



**MEETING OF SENATE
MINUTES
Monday 6 October 2025
14.00, online via Teams**

Present:

Professors: Arpad Abraham, Michael Banissy, Michele Barbour, Matthew Brown, William Browne, Craig Butts, Tristan Cogan, Ryerson Christie, Emma Clark, Ian Craddock, Natalie Edwards, Tom Ellson, Sarah George, Ruth Glynn, Darryl Hill, Jonathan Ives, Tansy Jessop, Oliver Johnson, Catherine Kelly, Astrid Linthorst, Barry Main, David Manley, Richard Martin, Jennifer McManus, Harry Mellor, Anthony Mulholland, Stuart Mundell, Ian Nabney, Aydin Nassehi, 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, Palie Smart, Michelle Spear, Brian Squire, Judith Squires (**Chair**), Leah Tether, Jaap Velthuis, Karen West, Kate Whittington, Liang-Fong Wong, John Wylie.

Dr Peter Allen, Mr Yogadhveep Arora, Miss Sarah Bain, Ms Francesca Blackburn, Professor Alvin Birdi, Dr Edmund Cannon, 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 Lauren Goodhead, Dr Maxine Gillway, Mr Teo Guez, 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 Efi Psomopoulou, Jo-Jo Vyvyan-Jones, Dr Meng Wang.

Apologies: Professor Evelyn Welch, Professor Michele Acuto, Professor Jonathan Beaverstock, Professor Ian Bond, Professor Mark Dillingham, Professor Charl Faul, Dr Joseph Hallett, Professor Joanna Hawarth, Professor Karim Malik, Professor Richard Martin, Professor Chrissie Thirwell

In attendance: Helen Cole (Senior Governance Officer and **minutes**) Michael Flay (University Secretary & Director of Governance) for item 3, Hannah Quinn (Chief of Staff).

- 1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING on 2 June 2025 (on file)**
 - 1.1 **APPROVED** as a true and accurate record.
- 2. CHAIR'S REPORT**
 - 2.1 RECEIVED and **DISCUSSED**: paper ref: (**SN/25-26/001**) (*on file*).
 - 2.2 NOTED the report of the Vice-Chancellor including the Chairs Action approvals (section 5)
 - 2.3 APPROVED the Senate Standing Orders for 2025/26
 - 2.4 APPROVED the Senate Delegation Framework/ Schedule at Appendix 1
 - 2.5 NOTED that the Senate membership for 2025/26 is discussed under item 2 below.

- 2.6 With regret, the Chair expressed personal condolences on the passing of Professor Steve Fenton.
- 2.7 The Chair provided a verbal update, expanding on the written report the following areas were noted: Launch of the TQ 1 year to go campaign, Positive reception to Mumbai Enterprise Campus, Launch of South Bristol Micro Campus, university ranking announcements including Research University of the Year (Daily Mail) ,15th in UK (The Guardian), and 10th in UK (The Times).
- 2.8 A verbal update was provided on the latest admissions data, noting that, as anticipated, it had been a challenging confirmation and clearing round. The University had been short of targets in certain areas and had used the planned near miss strategy, clearing and agreed overshoots in some areas to offset projected shortfalls. A budget shortfall had materialised but could be accommodated inside the contingency. The University would seek to avoid this reoccurrence by re baselining its intake targets for 2026/27, thereby bringing greater realism to targets where student demand was changing, noting that it was imperative that targets be aligned with actual market demand.
- 2.9 The possible impact of the International Student Levy on the University was discussed. In particular, it was noted that although an update had been provided at the Labour Party Conference, many details were still to emerge. Areas still to be clarified and therefore of uncertainty included: the total amount and rate to be applied, timing of implementation, and whether it would or would not be phased. Under these circumstances, the University was still seeking to estimate the potential exposure to allow for early planning on mitigations and minimising impact.
- 2.10 A Senate member queried the extent to which lessons had been learned with regard to the approach to redundancies in the Centre for Academic Language and Development (CALD) in recent months. In response the Chair noted that the Executive were mindful of how the process could be used to inform future decision making in similar circumstances.

3. CHANGE TO ORDINANCE 6

- 3.1 RECEIVED and **RECOMMENDED**: paper ref: (SN/25-26/002) (*on file*).
- 3.2 AGREED to RECOMMEND to the Board of Trustees the amendments to Ordinance 6 as detailed in the paper. NOTED that this would result in the removal of the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellors (APVCs) from the membership of Senate but that APVCs would be invited to attend Senate meetings as/ when required on the suggestion/ recommendation of the relevant Pro Vice-Chancellor.
- 3.3 AGREED that to facilitate the above the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellors would receive the papers for each meeting from the Governance Team.

Action: Secretary

4. REPORT FROM THE ACADEMIC TRUSTEES ON BOARD-RELATED BUSINESS

- 4.1 Professor Ian Craddock and Professor Natalie Edwards provided a verbal update on the business undertaken by the Board of Trustees at its most recent meeting on 3 October 2025.
- 4.2 The Board considered the following:
- Executive Report
 - Finance Report
 - Education and Student Experience: NSS Results

- SU Sabbatical Officers Presentation
- Civic Engagement: APVCs and Reparative Futures
- US2030: Professional Services Transformation Programme
- Report from Audit and Risk Committee
- Report from Culture and Inclusion Committee
- Report of the University Secretary

5. ANNUAL PRESENTATION FROM SU SABBATICAL OFFICERS

5.1 RECEIVED PRESENTATION (on file)

5.2 In discussion Senate noted that the University was at present an outlier in the sector in terms of the strong, constructive, positive links between its Sabbatical Officers and its Executive. The UEB (University Executive Board) Conference held at the start of each academic year was attended by the Sabbatical Officers and facilitated the setting of *smart* targets with senior staff engaging in these and sharing knowledge on processes, mechanisms and staff that were able to assist in achieving end goals.

5.3 A question was raised on communication between the Sabbatical Officers and the General/ wider student body, in particular how Senate members could offer support. In response it was noted that a wide variety of mechanisms were already in place, including strong student representation on academic committees and groups, the Sabbatical Officer led student forum and Blogs posted by the Sabbatical Officers. Senate members' existing and continued engagement in these areas and associated outcomes was greatly appreciated.

5.4 In response to a question, the Sabbatical Officers expanded on the reference to academic transparency in the presentation. In summary, Faculty reps had shared concerns that students were not sufficiently informed of the processes and steps that scrutinised work that had been submitted (handed in) and the mechanisms that resulted in marks awarded. There was a perceived lack of clarity on the meaning of terms and definitions for example the distinction of the first marker versus second marker, the role of the exam board etc.

6. PROFESSIONAL SERVICES: ROLE FAMILY IMPLEMENTATION

6.1 RECEIVED and DISCUSSED: paper ref: (SN/25-26/003) (on file).

6.2 The Chief Operating Officer and the Executive Director of Faculty Operations presented to Senate (on file).

6.3 A query was raised on whether the timing of the schedule for implementation was too tight given its importance. In response, it was noted that initial work on Role Family Implementation had commenced in October 2024, with research and engagement with senior leaders continuing throughout the year. Role Family Implementation was not a large area of activity within the wider Professional Services Transformation Programme (PSTP), but it was an important element, linking with the forthcoming Service Level Agreements and Service Catalogue.

6.4 A Senate member recalled that similar reviews/ initiatives had been conducted over the last twenty-five years and queried whether previous exercises had been deemed successful and what lessons had been learned from them. In response, it was noted that the outcomes of the Support Services Process Review (SSPR) had been reviewed as part of the establishment of the PSTP. In some areas of activity SSPR was very effective, for example in finance services. In other areas, structural changes were made

but not in the equivalent in processes and systems, which meant that SSPR was less impactful than it might otherwise have been.

- 6.5 A query was raised to the disadvantages of implementing role family changes across all groups at the same time, in particular with reference to the impact of varying workload for staff over each year. In response it was noted that the programme board had considered this and that the benefit of a single implementation was that all groups were engaged equally, and no group would feel overlooked/ forgotten. Arguably, there was never a good time as workloads tended to be more consistent throughout the year, although it was noted that school half terms and exam board periods would be avoided.
- 6.6 Senate discussed recent restructuring changes in the Communications and Marketing Division and queried what the links and commonality were between these changes and PSTP. In response, it was noted that the principles would be the same, with the aim of linking to a service catalogue that was financial sustainability and ensuring that activity undertaken was of value and focused on defined and consistent outcomes.
- 6.7 Senate sought clarification on the Service Level Catalogue, specifically how it would work; whether it would contain clear service level agreements; and whether there would be minimum levels of service that Schools could expect regardless of their financial position. In response it was noted that these areas would be covered and defined as part of the programme's delivery.

7. EDUCATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE: NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS) RESULTS

- 7.1 RECEIVED and **DISCUSSED**: paper ref: **(SN/25-26/004)** (*on file*).
- 7.2 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students), the Dean of the Faculty Health & Life Sciences and the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Quality Assurance and Enhancement) presented to Senate (*on file*).
- 7.3 Senate queried what strategies were being used to share good practice between Schools that scored highly in the NSS and those scoring less well. In response, it was noted that this year an insight report had been shared. The report highlighted services provided centrally and posed related resourcing questions that Schools could address to drive improvements, this demonstrated sharing of best practice between Heads of School.
- 7.4 Senate discussed the link between achieving TEF Gold and effective Professional Services provision noting that much of student experience was delivered through staff working in Professional Services teams. In particular Senate queried whether changes delivered as part of the Professional Services Transformation Programme (PSTP) risked impacting negatively on NSS scores. In response it was noted that arguably change programmes undertaken by the University over the last 12-18 months were responsible for some of the improvement in the NSS results for the most recent return. For example, changes to both Blackboard Ultra and the SAY (Structure of the Academic Year) had been delivered within this, an improving environment. As discussed under item 6, the inherent purpose and intention of PSTP was to deliver improvements in Professional Services provision that were aligned with University goals and its strategic aims. The expectation was that PSTP would support and drive further improvements in NSS scores overtime.
- 7.5 Senate discussed how the University could ensure that individual School level responses to NSS themes could be maintained in the context of the universal service levels referred to under agenda item 6 above. A query was raised a whether planned changes risked

localised responses to the distinct demands and needs of student cohorts at a School level being lost in pursuit of consistency. In response, staff working in this area agreed that was a potential area of tension but highlighted that TEF was designed to measure consistency in student experience both over time and between student cohorts so it was important to establish the specifics of where and when discipline diversity mattered and was impactful to the student experience so that variability was applied only when beneficial.

8. REVIEW OF 2024-25 PROMOTION TO PROFESSOR AND ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR PROCESS AND PROPOSALS FOR 2025-26

8.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED** paper ref: **(SN/25-26/005)** (*on file*).

NOTED:

1. The findings from the promotion to AP/Professor data analysis 2024/25
2. Impact of the change to the use of External assessor reports
3. Changes to the Academic Promotion Framework
4. Newly promoted Professors and Associate Professors
5. Changes to the Promotion procedure that had been considered and were supported by Academic Leadership Board (ALB).

8.2 **AGREED** that Senate was supportive of the process and proposals including changes detailed in the paper. In particular, Senate noted (without objection) the change to seek names of potential external assessors only where a Faculty Promotions Committee (FPC) had recommended that these be considered by University Promotions Committee (UPC) and that this would be transparent to staff in the process.

8.3 In terms of future iterations and development of the process ahead of next year's round, Senate requested that the examples of evidence suggested/ given in the guidance be reviewed to show examples of making a case against various and more varied criteria, for example teaching and educational leadership. This would ensure that where large units were taught by multiple staff members, each staff member could make reference to experience and expertise in teaching these cohorts.

8.4 A question was raised as how what extent the process was mindful of the potential gender bias in student feedback. On a related point, it was noted that feedback collected via the survey tool Blue focused at the Unit level rather than the individual staff level. It was noted that BILT (Bristol Institute for Learning and Teaching) were working on this area and that an agenda item presented by staff from BILT would be added to a forthcoming Senate agenda.

Action: Secretary and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students)

9. EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

9.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED** paper ref: **(SN/25-26/006)** (on file).

9.2 **NOTED** items reported from the June and September 2025 meetings of Education Committee.

9.3 **APPROVED** updates to the Policy for Staff Participation in the CREATE Scheme for 2025/26.

9.4 **APPROVED** the updated terms of reference for University Education Committee (UEC) for 2025/26, subject to the conclusion of discussions detailed below.

- 9.5 With reference to the Education Committee Terms of Reference, a query was raised by Senate member Jordan Fung as to whether the deletion of bullet point 9 namely “*To keep Senate updated on matters that relate to the delivery of educational strategic initiatives*” would have an impact on student voice. In response it was agreed that the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) would discuss after the meeting with Jordan Fung, (with Senate member Yogadhveep Arora also to be invited the call). Subsequently, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) advised that Education Committee had been of the view that bullet point 9 had seemed to replicate point 10 (*To advise Senate on the current debates and key areas of work in the education arena and seek input on strategic institution-level education issues*) and the this was why it had been removed. The Senate members referred to above were content with this explanation. (Therefore, the Terms of Reference as presented to Senate on 6 October 2025 to be the approved version.)

10. RESEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT

- 10.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED** paper ref: **(SN/25-26/007)** (on file).

NOTED the report from Research Committee on activity since the last report to Senate in April 2025.

11. POLICIES FOR APPROVAL BY SENATE ON THE RECOMMENDATION OF RESEARCH CTTEE:

Research Governance Integrity Policy

Ethics of Research Policy

- 11.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED** paper ref: **(SN/25-26/007)** (on file).

- 11.2 On behalf of Senate, the Chair expressed thanks to Professor Matthew Brown (Chair of University Ethics of Research Committee) and the team within the Division of Research, Enterprise and Innovation for the extensive work and wide consultation in the development of improved practice and policy development in this important area of the University’s values and its adherence to national standards and regulatory requirements.

- 11.3 **APPROVED** on the recommendation of Research Cttee, updated versions of the Ethics of Research Policy and the Research Governance and Integrity Policy.

- 11.4 In terms of the membership of the University Ethics of Research Committee, a query was raised as to why/ whether it was necessary to stipulate that the Chair of the Committee would be a University of Bristol member of staff with experience of human participant research i.e. whether human participant research was a requirement, the concern being that this might prevent those without this experience from becoming Chair. In response, it was noted that previously this experience had been sought because the majority of the cases/ work (~90%) dealt with by the Committee was human participant related, however it was not a requirement. **AGREED** that the policy as presented was approved, Senate were comfortable that the Chair of University Ethics of Research Committee explore adding “normally” to the relevant section thereby not ruling certain staff out from being the Chair. **AGREED** that regardless of this suggested addition being made or not being made, no further consideration by Senate was required in this or next academic year. **NOTED** that the date of next full review was 6 October 2027.

12. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 12.1 There was none.

MEETING CLOSED.

Next meeting Monday 9 December 2025, 2pm