

Senate

29 January 2025 / Council Chamber

MINUTES



15540.0 Welcome and Quorum

REPORTED

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted a quorum was present. Apologies were noted from Professor Duncan Craig, Professor Steve Brammer, Professor Michael Lewis and Professor Momna Hejmadi. A particular welcome was extended to Dr Fran Laughton and Professor Momna Hejmadi who had been elected onto Senate, and Don McLaverty, a lay member of Council who was attending as an observer for this meeting.

15541.0 Declarations of Interest

REPORTED

The University Librarian noted that the Library Annual Report was due to be considered at the meeting. There were no other declarations of interest.

15542.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting - S24/25 - 41

DECISION

The minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 6 November 2024 were approved as an accurate record.

15543.0 Actions and Matters Arising - S24/25 - 42

REPORTED

It was noted there were no outstanding actions for Senate.

15544.0 Institutional Update - S24/25 - 43

REPORTED

The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the following:

- The Government Chief Scientific Advisor, Professor Dame Angela McLean, would be attending the launch of the Institute for Digital Security and Behaviour.
- The advert for the new Chair of Council had gone live.
- The new Deputy Vice-Chancellor and new Director of Advancement had been appointed. Senate would shortly be asked to approve the new Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global) by correspondence.
- Winter Graduations had taken place, with several Council members in attendance for the first time. An excellent group of honorary graduates had been honoured.
- Nominations for the new SU Officers would be open until 10 February.
- The NSS would be open until 30 April.
- Nominations for the University Teaching Awards 2025 were open.
- There had been significant success in research, with an award of £4.5million for the Brunel Centre for Policy Research. The University was part of a project aiming to develop a strong policy voice in the south west to show the government what the region has to offer and strengthen the support available.
- Congratulations were extended to the University Librarian, Kate Robinson, who had been appointed as President of the International Association of University Libraries.

DISCUSSION

It was highlighted that Faculty of Engineering and Design had achieved a full house of Silver Athena SWAN awards.

It was confirmed that the net effect of the Tuition Fee increase and the National Insurance increase would -£1.5million, rather than the initially reported £1million. This estimate had changed after more detailed calculations had been done.

15545.0 Doctoral Academic Milestone Proposal - S24/25 - 44

REPORTED

Senate received the Doctoral Academic Milestone Proposal. It was noted that since the previous report submitted to Senate in November 2024 outlining the milestones, a consultation survey had been held. The names of the milestones had changed as a result, but their contents had not.

It had previously been clear across the sector that progress reports were not fit for purpose. The new process was intended to improve the PGR experience and increase submission rates. An amendment was also proposed to the appointment criteria for internal examiners; this was

intended to support the development of early career researchers.

DISCUSSION

Assurance was given that the Project Team had worked closely with the PGR Independent Advisors when developing the proposal. Their support would be sought when drafting the Agreement of Expectations. A separate piece of work was being carried out with the help of the Independent Advisors to look at the structure of and accountability in supervision, which would introduce formal processes to follow when issues arose. A paper on this would be submitted to a future meeting of Senate.

Senate queried whether sufficient resources were in place to implement and oversee the changes proposed. While Phase 1 of the project had focused on drafting the proposal, Phase 2 would focus on its implementation. A paper was intended to go to UEB soon so that a decision could be made on funding and resource for the work. At a local level, the changes were expected to reduce supervisors' workloads.

It was noted that it would be useful to be explicit on the different timelines for full-time and part-time students. Members highlighted that the changes proposed would help to demonstrate how feedback from postgraduate students had been considered and acted on.

DECISION

Senate approved the Doctoral Academic Milestone Proposal.

Senate approved in principle the proposed amendment to the appointment criteria for internal examiners.

15546.0 IP Policy Changes - S24/25 - 45

This item was taken before 15545.0

REPORTED

This work had been led by the Vice President (Enterprise) and reviewed by the University Commercialisation Executive Board, and addressed the implications of the Governmental Independent Review of spin-out companies on the University. As a result, the recommendation was to remove the relevant clauses from the Ordinances and create an IP Policy.

DISCUSSION

In response to a question about the implications of removing this information from the Ordinances, Senate was assured that a policy would allow greater flexibility in the future and allow the University to respond positively to any further changes in this area.

A question was asked about the scope of the policy, as it was not uncommon for UG or PGT students to claim IP from their final project. It was confirmed that this was included in the policy and would also help to address this long-standing problem. Academics had been trying to educate their students that the better the IP was the better protected it could be, and the more value it would have. The policy would also help to clarify the challenges that arose when students did not recognise that their IP was a direct result of work with staff.

DECISION

Senate approved the IP Policy and recommended the changes to the Ordinances to Council.

Senate Appointments Committee Proposal - C24/25 46a

REPORTED

Senate received a proposal recommending the setting up of a Senate Appointments Committee.

When appointing Senate members to committees under the current process, members would be asked for expressions of interest or nominations. This frequently led to issues when not enough expressions of interest were received. The paper laid out three possible options to help address this, of which Option 2, to set up a Senate Appointments Committee, was recommended for approval.

DISCUSSION

It was agreed that the current process was in need of reconsideration and the proposed changes would help move the process in a better direction.

The basis that would be used by the Senate Appointments Committee to make appointments was queried. An annual skills matrix would be conducted to help ensure that appropriate appointments were made. This would be similar to the skills matrix conducted for Council members and which was used by the Nominations Committee that reported to Council.

Option 1, under which all posts would be filled by the Vice Chancellor, was recommended to be removed from the proposal. This option could place an unfair burden on the Vice Chancellor and potentially lead to transparency issues.

Senate recommended that modifications could be made to Option 2. A refined version could include information on the term lengths for Senate members appointed on to committees.

It was noted that having more clarity around the expectations for Senate membership could aid members in receiving departmental approval for joining committees.

DECISION

Senate agreed that a modified version of the proposal to set up a Senate Appointments Committee should be submitted to a future meeting of Senate.

Governance Framework Review Project Board Update - S24/25 - 46b

REPORTED

Senate noted the update from the Governance Framework Review Project Board. The Statutes had previously gone to Privy Council and work was now underway on the Ordinances, looking at what could be taken out and moved into policy, allowing for more streamlined Ordinances

and flexibility for future changes. An updated set of Ordinances would be brought to the April meeting of Senate.

15548.0 Student Appeals Annual Report 2023-24 - S24/25 - 47

REPORTED

Senate received a report of the Student Appeals considered under the Student Appeals Policy in the 2023/24 Academic Year.

DISCUSSION

It had been noted in the report that training for sexual misconduct appeals had been identified as a priority for the team but there were no clear actions within the report. It was confirmed that the Governance Team would be looking to run this additional training in the Spring. Currently around half of the Appeal Panel Pool had engaged with sexual misconduct training and only those who had engaged with the training could consider cases involving sexual misconduct. The training would be used as an opportunity to increase this potential pool however it would remain as an optional training for the Panel members.

The prevalence of instances of sexual misconduct on campus was queried. While it was noted as an issue there continued to be underreporting both at the University and across the sector so any instances of reporting should be seen as positive as students felt able to approach the University with their experiences.

It was noted that while there were a number of appeals considered only one had been accepted after being heard by a full Panel. It was queried what support was available for students when their appeals were rejected. All students were signposted to student support services and the Governance Team would liaise with the Students' Union to ensure all the support information was included within the letters. The focus moving forward was to look into the communication with Reporting Parties if an appeal was accepted and the best way this communication could be managed.

15549.0 Annual Library Report - S24/25 - 49

REPORTED

Senate noted the Library's Annual Report for 2023/24 which illustrated the breadth of the Library's work.

DISCUSSION

The challenge of space was discussed and the potential opportunity that expanding into the city centre might have for the Library. The University Librarian had been speaking with the Director of Strategic Partnerships & Innovation regarding this opportunity.

It was acknowledged that the Library's work was a huge credit to the University and something

to celebrate.

Action

Library requirements on campus

Action Description - To ensure that the Chief Operating Officer takes into account Library requirements when looking at expansion on campus.

15550.0 Annual Review and University Accounts Overview - Martin Williams

REPORTED

Senate received a presentation from the Director of Finance which gave an overview of the University's Annual Report and Accounts for 2023/24 and financial targets for the future.

DISCUSSION

Discussion at the meeting covered the following points:

- Plans going forward to include efficiencies in teaching, better cost recovery in research, central cost savings, innovation opportunities and collaborative work with industry.
- Planning for continued uncertainty within the sector. It was acknowledged that some other Universities, as well as other public sector organisations, were in a tougher position than Bath, which could lead to the potential need for shared services or mergers in the future.
- Terminology with use of the word 'surplus' when the funds were already earmarked and the need to ensure that the University community was aware of the difficult challenges ahead.
- The higher proportion of people in management and support roles compared with education and research and whether this was a typical proportionate central vs faculty spend. Benchmarking by activities with others in the sector showed that the University was performing well.

15551.0 UDSC Terms of Reference and Membership and PGR Independent Advisor Report /UEB Response - S24/25 - 48

REPORTED

The Postgraduate Independent Advisor attended the meeting to provide an update of the work of the Independent Advisors over the 2023/24 Academic Year. An additional advisor had been appointed, making up a team of four academics which left the team with enough capacity to support all the students who engaged with the process. While there was still a relatively high number of students being supported by the team with similar themes arising the team still felt that it was a positive space to work in, with early intervention with students helping to prevent

more severe complaints and issues later on. The Independent Advisors had the support of the Doctoral College in providing training to supervisors and students as to the work of the advisors and the importance of students coming forward.

DISCUSSION

Thanks were extended to the Independent Advisors for their work and the positive impact they were having for the Postgraduate Student experience. It was queried how well known the service was amongst students. A recent survey had reported that 44% of the 38% of students who responded to the survey were aware of the Independent Advisor service. Within the first month of registration all first year PhD students were invited to a session with the Independent Advisors and the information had been included within the Doctoral Supervisor training but there was always space to further push the services.

It was noted that the reporting lines for the Independent Advisor report had changed from being recommended to Senate by the University Executive Board to being recommended by the University Doctoral Studies Committee (UDSC). This change had been made to reflect where the work of supporting Doctoral Students was done. It was requested that moving forward the report from UDSC would include a retrospective look at the actions from the previous year's report.

It was noted that within the current documentation there was no requirement for supervisors to discuss funding changes with Doctoral Students and there was a need to make this clear. A paper would be brought to a future meeting of Senate looking at academic funding of PhDs.

The number of students seen by the Independent Advisors remained fairly stable across Academic Years but there were concerns that the issues being seen were the same. There were a number of students who were being supported for a number of years. The aim was for cases to be concluded in a timely manner and when cases were with the team for a long period of time they often resulted in a formal complaint process. Work was completed following the conclusion of cases to prevent similar issues arising in the future.

It was noted that there was still work needed in this area but the report indicated that there had been significant improvement and the University was in a more positive place now.

15552.0 Course Approvals/CPAC Summary Report - S24/25 - 50

DECISION

Senate approved the Stage 2 new course proposal, MA in Education; and noted the CPAC summary report.

15553.0 Excellence in Doctoral Supervision Prize Committee - S24/25 - 51

DECISION

Senate approved the terms of reference for the Doctoral Supervision Prize Committee

15554.0 Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee Summary Report - S24/25 - 52

DECISION

Senate approved including the Deputy Director of RIS as an ex officio member of the Committee; and noted a summary report from the 26 November 2024 meeting of the Research and Knowledge Exchange Committee.

15555.0 Analysis of Widening Participation student admissions data 2024 - S24/25 - 53

DECISION

Senate noted an analysis of widening participation student admission data for 2024 and actions for 2025.

15556.0 Boards of Studies

DECISION

Senate noted the minutes from the Boards of Studies.

15557.0 Senior Academic Appointments Committee - S24/25 - 54

DECISION

Senate noted a summary report from the 16 December 2024 meeting of the Senior Academic Appointments Committee.

15558.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting - S24/25 R06

DECISION

The Reserved Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2024 were approved without amendment.

15559.0 Conferment of Honorary Titles - S24/25 - R07

DECISION

Senate approved the conferment of the Honorary Titles.

15560.0 Regulation 15.7 - Extension of registration for an undergraduate student - S24/25 - R08

DECISION

Senate approved setting aside Regulation 15.7(b) and granted an extension of registration to a student on the BSc International Development with Economics.

15561.0 Student Withdrawals - S24/25 - R09

DECISION

Senate noted the student withdrawals.

Attendees

Attended

Jimena Alamo
Teslim Bukoye
Zoe Burke
Julian Chaudhuri
James Davenport
Adrian Evans
Huw Ford
Sabina Gheduzzi
Fiona Gillison
Nathalia Gjersoe
Marion Harney
Sophia Hatzisavvidou
Alan Hayes
Jo Hyde
Tim Ibell
Nigel Johnston
Zuber Lakhani
Peter Lambert
Frances Laughton
Sandhya Moise
David Moon
Lucy Noble
Fei Qin
Ben Ralph
Paul Shepherd
Amber Snary
Cassie Wilson
Phil Taylor, Chair
Edmund Thompson
Jennifer Thomson
Deborah Wilson
Jun Zang

Apologies

Steve Brammer
Duncan Craig
Momna Hejmadi
Michael Lewis
Rachel Sheer

Partial Attendance

Sarah Hainsworth - **Left during 15548.0**
Andrew Heath - **Left during 15548.0**
Kate Robinson - **Left during item 15551.0**

In Attendance

Katie Anderton, Acting Secretary to Senate
Laura Andrews
Sascha Athey

Helena Barrell
Ian Blenkarn
Christopher Bonfield
Don McLaverty
Ruth Robins