



MEETING OF SENATE MINUTES

Monday 7 April 2025

14.00, virtual Microsoft Teams meeting

Present:

Professors: Michele Acuto, Barry Main, Michael Banissy, Michele Barbour, Ian Bond, Craig Butts, Emma Clark, Tristan Cogan, Ryerson Christie, Ian Craddock, Esther Dermott, Alison Donnell, Natalie Edwards, Charl Faul, Mike Fraser, Sarah George, Darryl Hill, Tansy Jessop, Oliver Johnson, Catherine Kelly, Astrid Linthorst, 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 Chris Kent, Dr Zoe Leinhardt, Dr Alison McClean, Mrs Mary Millard, Dr James Palmer, Dr Dinesh Pamunuwa, Ms Lucinda Parr, Miss Lucy Pears, Professor Benjamin Pohl, Dr Matthew Tointon, Jo-Jo Vyvyan-Jones, Dr Meng Wang.

Apologies: Professor Melissa Allen, Professor Matthew Brown, Professor William J Browne, Professor Edmund Cannon, Dr Alex Clayton, Professor Mark Dillingham, Professor Tom Ellson, Professor Ruth Glynn, Mr Steve Hall, Dr Joanna Howarth, Miss Bhavni Joshi, Antonia Lythgoe, Professor David Manley, Dr Stephen Montgomery, Professor Marcus Munafo, Dr Angeliki Papadaki, Professor Nigel Savery, Dr Nicholas Simpson, Dr Dan Smith, Professor Nicholas Timpson

In attendance: James Bigwood (Chief People Officer), Tracy Brunnock, (Head of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion) for item 8, Helen Cole (Senior Governance Officer, Clerk to Senate and **minutes**), Michael Flay (Head of Governance and Interim Deputy Secretary) for item 5, Jason Parr (Director of Health & Safety) for item 7, Hannah Quinn (Chief of Staff).

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING ON 3 February 2025 (*on file*)

1.1 APPROVED the minutes of the meeting on 3 February 2025.

2. CHAIR'S REPORT

2.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: paper ref: (**SN/24-25/028**) (*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 APPROVED on the recommendation of the Chair of Senate, the changes to the Senate Delegation Schedule see section 4 and Annex A, subject to the following correction, that the two mentions of "Research Ethics Committee" should both read "Ethics of Research Committee".

- 2.4 NOTED the response to a question raised by a Senate member regarding Social Media, section 3, there were no follow up questions.
- 2.5 NOTED that the next meeting on 2 June would be a hybrid meeting with Teams and in person attendance possible. The in person element would be held at Lady Hale Moot Court, 8-10 Berkely Square.
- 2.6 A verbal update was provided by the Chair on activity relating to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement)'s brief. NOTED that members were invited to contact the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement) with any follow up queries.
- NOTED that University Executive Board had approved the new International Education Plan which would set the University's strategic approach to global education focussed engagements for 2025-2030. The Plan was the result of extensive consultations and analysis and would be circulated and discussed with Schools from June 2025. It provided sharper and focussed detail on how the University will sustain its goals of growing and diversifying student community on campus, as well as setting the tone for transnational education (TNE). The Plan identified key priority countries, and was already actively engaging in scoping exciting TNE opportunities in some of these including in India and Malaysia.
 - NOTED that APVCs (Associate Pro Vice-Chancellors) for Global Engagement had now been appointed in each of the three faculties, and APVC (International Education) Liang Wong had been renewed for another 3-year term. NOTED that the appointment an additional APVC for International Partnerships and Reputation was ongoing (application deadline 22 April).
- 2.7 The Chair reflected on recent geopolitical events and the potential impact on the UK HE Sector. NOTED that via its membership of sector bodies including University UK (UUK) the University was engaged in demonstrating how the sector could support the "Milestones for Mission-Led Government" as defined by the UK Government in particular the Kickstarting Economic Growth mission.
- 2.8 The Chair reflected on the University of Sussex's fine of £585,000 by the higher education regulator, the Office for Students (OfS), for failing to uphold freedom of speech. NOTED that activity was being undertaken across and between several Professional Service functions to ensure that the University responded proactively and pre-emptively and where possible learnt lessons from this case. NOTED that the Freedom of Speech Annual Report would be discussed under agenda item 8.
- 3. REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC TRUSTEES ON BOARD-RELATED BUSINESS**
- 3.1 Professor Ian Craddock provided a verbal update on the business undertaken by the Board of Trustees at its Development Day on 27 March and its meeting on 28 March 2025.
- 3.2 At its Development Day the Board considered the following:
- Session entitled: Sustaining excellence for REF 2029 and beyond
 - Session entitled: Progress and Actions towards TEF Gold
 - Session entitled: Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy Development
- 3.3 At its Board meeting the Board considered the following:
- Modern Network Update
 - Executive Report
 - Finance Report
 - Presentation on Bristol Skills Profile and Employability Work

- Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Spotlight Presentation
- Annual Report on Student Mental Health & Wellbeing
- Annual Report: Student Complaints
- Revisions to the Freedom of Speech Complaints Procedure
- Report of the Finance & Investment Committee
- Annual Statement on Research Integrity
- Report of the Audit & Risk Committee
- Report of the Nominations Committee

4. ADMISSIONS AND PORTFOLIO PLANNING

- 4.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement) presented to Senate.
- 4.2 NOTED that at present the University was running a significant proportion of its postgraduate programmes with low numbers per programme, where low was defined as 15 or fewer and that delivery of small-scale individual programmes was in relative terms both resource intensive, inefficient and did not always offer the optimum student experience. Both postgraduate taught and postgraduate research were affected in terms of both overseas and home markets, additionally certain undergraduate programmes were also impacted in the same way although to a lesser extent. The University of Bristol's strategy to 2030 was clear that rigorous assessment of size and shape was needed; work to simplify the curriculum had been identified as a requirement for a considerable period of time and needed to start now.
- 4.3 NOTED that activity was ongoing whereby professional service teams would provide advice on data and marketing strategies to Schools and Faculties to enable informed, evidence based, agile decision making on ways to close or combine/ re bundle programmes with low numbers. NOTED that although programmes with 15 students or fewer would prompt review, programmes with 20 or fewer students would also be considered as in scope. The PVC Education and Students and the PVC Global Engagement would lead on monitoring this work.
- 4.4 NOTED that 23% of postgraduate taught programmes had five students or fewer enrolled and that arguably these cases represented the most significant opportunity to make savings and improve the student experience across a variety of areas and functions. NOTED that although certain professionally accredited programmes might need to be smaller, these were a minority, the vast majority of programmes didn't have this stipulation.
- 4.5 NOTED that the work to date recognised that analysis and activity in this area needed to look beyond single measurement i.e. the number of students per programme. For example, in each subject area consideration always needed to be given over time to the balance between ease of recruitment and student satisfaction outcomes, programmes that were easier to recruit to typically had higher student satisfaction leading to a positive feedback loop.
- 4.6 NOTED that work to simplify the programme portfolio was aligned with workstreams on space optimisation and timetabling, and was focused on four areas in particular: 1. Review of programmes with low numbers (as referred to above), 2. Removal of cross year units, 3. Enhanced structured optionality to reconfigure and limit the total number of pathways, 4. Reduction in optionality where required.
- 4.7 A question was raised as to what other sources of context and factors might be included/ considered when determining whether a programme should be continued for

example: 1. a civic duty/ responsibility to make provision in at a national or regional level especially if others institutions were ceasing to deliver in a particular field, 2. Relationships/ links between taught programmes and research outcomes. The Executive noted that it was expected that an emphasis on a joined up approach to higher education between institutions would expand/ evolve in line with Government thinking but that such initiatives would occur in the longer term, whereas the work referred to above was focused on the immediate term. In terms of the link between research and teaching, it was important that focus remained on the primary function of taught programmes i.e.. providing students with routes into employment.

- 4.8 In discussion a Senate member noted that risks associated with programme simplification could include the loss of visibility of research and expertise in areas which might impact negatively on the University's reputation. A Senate member noted that although post graduate provision needed to provide value for money, such provision also ensured a future for research specialisms by providing education in specific research skills.

5. CHANGES TO ORDINANCE 6 (ALIGNMENT OF SENATE MEMBERSHIP WITH NEW THREE FACULTY STRUCTURE)

- 5.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: paper ref: (SN/24-25/029) (on file).

- 5.2. AGREED to RECOMMEND to Board of Trustees, amendments to Ordinance 6 to result in alignment of Senate membership with new three Faculty structure as summarised below and via track changes in the paper. NOTED that the working membership of Senate had been aligned to the new structure since the start of the academic year.

Ordinance 6

2.2.24 – Educational Partnerships – Senate may require the ~~Chief Operating Officer~~ & Academic Registrar to publish a list of Educational Partnerships)

3.1.1 Class 1 – Ex Officio (d) the Faculty Deans.

3.1.3 Class 3 - Academic and other post-holders

(a) The Associate Pro Vice-Chancellors.

(b) ~~A representative of the Faculty Managers appointed by them.~~ The Executive Director of Faculty Operations (or their nominee)

(c) The Chair of the University Ethics of Research Committee

(d) Executive Director for Education and Students

3.1.4 Class 4 – Academic Staff

(a) There shall be a total of ~~twelve~~ twenty-four members of Staff from each Faculty serving on Senate at any one time, comprising Heads of School (or their nominees) (Class 2) and academic Staff (Class 4). In respect of each Faculty, the number of members of academic Staff serving on Senate in Class 4 shall be calculated by deducting from ~~twelve~~ twenty-four the number of members of Staff serving on Senate in Class 2.

(b) Members of academic Staff serving on Senate in Class 4 shall be appointed to serve from the beginning of the Academic Year for renewable three-year terms, up to a maximum of nine years in total, in accordance with procedures prescribed by the individual Faculties ~~Faculty Board and approved by Senate~~.

6. ANNUAL REPORT ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH

- 6.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: paper ref: (SN/24-25/030) (on file).

- 6.2. NOTED the Freedom of Speech Annual Report. NOTED that this was the first of the Reports (annually going forward). It had already been considered by Freedom of Speech Advisory Group (FSAG) and University Executive Board (UEB). It would be considered by Audit and Risk Committee on 9 June and the Board of Trustees on 18 July 2025.
- 6.3 NOTED that the essential training relating to Free Speech and Academic Freedom for academic staff and recommended for Professional Services Staff was on the University intranet via [Develop](#).
- 6.4 A question was raised on the distinction/ definition of essential versus mandatory in terms of the training referred to above. In response, the Executive advised that the term mandatory was only used for training modules that all staff had to take. The training referred to above did not fall into this category, it was recommended for Professional Services staff and essential for Academic staff. It was important that staff were only asked to complete training relevant to their individual job roles to avoid overburdening staff.
- 6.5 A question was raised on the importance of ensuring that EDI policies, guidance and practices were consistent with University's lawful obligations, a briefing on the interaction between Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act and EDI at an Office for Students seminar was referred to. Subsequent to the meeting, the following response was provided. *We are reviewing EDI governance, policy and guidance to ensure consistency with our lawful obligations drawing from a wide range of guidance from bodies such as OfS and Advance HE.*
- 6.6 A query was raised as to whether there were risks associated with University having commissioned EDI-related guidance and staff training from activist groups, and the risks associated with individual schools and faculties devising/circulating their own policies and guidance in relation to EDI matters. Subsequent to the meeting, the following response was provided. *The central EDI Team works closely with external training providers they commission to ensure that content is compatible with legal and regulatory requirements, however it is important to note that such training is optional and not mandatory. The online Essential EDI training module is currently under review and will be finalised in July 2025.*
- 6.7 NOTED that the paper had been incorrectly classified as Confidential, the correct classification was Open. Secretary to make correction.

Action: Secretary

7. HEALTH AND SAFETY ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24

- 7.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: paper ref: **(SN/24-25/031)** (on file).
- 7.2. NOTED the Health and Safety Annual Report 2023/24 ahead of approval by the Board of Trustees.
- 7.3 NOTED that at present use of the Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) was relatively low, in comparison demand for the staff counselling service was very high. This discrepancy indicated that staff were not aware of the EAP and work was now ongoing to better promote this service.
- 7.4 NOTED that a training module on the subject of work related stress assessment was being developed, any Senate members interested in contributing to this work were

invited to contact James Bigwood (Chief People Officer) and Jason Parr (Director of Health & Safety) after the meeting.

8. STATUTORY ANNUAL REPORT ON GENDER & ETHNICITY PAY GAP

8.1. RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: paper ref: **(SN/24-25/032)** (on file).

8.2. NOTED the data to be published as part of statutory GPG report.

8.2 The following question was raised: Will the University be reconsidering its definition of sex as legal sex in light of the recommendations of the Sullivan Review (which recommends using biological sex)? On behalf of the Executive, the Head of Equity, Diversity & Inclusion advised that the University was aware of the issues involved and that conversations were ongoing.

9. EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT TO INCLUDE:

9.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: paper ref: **(SN/24-25/033)** (on file).

9.2. NOTED the items for report from the 5 March meeting of University Education Committee.

9.3 APPROVED a new award title of Bachelor of Dental Hygiene denoted by BDH.

9.4 NOTED the Annual Quality Assurance Report to the Board of Trustees (covering the 2023/24 academic year)

10. RESEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT INCLUDING: -TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR APPROVAL

10.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: paper ref: **(SN/24-25/034)** (on file).

11. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 There was none.

MEETING CLOSED. Next meeting 2 June 2025, 2pm.