



MEETING OF SENATE MINUTES

Monday 03 February 2025

14.00, Room 4.10, School of Education, 35 Berkeley Square
(with some members attending via Microsoft Teams)

Present:

Professors: Michele Acuto, Barry Main, Michael Banissy, Michele Barbour, Ian Bond, Matthew Brown, William Browne, Craig Butts, Edmund Cannon, Emma Clark, Tristan Cogan, Ryerson Christie, Ian Craddock, Esther Dermott, Mark Dillingham, Alison Donnell, Natalie Edwards, Charl Faul, Mike Fraser, Sarah George, Ruth Glynn, Darryl Hill, Tansy Jessop, Oliver Johnson, Catherine Kelly, Astrid Linthorst, David Manley, Paola Manzini, Richard Martin, Jennifer McManus, Harry Mellor, Anthony Mulholland, Stuart Mundell, Ian Nabney, Aydin Nassehi, Leah Tether, Therese O'Toole, Tim Parkin, Hugh Piggins, Guy Poppy, Martyn Powell, Brian Squire, Tuomas Tahko, Jeremy Tavare, Nicholas Roberts, Alison Rust, Nigel Savery, Annela Seddon, Helen Simpson, Palie Smart, Michelle Spear, Judith Squires, Chrissie Thirlwell, Evelyn Welch (**Chair**), Karen West, Kate Whittington, Chris Willis, Liang-Fong Wong, John Wylie.

Dr Peter Allen, Mr Yogadhveep Arora, Miss Sarah Bain, Professor Alvin Birdi, Dr Ruzanna Chitchyan, Miss Gurvin Chopra, Dr Jennifer Collins, Dr Suchandrima Das, Dr Amy Edwards, Mr Ed Fay, Dr Jonathan Fellows, Mr Jordan Fung, Dr Hermes Gadelha, Dr Lauran Goodhead, Dr Maxine Gillway, Dr Gibran Hemani, Dr Joanna Howarth, Dr Chris Kent, Dr Zoe Leinhardt, Mrs Antonia Lythgoe, Dr Alison McClean, Mrs Mary Millard, Dr Stephen Montgomery, Dr James Palmer, Dr Dinesh Pamunuwa, Dr Angeliki Papadaki, Ms Lucinda Parr, Miss Lucy Pears, Professor Benjamin Pohl, Dr Matthew Tointon, Jo-Jo Vyvyan-Jones, Dr Meng Wang.

Apologies: Professor Mellisa Allen, Dr Mark Allinson, Professor Jonathan Beaverstock, Dr Manjola Caro, Ms Paula Coonerty, Dr Alex Clayton, Professor Tom Ellson, Dr Michael Henehan, Miss Bhavni Joshi, Professor Catherine Kelly, Professor Marcus Munafò, Professor Karim Malik, Mr Dan Smith, Professor Nicholas Timpson.

In attendance: James Bigwood (Chief People Officer), Helen Cole (Senior Governance Officer, Clerk to Senate and **minutes**), Leonardo Coppi (Student Trustee on the Board of Trustees), Elinor Davies (Academic Registrar) for item 8, Sarah Davies (Director of Education Innovation and BILT) for item 4, Steve Hall (Executive Director for Education & Students) for item 5 and item 9, Dan Hancock (Director of Research Finance) for item 6, Alicia Jago (Deputy Director, Fundraising and Stewardship) for item 10, Andrew Monk (Executive Director of Global Engagement) for item 10, Peter Vermeulen (Chief Financial Officer) and Keith Woolley (Chief Digital Information Officer).

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING ON 9 December 2024 (on file)

1.1 APPROVED the minutes of the meeting on 9 December 2024.

2. CHAIR'S REPORT

2.1 RECEIVED and CONSIDERED: paper ref: **(SN/24-25/019)** (on file).

2.2 NOTED the report of the Vice-Chancellor and the opportunity to ask any follow up questions in the meeting.

- 2.3 NOTED the use of Chair's Powers to take decisions between meetings (section 3 of the paper) to approve the retention of the proposed latest arrival dates for taught students for the 2025/26 recruitment cycle.
- 2.4 A verbal update was provided on the financial challenges faced by the UK HE sector and the activities being undertaken by the University to mitigate and manage both in the medium and long term. It was noted that at present the University was in a strong position when compared to its UK based collaborators and competitors but was not complacent. Senate would be aware of other institutions announcing cost saving measures both in the last few weeks but also over the last two to three years. In terms of messaging over the last year and into the foreseeable future, communications to staff would articulate that a shift was now required from *stable and confident* to an increased emphasis on the *act now* element. A range of areas had been reviewed since the start of the year to identify where efficiencies and savings could be made, these had included: space utilisation, estate and asset management and potential disposal, analysis of the academic contribution of individual Schools and Faculties, work to streamline and reduce the level of complexity of academic programmes, bringing forward of elements of the Professional Services Transformation Programme. It was noted that the University needed to present the right offer to potential students with the right staff base in situ for sustained delivery into the future, and would have to make changes where this was not the case. An all staff briefing would take place on 11 February, this would be followed by a range of activities.
- 2.5 Senate sought clarification as to whether reductions in staffing numbers would be required noting that in previous communications this had not been specifically referred to. The Executive advised that there was now a need to reduce the salary budget across all areas.
- 3. REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC TRUSTEES ON BOARD-RELATED BUSINESS**
- 3.1 Professor Ian Craddock and Professor Natalie Edwards provided a verbal update on the business undertaken by the Board of Trustees at its meeting on 31 January 2025.
- 3.2 At this meeting the Board considered the following:
- University Finances comprising Chief Financial Officer Report and Long term financial planning framework.
 - Global Education Plans
 - Research sensitisation: Health and Life Sciences Faculty including Faculty restructure proposal
 - Statutory Annual Report on Gender & Ethnicity Pay Gap
 - Annual Report on Philanthropic Income 2023/24
 - Report from Finance & Investment Committee
 - Report from Nominations Committee
 - SU Sabbatical Officers progress update
- 4. GENERATIVE AI AND EDUCATION - STRATEGY AND PRACTICE**
- 4.1 RECEIVED and CONSIDERED: paper ref: (SN/24-25/19) (on file).
- 4.2 NOTED that the paper circulated in advance was to provide Senate with background on the strategic direction for using generative AI in research, teaching, and PS processes and provide the wider institutional context for a discussion at the meeting on Gen AI in Education led by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) and Director of Education Innovation and BILT (Bristol Institute of Learning and Teaching).

- 4.3 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) and the Director of Education Innovation and BILT (Bristol Institute of Learning and Teaching) presented to Senate (*on file*).
- 4.4 In discussion Senate noted that:
- BILT did cover use of Generative AI in some of its training modules that were already available to staff,
 - the potential benefits of using Generative AI to improve student's experience of assessment feedback thereby impacting positively on NSS scoring.
- 4.5 In terms of collaboration and engagement across the University, the Chief Digital Information Officer noted that his team were now seeking to build connections and relationships with those academic staff who had specialist interests and expertise in this subject via the formation of a focus group.
- 5. INCLUSIVE ASSESSMENT: COMPETENCE STANDARDS, REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS, AND IMPLEMENTING OUR ASSESSMENT STRATEGY.**
- 5.1 RECEIVED and CONSIDERED: paper ref: (SN/24-25/20) (*on file*).
- 5.2 NOTED and DISCUSSED the work to date to support inclusive learning, teaching and assessment and comply with the (Equality & Human Rights Commission) EHRC advice note following the outcome of the Abrahart case and the planned next steps.
- 5.3 Senate queried to what extent non compulsory assessment elements would be covered by the strategy. In response it was noted that any formative work that was informing the pedagogical aspect of a course would need to be compliant.
- 5.4 Senate noted the reference to *medical evidence not always being a requirement* and queried what other types of evidence were valid. In response, it was noted that other methods could include self assessment and interviews but that essentially engagement with students would start from a position of trust. It was noted that data would be collected to monitor numbers over time and across disciplines with further analysis or investigation undertaken if required. It was noted that it was reasonable to expect some up-tick in numbers of referrals initially.
- 5.5 In discussion, Senate members posed questions on the finer details of the approach in particular management of processes and wider work load requirements at the School and individual programme level. In response, it was noted that more guidance would be provided via multiple avenues but that fundamentally a clear pathway would be defined for Schools to follow.
- 5.6 In terms of accredited degrees with specific requirements of methods of assessments, it was noted that stipulations from Professional and Statutory Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) were often less specific than initially appeared to be the case and that a similar approach to these courses would be required to comply with the guidance.
- 6. RESEARCH INCOME AND COST RECOVERY**
- 6.1 RECEIVED and CONSIDERED: paper ref: (SN/24-25/21) (*on file*).
- 6.2 The Chief Financial Officer and the Director of Research Finance presented to Senate (*on file*).
- 6.3 In discussion Senate noted that research cost recovery referred to the comparison of income generated from research activities against the associated costs, but that the percentage recovery from different types of funding body varied. Centrally, the

University was not setting targets in terms of the proportion of different sources of funding within an individual discipline or School. At the macro level, to switching from charity funding to UKRI or industry funding could improve the University's financial position but the aim was instead to optimise funding sources to develop a portfolio approach within individual research areas.

7. US20230 UPDATE TO INCLUDE SAY AND ACADEMIC STRUCTURES

7.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: paper ref (**SN/24-25/22**) (*on file*).

7.2 NOTED that Recommendation HoS6 in the paper referred to the role of Heads of School in terms of the recruitment of staff and students. Senate queried whether the role of Heads of School in determining the types and mix of research funding should also be included (this was also pertinent to agenda item 6 above). In response, it was agreed that this suggestion would be explored by the paper author and paper sponsor over the next two months.

8. UPDATE ON TEACHING TIMETABLING APPROACH, SUMS REVIEW AND TEMPLE QUARTER

8.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: paper ref (**SN/24-25/23**) (*on file*).

8.2 NOTED the work to date on teaching timetabling and planned next steps.

8.3 In discussion Senate queried the following: the extent to which joint honours programmes would be affected, and extent to which professional programmes required greater flexibility. In response, it was noted that further engagement with the academic community on these topics was being planned.

9. ANNUAL STUDENT MH&WB REPORT

9.1 RECEIVED and CONSIDERED: paper ref: (**SN/24-25/24**) (*on file*).

9.2 NOTED the Annual Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Report, which detailed the achievements and challenges during 2023/24 and priorities for 2024/25, ahead of its presentation to the Board of Trustees on 28 March 2025.

9.3 NOTED Report had been received by the following: Student Wellbeing Committee (26 September 2024), Student Experience Committee (12 November), University Education Committee (27 November) and University Executive Board (UEB) (20 January 2025).

10. ANNUAL REPORT PHILANTHROPIC SCHOLARSHIPS

10.1 RECEIVED and CONSIDERED: paper ref: (**SN/24-25/25**) (*on file*).

10.2 NOTED the detail of philanthropic scholarships and how these contribute to the University's Strategy 2030. NOTED this Report was presented to UEB on 20 January 2025.

10.3 NOTED that the paper referred to PG taught (PGT) scholarships only and queried whether PG research (PGR) should be included. Additionally, the potential link between philanthropy and the University's scholarship programme was noted as an area that could be expanded further.

11. EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

11.1 RECEIVED and CONSIDERED: paper ref: (**SN/24-25/26**) (*on file*).

11.2 NOTED the Annual Report of Student Disciplinary Matters for 2023/24 (annex A) and the Annual Students Complaints Report for 2023/24 (annex B).

- 11.3 NOTED the items for report from the 4 December and 22 January meetings of University Education Committee.
- 11.4 Senate members queried references in the paper to commitments on returning feedback to students and definitions including moderated versus provisional. Additionally, questions and comments were raised as to the extent to which the *Framework for the return of feedback to students on their work* was being applied in individual schools both within the current year and its feasibility for the forthcoming year. In response it was noted that although nuance had been added for the year 2025/26, it was important to highlight that this was not a new policy. Standardisation of approach in this area was essential to ensure consistency of experience for students. Faculty Education Directors had been engaged on the topic by the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education Quality and Standards so the adoption of the framework policy should be occurring.
- 12. ETHICS ITEMS:**
- A. ETHICS OF RESEARCH ANNUAL REPORT**
- B. ANNUAL STATEMENT ON RESEARCH INTEGRITY**
- C. RESEARCH MISCONDUCT PROCESSES**
- 12.1 RECEIVED and CONSIDERED: paper ref: (SN/24-25/27) (on file).
- 12.2 NOTED that activity in this area was ongoing with several projects and initiatives under way. NOTED that Senate had received a paper on 9 December 2024 entitled Strengthening Research Ethics that built on two papers from earlier in 2024.
1. Restructuring Research Ethics (SN/23-24/034) (noted by Senate in June 2024, and now being implemented.),
 2. Assessment of Third-Party Suitability (SN/23-24/033), produced at the request of Academic Leadership Board, after discussion at Senate in June 2024 about the University's external partnerships, particularly with the defence sector. Afterwards, a statement was published on the University's website [Relationships with defence](#). An options paper was subsequently taken to Academic Leadership Board, then Research Committee (November 2024) with recommendations endorsed and approved respectively.
- 12.3 NOTED that on 30 January, the University had communicated the following:
[Update on the forced swim test.](#)
You may be aware that the use of an experimental procedure called the forced swim test has prompted discussions around the ethics of using animals in research. We're announcing today that we've now stopped using the forced swim test because the research project which used it is due to conclude shortly. [Read our full statement online.](#)
- ETHICS OF RESEARCH ANNUAL REPORT**
- 12.4 NOTED the Ethics of Research Committee Annual Report 2023/24. NOTED this Report had been considered by Ethics of Research Committee (ERC) on 23 October 2024 and by Research Committee on 17 December 2024.
- 12.5 Subsequent to the meeting, the Governance Team advised that as per the Senate Delegation Schedule, the Ethics of Research Committee Annual Report should have been presented Senate for approval, not just to note. (Research Committee does not have delegated authority to approve the report.) On this occasion, as there were no questions/ comment at the meeting on 3 February 2024, the Report would not be presented to Senate again for formal approval. Going forward Research Committee

would recommend this Report to Senate for approval, this information had been shared with relevant staff.

ANNUAL STATEMENT ON RESEARCH INTEGRITY

- 12.6 NOTED the Annual Statement on Research Integrity. NOTED this paper was endorsed by Research Committee on 17 December 2024 and would be presented to Board of Trustees for final approval in due course.
- 12.7 NOTED that the Statement was developed by the Research Governance team, with review and input by the Ethics of Research Committee, the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research Culture) and the University's legal team.

RESEARCH MISCONDUCT PROCESSES

- 12.8 NOTED the proposed revised process for managing reports of Research Misconduct. NOTED that Research Committee has discussed this topic in June 2024 and approved the proposed revised processes on 17 December 2024.
- 12.9 AGREED that the University's processes for reporting and dealing with suspected cases of Research Misconduct require updating and streamlining. The recent Annual Research Integrity Report, only noted one case of suspected Research Misconduct which had been dealt with through existing processes. NOTED that the paper detailed proposals including introducing standardised requirements for the reporting of Research Misconduct allegations and a transparent initial review process, to facilitate consistency, record-keeping and equity of treatment.

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 13.1 There was none.

MEETING CLOSED. Next meeting 7 April 2025, 2pm.