

Senate

Wednesday, 15th April 2026 2:15 pm

Council Chamber | Senate

Attendees

Members Attended

Manuel Barcia

Teslim Bukoye (Online)

Zoe Burke

Emma Carmel

Julian Chaudhuri

Duncan Craig

Ian Crawford

James Davenport

Adrian Evans

Sabina Gheduzzi

Nathalia Gjersoe

Marion Harney

Sophia Hatzisavvidou

Alan Hayes

Momna Hejmadi

Jo Hyde

Tim Ibell

Sanya Jethwani

Nigel Johnstone (Joined at 15:15)

Richard Kamm

Frances Laughton

Sandhya Moise

Priyanka Mysore Krishna

Lucy Noble (Online – left at 15:45)

Fei Qin

Ben Ralph (Joined at 15:15)

Paul Shepherd

Helen Slater

Phil Taylor (**Chair**)

John Troyer

Deborah Wilson

Cassie Wilson

In Attendance

Ian Blenkarn, University Secretary and Registrar – Secretary to Senate

Christopher Bonfield, Director of CLT

Jason Harper (Deputising for Kate Robinson, Librarian)

George Newham, Education Manager (The SU)

Rachel Sheer, Director of Academic Registry

Filipa Vance, Director of Research Policy, Governance & Integrity

Secretariat

Elisabeth Day, Interim Head of Governance

Apologies

Sascha Athey

Sarah Bailey

Steve Brammer

Maria Garcia

Sam Kilgour

Peter Lambert

Marcus Munafo

Benjamin Orford Thompson

Kate Robinson

Jun Zang

15723.0 Welcome and Quorum

Purpose - For Information

REPORTED

The Chair welcomed members and attendees and made a formal note of attendance to ensure that quorum was maintained throughout the meeting.

A particular welcome was made to Sharon Flood, Chair of Council who was observing today's meeting.

15724.0 Declarations of Interest

Purpose - For Information

REPORTED

This item has been redacted in accordance with the Senate publication framework as it relates to confidential matters concerning identifiable individuals.

No further conflicts of interest had been declared.

15725.0 Minutes of the Previous Meeting - S25/26 - 68

Purpose - For Approval

DECISION

Senate approved the minutes of the previous meeting of Senate held on 28 January 2026.

15726.0 Actions and Matters Arising - S25/26 - 69

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

Senate **noted** the Senate action log since its last meeting on 28 January 2026.

Senate noted that Action 15676.0 (Rules of Procedure for Congregations S25/26 - 32) had been closed and that no changes would be made to the presentation of Postgraduate Research or PhD graduates at ceremonies.

Senate noted that Action 15638.0 (Deadline for Feedback on Summative Assessment) was a substantive agenda item and would close after the current meeting.

Senate noted that Action 15695.0 (Institutional Update publication - S25/26 - 45) had been closed and that discussion would take place ahead of the new academic year between Governance and the Vice-Chancellor's Office.

Senate noted that all remaining actions would be taken forward to the next meeting.

DISCUSSED

Senate considered, under matters arising, a comment that an explicit action had not been recorded following Item 15697.0 (Academic Assembly resolution) at the previous meeting.

The University Secretary clarified that the matter had been considered by Council and that Council's response had been communicated to members of Academic Assembly.

Senate noted that the actions sat within Council's oversight and assurance responsibilities under the University's governance framework and agreed that, as they arose from Council rather than Senate, they would not be recorded as Senate actions. Senate further noted that consideration of any additional data sharing would be taken forward through the appropriate Council committees.

15727.0 Institutional update - S25/26 - 70

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

Senate **received** an update from the Vice-Chancellor (VC) on recent developments across the institution.

Recent international engagement was highlighted, including a visit to China during which meetings had been held with a range of universities. It was noted that the University of Bath and its students were held in high regard and that the visit had identified opportunities for future collaboration. Alumni and offer-holder events had taken place, supported by media activity to raise the University's profile, and the Vice-Chancellor thanked colleagues involved in organising the visit.

The launch of Varsity earlier that day was noted, alongside confirmation that local planning permission for the R7 development had been approved by Bath and North East Somerset Council, subject to Secretary of State approval. The significant contribution of staff involved was recognised.

Reference was made to the forthcoming retirement of Professor Julian Chaudhuri, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education).

The Vice-Chancellor also referred to the University's position in the QS World Rankings and noted their relevance to international engagement.

It was reported that the University had become a full member of the Compact Muon Solenoid (CMS) experiment at CERN, including participation in internationally co-authored outputs and work relating to equality and diversity.

The commencement of the University's 60th anniversary celebrations was noted, including the first Adelard Lecture featuring Sir Chris Whitty, with further events planned in the coming months.

An overview of applications was provided. As at the time of reporting, undergraduate applications from home applicants were approximately 7% higher and international applications

approximately 12% higher than at the same point in 2025, although conversion was the next challenge and a range of activities to increase conversion remained ongoing. Postgraduate applications, particularly international, were approximately 10% lower and were being monitored by the Recruitment and Admissions Working Group and the University Executive Board.

Finally, the introduction of a two-grade contextual offer for applicants from Free School Meal and IMD backgrounds through the Access and Participation Plan was reported, with 2025 targets met and exceeded for the second time since 2018. It was noted that the University would continue its strategy to retain headroom during Clearing in order to maximise recruitment in support of the APP.

DISCUSSED

Discussion of the institutional update covered the following points:

- The changing nature of engagement with China. It was noted that economic conditions were influencing student decision-making and that collaboration models were evolving towards shorter-term activity, in-country delivery, placements and co-created partnerships rather than earlier extractive approaches. Senate noted that China remained an important but challenging market.
- Reputation and risk in relation to defence-related activity. It was noted that the University was seeing increased engagement in defence-related research, education and innovation, including externally funded projects and collaborations. It was noted that activity in this area was subject to regulatory requirements and due-diligence processes to assess reputational risk and alignment with institutional values. Academic freedom would mean that no academic would be required to engage in such activity if they did not wish to do so.

15728.0 Inclusive Education - Procedure for Reasonable Adjustments to Teaching, Learning and Assessment for Disabled Students - S25/26 - 71

Purpose - For Decision

REPORTED

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience & Sport) introduced proposals relating to inclusive education and reasonable adjustments.

Senate considered revisions to the Disabled Students Policy, a new Procedure for Reasonable Adjustments to Teaching, Learning and Assessment for Disabled Students, and revisions to the Recorded Teaching Policy, developed in alignment with the Framework for Reasonable Adjustments agreed by Senate in June 2025 (S24/25 - 88).

It was reported that the proposals reflected the University's anticipatory legal duties and had been informed by extensive consultation with staff and students. The proposals sought to address inconsistency across the institution by establishing a clear and consistent basis for practice. Resource had been secured to support implementation within faculties and schools.

It was noted that implementation would focus initially on supporting staff through communications, training and operational guidance, with implementation expected from the start of the next academic year.

It was reported that the revised Disabled Students Policy aligned with the University's governance policy framework and reflected Council's overall responsibility, with no material changes beyond those required to support the accompanying procedure.

DISCUSSED

Discussion of the proposals covered the following points:

- How reasonable adjustments would apply where peer-led student teaching was scheduled as part of timetabled teaching. It was noted that this point would be considered further.
- The anticipatory nature of the approach, including the scope and level of prescription associated with Level 1 and Level 2 adjustments, and the importance of supporting the academic community through implementation.
- Clarity of roles and responsibilities, particularly for Directors of Studies, and noted that work was underway to streamline processes and systems support, including through developments within SAMIS.
- The importance of considering intersectionality and welcomed the intention that the approach would support broader inclusive education over time.
- The relationship between recorded teaching and in-person engagement and noted the importance of clear communications on expectations.

DECISION

Senate agreed to:

1. **Recommend** revisions to the Disabled Students Policy to Council for approval;
2. **Approve** the Procedure for Reasonable Adjustments to Teaching, Learning and Assessment for Disabled Students and revisions to the Recorded Teaching Policy; and
3. **Delegate approval** and ongoing responsibility for maintaining the list of Level 1 and Level 2 reasonable adjustments and the procedure to the Education Quality & Standards Committee (EQSC).

15729.0 Research Excellence Framework (REF) Code of Practice - S25/26 - 72

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) introduced the Research Excellence Framework (REF) Code of Practice, which Senate was asked to discuss and endorse prior to consideration

by the University Executive Board.

It was reported that the Code of Practice was a mandatory requirement for REF 2029 and set out the University's approach to REF-related decision-making, including governance, transparency and fairness. The Code had been developed to reflect REF requirements and timelines, using the longest permissible assessment period, and would be submitted earlier than in previous cycles. It was noted that the Code would operate as a living document, subject to review, with assurance provided by Senate, approval by the University Executive Board, and review by Research England.

Extensive consultation had informed the Code, and routes were in place for concerns to be raised confidentially. Key elements included decoupling individual research activity from institutional submission, determination of significant responsibility for research and research independence, allocation of contracts to Units of Assessment, and output selection with quality as the primary criterion. Governance arrangements included a REF Oversight Board and a REF Submission Group.

It was reported that an Equality Impact Assessment formed part of the Code of Practice and that no systematic equality issues had been identified to date. Senate recorded its thanks to the Deputy Director for Research Performance, Information and Insight for her contribution to the development of the Code.

DISCUSSED

Discussion of the Code of Practice covered the following points:

- The implications of decoupling individual research from institutional submission, including how decisions on contract allocation and Units of Assessment would be made and communicated, noting that allocation related to volume rather than quality.
- Clarification of output eligibility, including sole-and jointly-authored outputs, particularly in relation to education-focused staff, noting that further clarification would be required.
- Student engagement and representation within REF-related governance structures.
- The expectation that the Code of Practice would continue to evolve in response to guidance and experience.

DECISION

Senate **endorsed** the Research Excellence Framework Code of Practice for submission to the University Executive Board for approval.

15730.0 Revised Deadline for Feedback on Summative Assessment - S25/26 - 73

Purpose - For Approval

REPORTED

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) introduced a revised proposal on deadlines for feedback on summative coursework to come into effect from the 2026/27 academic year, following

Senate's earlier decision to refer the matter back to the Education, Quality and Standards Committee (EQSC) for further consideration. Senate retained oversight of the matter and considered the revised proposal accordingly.

It was reported that the proposal clarified the wording of QA16 Assessment, Marking and Feedback to make a 15 working day period for feedback on summative coursework a firm requirement rather than guidance, with working days defined in line with the Academic Year Chart. The proposal sought to improve clarity, consistency and communication with students, while recognising the need to consider staff workload and wellbeing.

It was further reported that, where the 15 working day deadline could not be met, the revised wording required full and frank communication with students to manage expectations, alongside annual reporting to EQSC on reasons for delays and actions taken. The proposal reflected extensive consideration by EQSC and responded to feedback received from Senate at its previous consideration of the matter.

DISCUSSED

Discussion of the revised proposal covered the following points:

- The importance of timely and transparent communication with students where deadlines could not be met, particularly in cases of unforeseen circumstances or large cohorts.
- The need for clarity and consistency in the definition of working days, noting that previous inconsistency had contributed to confusion for both staff and students.
- The balance between improving the student experience and supporting staff wellbeing, including the implications of different calendar exclusions from the 15 working day requirement.
- The rationale for the revised options presented, including EQSC's recommendation of Option 3 as an appropriate balance between clarity for students and staff workload considerations.
- The expectation that implementation would be reviewed in due course to assess effectiveness and identify any unintended consequences.

DECISION

Senate agreed to:

1. **Approve** clarifications to the wording of QA16 Assessment, Marking and Feedback to confirm that a 15 working day period for feedback on summative coursework was a firm requirement;
2. **Approve** Option 3, under which the 15 working day requirement for feedback on summative coursework excluded assessment and marking periods, as the agreed approach to calendar exclusions;
3. **Approve** wording to require full and frank communication with students where the deadline was not met, alongside annual reporting to EQSC on reasons for delay and actions taken.

Senate further agreed that the revised arrangements would be subject to review and that a timeline for bringing this back to Senate would be confirmed.

ACTION

Assigned to – Julian Chaudhuri | Due by – 3 Jun 2026

Agree timeline for review of revised deadline for feedback on summative assessment and confirm with Senate.

15731.0 Proposed Amendment to Admissions Regulations for 3+1 Masters Articulation Pathway - S25/26 - 74

Purpose - For Approval

REPORTED

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement) introduced a proposal to amend the Admissions Regulations to support the development of a 3+1 Masters articulation pathway with approved international partner institutions.

It was noted that Senate had previously discussed the proposal in November, at which time it had provided an initial steer and agreed the direction of travel. The current paper represented a further iteration, taking account of feedback received at that meeting. Consultation had been undertaken, and the proposal included strong safeguards to ensure the pathway operated to the University's advantage. It was reported that such pathways were well-established within the sector, although new to the University of Bath.

The proposed amendment involved an addition to Regulation 13.5(b), as detailed in Appendix 1 to the paper. It was reported that the pathway would be selective and partnership-based, with students completing their final year of undergraduate study at the University while progressing to Masters-level study.

It was further reported that an update report would be submitted to Senate within six months of approval, outlining progress on regulatory changes, partner agreements and operational readiness.

DISCUSSED

Discussion of the proposal covered the following points:

- Senate noted that the revised paper addressed concerns raised at the previous meeting and welcomed the increased clarity and assurance provided.
- The importance of selectivity and quality assurance was emphasised, with discussion of the types of international partners expressing interest in the pathway.
- Clarification was sought on EQSC's involvement. It was noted that while EQSC had not considered the paper formally as a committee, members consulted had been supportive of the proposal.
- Senate discussed student preparedness, including the ability of high-calibre students to complete final-year undergraduate assessments while progressing to Masters-level study. It was reported that evidence from other institutions showed strong completion rates and that academic synergy between final-year and Masters-level study would be required.

- It was agreed that further information on completion rates from comparator institutions would be shared by correspondence.

DECISION

Senate **approved** the amendment to Admissions Regulation 13.5(b), to support the development of a 3+1 Masters articulation pathway with approved international partner institutions.

ACTION

Assigned to – Manuel Barcia | **Due by** – 7 Oct 2026

Update report within 6 months

An update report would be submitted to Senate within six months of approval, outlining progress on regulatory changes, partner agreements and operational readiness.

15732.0 Institutional Response to the Office for Students (OfS): Bachelor Degree Classification - S25/26 - 75

Purpose - For Decision

REPORTED

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) introduced the University's proposed response to the Office for Students (OfS) report on bachelor's degree classification.

It was reported that the OfS had introduced tighter regulatory expectations relating to the use of multiple degree classification algorithms and discounting practices, and had required providers to confirm compliance by July 2026. Due diligence had been undertaken to assess the University's current practices against these expectations, including consideration by an extraordinary meeting of the Education, Quality and Standards Committee (EQSC).

It was reported that the University's response concluded that the University did not use multiple algorithms to classify degrees and did not apply discounting as defined by the OfS. The response set out the University's use of a single degree classification algorithm based on Overall Course Average, with defined borderline provisions and academic judgement, including consideration of extenuating circumstances, consistent with regulatory expectations.

The proposed response comprised two recommendations to be submitted to the OfS by the Vice-Chancellor, as Accountable Officer. Relevant matters would be reported to the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee and Council as part of the University's regulatory assurance arrangements.

DISCUSSED

Discussion of the proposed response covered the following points:

- Clarity of language in describing the University's approach to degree classification, including the use of borderline provisions, and the importance of ensuring alignment with the OfS definition of a single algorithm.

- Confirmation that the University's approach differed materially from practices of concern to the OfS, particularly those introduced temporarily by other providers during the Covid-19 pandemic or marking boycotts.
- The distinction between degree classification and eligibility for award, and confirmation that the OfS report related specifically to classification rather than award rules.
- The need to ensure that references in the response accurately reflected the University's regulations, including appropriate links to policies governing extenuating circumstances.

It was agreed that minor drafting amendments would be made to tighten language where necessary, without altering the substantive position of the response.

DECISION

Senate **endorsed** the University's response to the Office for Students, including Recommendations 1 and 2, for submission by the Vice-Chancellor.

15733.0 Education Portfolio Strategic Course Decision Making - S25/26 - 76

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) introduced proposals relating to strategic course decision-making within the education portfolio.

It was noted that the operation of Academic Programmes Committee (APC), acting as a delegation of Senate, had been reviewed previously, including through a Senate-supported working group. The current proposals brought together earlier review activity and sought to address concerns about complexity, duplication and timeliness in strategic course approvals.

It was reported that the proposals reclarified the purpose of strategic course decision-making as business decision-making, informed by market opportunity, financial sustainability and strategic fit, distinct from academic decision-making. Under the proposals, responsibility for strategic course decision-making (including new courses, substantive changes and withdrawals) would move from APC to a sub-group of the Planning Board, as a delegation of the University Executive Board, with regular reporting to Senate.

It was further reported that Senate would retain responsibility for all academic decision-making, including academic quality, standards and approval, with appropriate delegation to the Courses and Partnerships Approval Committee where relevant. The revised approach was intended to improve agility, reduce approval times and align decision-making with sector conditions and institutional priorities.

DISCUSSED

Discussion of the proposals covered the following points:

- Strong support for a clearer separation between strategic (business) decision-making and academic decision-making, and for the need to improve speed and effectiveness of course

approvals.

- Recognition that data-informed triage and portfolio review, informed by metrics, would help identify opportunities for growth, deeper review or withdrawal, while retaining academic judgement and executive oversight.
- Clarification that the proposals were principle-based rather than prescriptive and did not constitute a blanket approach; decisions would remain selective and contextual.
- The importance of considering both course-level and portfolio-level impact, including departmental presence and longer-term strategic coherence.
- Acknowledgement that EQSC members consulted had been supportive, and that further work would be required to implement revised processes and clarify treatment of major versus minor course changes.

DECISION

Senate agreed to:

1. Reclarify the purpose of strategic course decision-making as proposed; and
2. Align roles and responsibilities accordingly, moving responsibility for strategic course decision-making from Academic Programmes Committee to a sub-group of the Planning Board, as a delegation of the University Executive Board, while retaining Senate's responsibility for academic decision-making.

ACTION

Assigned to – Julian Chaudhuri | **Due by** – TBC

Implementation plan to be agreed and brought back to Senate

Action Description - The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) would agree an implementation plan and bring this back to Senate for consideration.

15734.0 Joint Institute - Verbal Update

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement) provided a short verbal update on the proposed Joint Institute between the University of Bath and an overseas partner institution in China.

It was reported that discussions were progressing with Xi'an Jiaotong University, a highly ranked institution both internationally and within China. Reference was made to recent senior-level engagement, including visits undertaken in support of the proposal.

It was noted that, subject to further development and approvals, the proposed Joint Institute was being explored with a potential start date of September 2027. A full paper would be brought to a future meeting of Senate for consideration.

No questions were raised.

15735.0 Discussion Item: Governance Sprint

Purpose - For Discussion

REPORTED

The University Secretary and Registrar introduced a discussion on the governance sprint, intended to raise awareness of the direction of travel ahead of more detailed proposals to be brought to a future meeting of Senate.

The governance sprint had begun within the executive arm of the University and subsequently expanded to include some aspects of Senate and Council, while maintaining clear objectives.

The work focused on improving the effectiveness, clarity and agility of decision-making, reducing unnecessary layers of governance, and strengthening accountability and assurance. Current arrangements were described as complex, with decisions often passing repeatedly through the same groups and scrutiny diminishing at higher levels of escalation.

The work sought to clarify where decisions should properly be taken, separate decision-making from engagement and consultation, and create conditions in which further delegation could be exercised appropriately, without altering Senate's statutory responsibilities. Early thinking included rationalising the executive layer around a smaller number of core functions and clearer academic coordination arrangements, combining executive authority with assurance and oversight. Council's role would remain unchanged, although opportunities to improve ways of working would continue to be considered.

Illustrative slides would be circulated, and more detailed proposals, including draft terms of reference and ways of working, would be brought back to Senate.

DISCUSSED

Discussion of the governance sprint covered the following points:

- Senate's role as an assurance mechanism and safeguard, particularly in the context of any future delegation.
- The need to support timely and effective decision-making while avoiding concentration of authority and unnecessary duplication of scrutiny.
- The relationship between decision-making and implementation, including alignment between executive accountability, authority and access to resources.
- The importance of proportionate and meaningful consultation, alongside a shared culture of responsibility, trust and accountability.
- Recognition that the proposals were at an early stage and would require iteration and review to identify gaps or unintended consequences.

No decisions were taken.

15736.0 PGR Independent Advisor Report & UDSC Response - S25/26 - 77

Purpose - For Decision

REPORTED

The Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Doctoral) and the Independent Advisor Lead introduced the Annual Report (2024/25) from the Independent Advisors (IAs) for Postgraduate Research Students and the accompanying response from the University Doctoral Studies Committee (UDSC).

It was reported that the report highlighted areas where the University needed to strengthen its approach to addressing poor doctoral supervision, particularly through more coordinated and supportive mechanisms for intervention. The response from UDSC recognised the findings of the report and set out actions underway or planned to support supervisors, improve consistency, and strengthen oversight.

Senate noted that the University Executive Board, at its meeting on 24 March 2026, had agreed to support the recommendations contained in the IA Annual Report and the UDSC response. UEB had further agreed that the Pro-Vice-Chancellors for Research and Student Experience would lead a group, including the Director of Human Resources, to clarify and strengthen the processes for addressing poor doctoral supervision. It was noted that the matter would also be reported onwards to Council as part of the University's assurance arrangements.

DISCUSSED

Discussion of the report and response covered the following points:

- Recognition of the valuable role of the Independent Advisors and concern that instances of poor supervision continued to arise, despite strong overall performance in doctoral education.
- The importance of earlier and more confident intervention, including both developmental support for supervisors and, where necessary, decisive action to prevent further supervision.
- The need for clearer accountability and better coordination across roles, including Heads of Department and Directors of Studies, so that concerns were not reliant on students raising issues themselves.
- The importance of "closing the loop" on recommendations from previous IA reports, including providing assurance on progress made since the prior year.
- The need for improved communication so that postgraduate research students were aware of the Independent Advisor role and felt supported in raising concerns.

ACTION

Assigned to – Joe Devine | Due by – 30 Apr 2026

Update for 2023/24 report actions to be provided

A short update would be provided to Senate on actions taken in response to the previous year's Independent Advisor recommendations, setting out progress made and remaining areas requiring attention.

15737.0 Export Control Policy Update - S25/26 - 78

Purpose - For Decision

REPORTED

Senate considered proposed amendments to the University's Export Control Policy.

It was reported that the amendments sought to address a gap in the current policy by extending its scope to include education activities, alongside research, and to strengthen oversight and clarity in response to regulatory requirements. The revised policy updated roles and responsibilities and introduced additional governance arrangements to ensure compliance across the full range of the University's international activities.

DECISION

Senate **agreed to recommend** the amended Export Control Policy to Council for approval.

15738.0 Honorary Degrees Committee - S25/26 - 79

Purpose - For Approval

REPORTED

Senate considered matters relating to the Honorary Degrees Committee.

A summary report was received, including that four preliminary nominations for National Honour awards had been considered, of which two nominees had been approved to be developed as full nominations for submission to the Cabinet Office, with one nomination deferred for further information.

Senate **noted** the summary report.

DECISION

Senate agreed to approve a change in the name of the Committee from Honorary Degrees Committee to Honorary Awards Committee, subject to joint approval with Council.

15739.0 University Secretary's Report to Senate - S25/26 - 80

Purpose - For Noting

REPORTED

The University Secretary and Registrar introduced his first report to Senate, providing a summary of governance, assurance and regulatory matters.

It was reported that the paper introduced a more streamlined, assurance-led approach, bringing together items previously presented separately for noting, with the aim of improving clarity, reducing repetition on the agenda, and supporting Senate's oversight role. Feedback on the impact of this approach on the information received by Senate was invited.

Senate welcomed the revised approach to reporting and provided positive feedback on its clarity and usefulness.

Senate also congratulated Helen Slater on her reappointment as Education Officer.

Senate **noted** the University Secretary's Report.

15741.0 Any Other Business

Purpose - For Noting

There was no other business.

Publication note: *Senate also considered a reserved item which have not been published in accordance with the Senate publication framework because they contained information relating to identifiable individuals and individual student matters.*