



**'VIRTUAL' MEETING OF SENATE
MINUTES**

Monday 9 December 2024

14.00, Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting

Present:

Professors: Mellisa Allen, Michele Acuto, Barry Main, Michael Banissy, Michele Barbour, Alvin Birdi, 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, Tom Ellson, Mike Fraser, Sarah George, Ruth Glynn, Darryl Hill, Oliver Johnson, Catherine Kelly, Astrid Linthorst, Karim Malik, David Manley, Richard Martin, Harry Mellor, Anthony Mulholland, Marcus Munafò, Stuart Mundell, Ian Nabney, Aydin Nassehi, Leah Tether, Therese O'Toole, Tim Parkin, Hugh Piggins, Benjamin Pohl, Guy Poppy, Martyn Powell, Brian Squire, Nicholas Timpson, Tuomas Tahko, Jeremy Tavare, Nicholas Roberts, Alison Rust, Nigel Savery, Annela Seddon, Helen Simpson, Palie Smart, Michelle Spear, Judith Squires, Evelyn Welch (**Chair**), Karen West, Kate Whittington, Chris Willis, Liang-Fong Wong, John Wylie.

Dr Mark Allinson, Mr Yogadhveep Arora, Miss Sarah Bain, Dr Ruzanna Chitchyan, Miss Gurvin Chopra, Dr Alex Clayton, Dr Jennifer Collins, Dr Suchandrima Das, Dr Amy Edwards, Mr Ed Fay, Dr Jonathan Fellows, Mr Jordan Fung, Dr Hermes Gadelha, Dr Luran Goodhead, Dr Maxine Gillway, Dr Gibran Hemani, Dr Joanna Howarth, Miss Bhavni Joshi, Dr Chris Kent, Dr Zoe Leinhardt, Mrs Mary Millard, Dr James Palmer, Dr Dinesh Pamunuwa, Dr Angeliki Papadaki, Ms Lucinda Parr, Miss Lucy Pears, Dr Matthew Tointon, Jo-Jo Vyvyan-Jones, Dr Meng Wang.

Apologies: Dr Peter Allen, Professor Jonathan Beaverstock, Ms Paula Coonerty, Professor Charl Faul, Dr Michael Henahan, Mrs Antonia Lythgoe, Professor Tansy Jessop, Professor Paola Manzini, Dr Alison McClean, Professor Jennifer McManus, Dr Stephen Montgomery, Mr Dan Smith, Professor Chrissie Thirlwell

In attendance: James Bigwood (Chief People Officer), Helen Cole (Senior Governance Officer, Clerk to Senate and **minutes**), Ross Robinson (Head of Faculty Transition and Projects, Faculty of Health and Life Sciences) for item 4 only, Peter Vermeulen (Chief Financial Officer).

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING ON 7 October 2024 (on file)

1.1 APPROVED.

1.2 The Chair provided an update to the members in relation to actions/ activities referred to in the minutes of the last meeting noting that all had either been completed or were in hand, details below (numbering related to minutes from 7 October meeting).

2.7 Alignment of Senate meetings with the Structure of the Academic Year (SAY) project. An email was sent to the members on 11 November advising that April 2025 meeting had been moved to 7th from 14th to align with Spring vacation period.

2.12 A update on Strengthening Research Ethics from Matthew Brown was an agenda for the 9 December meeting.

7.4 *A question was raised on where and what extent the principles agreed by the Academic Leadership Structure Senate working group that was convened from January 2023 to September 2023 had been aligned to in the plans that were*

now taking shape. A summary had been requested and would be circulated as part of the papers for the February 2025 meeting.

- 10.2 *NOTED that the timetabling team would need to ensure that students had sufficient time to move from Temple Quarter to the main campus (Clifton) if they had classes on both, this had the potential to pose a significant risk to effective teaching delivery. In response, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students) and the Chief Operating Officer advised that a report on this area (produced in collaboration with SUMS consulting) was expected in mid October and the results would be presented to Senate in due course. This had been added to the agenda for the February 2025 meeting.*

2. CHAIR'S REPORT

- 2.1 RECEIVED and CONSIDERED: paper ref: **(SN/24-25/009)** (*on file*).
- 2.2 NOTED the report of the Vice-Chancellor and 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 appointment of Professor Jane Memmott OBE FRS to The Dulverton Chair.
- 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. In terms of student numbers, the University currently retained a high demand for places from the Chinese student market but the types of course deemed most desirable was changing. In response, the University needed to rapidly adapt its offering to maximise recruitment for the current cycle, this would include targets needing to be more accurately set than in previous years, the development of new programmes that would meet demand and the withdrawal of those where uptake was falling over time. It was noted that at present the University was in a stable position and was on track in terms of budgeting in the current financial year. In terms of income, the University was experiencing a combination of effects namely the above decline in overseas PGT numbers and therefore fees combined with inflation and the recent increase in employer NI contribution.
- 2.5 A question was raised as to whether the University should consider reducing overseas fees on certain PG courses back to the levels charged previously. In response, the Chair noted that once a fee was set for a particular cohort the University was legally bound and could not make pricing changes in year. Additionally, the University strategy was not to "compete on price" by lowering fees and that from the perspective of the next year's intake the fee comparison from last year had now gone. Improvements in fee setting were always being sought, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and the Senate member who raised the query would discuss the specifics of example cited outside of the meeting as required.
- 2.6 It was noted that the Business School was exploring ways of offering an *in country* internship opportunity to Chinese students as part of University of Bristol degree programmes. The aim was to mirror the provision in Chinese universities where this was offered as a second year in a Masters degree and improved employability for graduates. This was cited as an example of where the University could broaden its market appeal and thereby maintain overseas student numbers.
- 2.7 In discussion it was noted that there were particular areas of research in which the University had expertise where the potential to increase income was higher than was typically the case. One example cited was the interface between research, teaching

and industry in digital health and enterprise health. A by product of increased revenue from industry contract research in these areas would be improvements and investment into existing University systems and spaces.

- 2.8 A query was raised as to what plans the University had to support students to complete degree programmes in the event of an individual course closure at another HE provider and/ or the closure of another entire HE provider. In response, the Chair noted that the University of Bristol was engaging on this topic at a variety of levels and fora via its membership of Universities UK (UUK).

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 22 November 2024.

- 3.2 At its meeting the Board of Trustees considered the following:

- Autumn 2024 Strategy Performance Report
- Key University Risk Review
- Finance Report
- Financial & Student Number Forecasts for Submission to the OfS
- Annual Report & Financial Statements 2023/24
- University Secretary's Report
- External Speakers' Code of Practice and ToR Free Speech Advisory Group (FSAG)
- Annual Report: Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (staff and students) 2023/24
- Report from Infrastructure Planning Committee
- Report from Nominations Committee
- Report from Finance & Investment Committee
- Report from Equity, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Oversight Committee
- Report from Honorary Degrees Committee
- Report from Audit and Risk Committee

4. FACULTY OF HEALTH AND LIFE SCIENCES STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: paper ref: **(SN/24-25/010)** (*on file*).

- 4.2 **DISCUSSED** the proposal to restructure the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences Schools and **NOTED** that the Board of Trustees would be asked to approve at its meeting on 31 January 2025.

- 4.3 **NOTED** that the names of proposed Schools in the paper were for illustrative purposes only. They would come back to Senate in due course once the names had been formally agreed by Faculty Board. Senate would be asked to approve the names at that stage (this aligned with the University's Constitution, Ordinance 6, which allowed Senate to give an opinion on proposals to create, close, name or rename Faculties or Academic Schools (following consultation by the Board of Trustees)).

- 4.4 In discussion, Senate were supportive of the proposal. In response to a question on the opportunities that were being presented, it was noted that the planned changes sought to coalesce staff to be focused on eight defined disciplinary areas, currently staff were split across Schools, the aim was to simplify. It was also noted that the new structure would create fewer Schools that were more equal in size with each other in terms of staff numbers. Larger Schools were more resilient and reactive in terms of staff turnover and with regard to ensuring that leadership roles were filled.

- 4.5 It was noted that underlying sub structures and systems support (for example ERP) would need to be adjusted to allow different systems and processes to report to each

other. The changes would also need to align with the Professional Services Transformation Programme as the programme developed and was implemented over the next few months. For these reasons the restructure proposals would be implemented through a transition period in 2025-26, with final implementation and systems changes ready for the 2026-27 academic year.

5. STRENGTHENING RESEARCH ETHICS

- 5.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: paper ref: **(SN/24-25/011)** (*on file*).
- 5.2 NOTED the changes to processes that would clarify how Research Ethics are embedded in decision-making across the University. In particular the biggest changes/improvements were: 1. increased guidance provided to staff, 2. Clearer processes and guidance to Heads of School, 3. Better clarity of processes, achieved via consolidation.
- 5.3 In response to a question about the restructure of Research Ethics committees, it was noted that both PGT and UG students were not affected by the new processes, they would continue to be administered by existing School level procedures.
- 5.4 A question was raised regarding how the new roles in the new Research Ethics structures would be spilt within and across Schools and Faculties and whether provision needed to be uniform. In response it was noted that this was an area that was still flexible and under review, at present the aim was that every School would have at least one Research Ethics Officer but it was anticipated that the workload allocation required would probably vary.
- 5.5 Senate members queried how the new roles described in the paper for School and Faculty Research Ethics Officers, and Workstream Chairs would be implemented and recruited to and whether they were aligned with the recruitment to faculty leadership roles that were planned as part of the Academic Structures element of the University Structures (US2030) programme. It was agreed that the Chair of the University Ethics of Research Committee and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor would engage on the subject after the meeting.

6. FREE SPEECH AND EXTERNAL SPEAKERS' CODE OF PRACTICE

- 6.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: paper ref: **(SN/24-25/012)** (*on file*).
- 6.2 NOTED the following:
1. The revisions to the External Speakers Code of Practice (the "Procedure") approved by the Board of Trustees;
 2. The revised Terms of Reference (ToRs) for the Free Speech Advisory Group; and
 3. That the essential training relating to Free Speech and Academic Freedom for academic staff and recommended for Professional Services Staff was now live on the University intranet via [Develop](#).

7. ANNUAL EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION REPORT: STAFF AND STUDENTS 2023/24

- 7.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: paper ref **(SN/24-25/013)** (*on file*).
- 7.2 NOTED that on 22 November, the Report was approved by the Board of Trustees on the recommendation of the Equity, Equality and Diversity Oversight Committee for publication on the University's website.
- 7.3 The Chief People Officer provided a verbal update on work being undertaken by the Human Resources division to co-ordinate the abundance of activity at the University

within this sphere, the various work areas were appropriate and valuable but a clearer direction of travel and alignment with University strategy was needed.

8. PROGRESS AGAINST UNIVERSITY STRATEGY: EDUCATION AND STUDENT SPIs

8.1 RECEIVED and CONSIDERED: paper ref (**SN/24-25/014**) (*on file*).

8.2 NOTED the goal performance reports, SPIs and KPIs that related to the education and student experience (E&SE) portfolio. NOTED the role of the TEF leadership oversight board in providing links between different areas of activity including partnerships with student group and those seeking to drive improvements to NSS scoring outcomes.

9. PROGRESS AGAINST UNIVERSITY STRATEGY: RESEARCH SPIs

9.1 RECEIVED and CONSIDERED: paper ref: (**SN/24-25/015**) (*on file*).

9.1 NOTED the progress update against Goals 1 & 6 that related to the research sub-strategy and the relevant critical path SPIs.

9.2 A question was raised as to the rationale and background to the comparison figure that had been used to set the target for increasing income from educational activities as distinct from research. The query centred on whether the University was currently above or below benchmark and therefore in what direction the target was seeking to move to and how the goals for research income affected the ratio between these two types of income. It was noted that the papers presented to Senate were a summary of more complex analysis, and that the original source material did provide more detail and information on the reasoning and logic behind the targets and the measurements that were used. It was agreed that the Deputy Vice-Chancellor would engage with the relevant staff to provide further information in response to this question and also regarding papers presented to Senate on this topic going forward.

10. VERBAL UPDATE FROM PRO VICE-CHANCELLOR RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

10.1 RECEIVED and CONSIDERED Presentation (*on file* and to be circulated with the draft minutes)

10.2 The Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation presented to Senate including his reflections on his first few weeks in post since joining the University on 1 October 2024. In discussion Senate expanded on the research income discussion referred to under paragraph 2.7 above.

11. RESEARCH COMMITTEE REPORT

11.1 RECEIVED and CONSIDERED: paper ref: (**SN/24-25/016**) (*on file*).

11.2 NOTED the report from URC on activity since the last report in October 2024.

11.3 NOTED the updated Terms of Reference for University Enterprise and Innovation Committee (2024-25) – (Annex A)

11.4 NOTED the updated Terms of Reference for University Postgraduate Research Committee (2024-25) – (Annex B).

12. EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

12.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: paper ref: (**SN/24-25/017**) (*on file*).

13. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

13.1 There was none.

14. Next meeting 3 February 2025, 2pm.