

The report from Council was noted by Senate.

15502.0 Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee Terms of Reference and Membership - S24/25 - 15

Purpose - For Approval

It was agreed that the amendments to the Terms of Reference of RKEC should be approved by circulation.

Action

RKEC Terms of Reference

Action Description - To seek approval of the RKEC Terms of Reference by way of circulation.

Action Completed Date - 24 Oct 2024 | Assigned to - Andrew Browning

15504.0 Dates of future meetings

Purpose - For Noting

The programme of meetings for 2024/2025 were noted by Senate.

15505.0 Reserved Minutes of the Previous Meeting - S24/25 - R01

Purpose - For Approval

The reserved minutes of the previous meeting of Senate held on 5 June 2024 were approved.

15506.0 Prize Committee Update - S24/25 - R02

Purpose - For Noting

The winners of the 2024 Godfrey and Sue Hall Postgraduate Research Student Prize and the 2024 Peter Troughton Research Staff Prize were noted by Senate.

15507.0 Continued Appointment of Independent Advisor - S24/25 - R03

Purpose - For Approval

Senate approved the renewal of the appointment of Dr Emma Denham in the role of Independent Advisor to Postgraduate Research Students.

15508.0 Any Other Business

Purpose - For Noting

There was no other business.

ATTENDEES

Attended	In Attendance	Apologies
Jimena Alamo	Katie Anderton	Fiona Gillison
Christopher Bonfield	Laura Andrews	Zuber Lakhani
Julian Chaudhuri	Helena Barrell	Amber Snary
James Davenport	Ian Blenkharn	Edmund Thompson
Adrian Evans	Andrew Browning	
Sabina Gheduzzi	Lauren Howells	
Nathalia Gjersoe	Ruth Robins	
Sarah Hainsworth	Rachel Sheer	
Marion Harney		
Alan Hayes		
Jo Hyde		
Tim Ibell		
Peter Lambert		
Michael Lewis		
Ryan Lucas		
Sandhya Moise		
David Moon		
Fei Qin		
Ben Ralph		
Kate Robinson		
Paul Shepherd		
Cassie Wilson		
Phil Taylor		
Jennifer Thomson		