



MEETING OF SENATE MINUTES

Monday 5 February 2024

14.00, virtual Microsoft Teams meeting

Present:

Professors: Allen, Birdi, Bond, Browne, Butts, Craddock, Clark, Dermott, Edwards, Faul, Glynn, Hemani, Hope Hailey, Jessop, Juncos, Kelly, Manly, McGirr, McManus, Malik, Munafo, Mundell, Nassehi, O'Toole, Piggins, Pamunuwa, Pantazis, Parkin, Powell, Raven, Robbins, Rust, Sandvoss, Savery, Smart, Spear, Squires, Tahko, Tavaré, Taylor, Tether, Thirlwell, Timpson, Welch, Whittington, Williamson, Wylie

Dr M Allison, Miss N Antoine, Mr M Byakatonda, Dr R Chitchyan, Dr T Cogan, Dr J Collins, Mr E Fay, Dr C Fricker, Dr F Ginn, Dr S George, Dr M Gillway, Dr D Hill, Ms T Hill, Dr J Howarth, Dr C Kent, Dr Z Leinhardt, Mrs A Lythgoe, Dr S Montgomery, Ms L Parr, Dr A Papadaki, Mr A Pearce, Dr B Pohl, Dr S Proud, Dr M Werner, Dr M Wang, Dr L-F Wong

In attendance: S Alam (item 6), C Bowden (Item 5), T Brunnock (entire meeting), H (Items 4 and 7), H Cole (Senior Governance Officer), C Buchanan (entire meeting), P Coonerty (entire meeting), J Hunt (Items 6 and 9), X Levantis (entire meeting), Jason Parr (Item 8), L Penrose (Deputy Head of Governance, Clerk to Senate), H Quinn (entire meeting), R Shimeld (Item 4), Simon Swales (Item 11), P Vermeulen (entire meeting) M Wood-Smith (Item 9),

Apologies: Prof M Barbour, Mr M Banissy, Mr J Barrie, Mr J Beaverstock, Dr A Clayton, Prof T Ellson, Mr B Mac Ruairi, Prof P Manzini, Dr B Main, Prof R Martin, Mrs M Millard, Prof N Roberts, Prof K West

1. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING ON 4 DECEMBER 2023 (on file)

1.1 APPROVED.

2. CHAIR'S REPORT

2.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED:** paper ref: (SN/23-24/017) (on file).

Sunday Times Article on international student recruitment

2.3 The following was **DISCUSSED:**

2.3.1 **REDACTED: S43 Commercial Interests**

2.4 **REDACTED: S43 Commercial Interests**

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

3.1 Professor Natalie Edwards and Professor Ian Craddock provided a verbal update on the business undertaken by the Board of Trustees at its meeting on 2 February 2024.

3.2 The following was **NOTED** and/or **DISCUSSED** by the Board of Trustees:

3.2.1 Professor Phil Taylor, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research & Enterprise, would be leaving the University at the end of July to join the University of Bath as their new Vice-

- Chancellor from 1st August 2024. A transition plan had already been implemented, and any conflicts of interests were being carefully managed by the Executive.
- 3.2.2 The new University logo had been approved by the University Executive Board at its recent meeting, and a digital strategy for the logo replacement was currently being developed. The deadline for final sign off by the Vice-Chancellor was early February (aligned with the publication timeline for the University Prospectus). In terms of implementation and communication with the wider University, this would likely take place after Graduation at the end of February.
 - 3.2.3 The Board approved the appointment of a new PVC Global Engagement.
 - 3.2.4 Recruitment and enrolment position to date were positive with UG applications not giving cause for any significant concern (too early to analyse the PGT enrolments).
 - 3.2.5 The implications of the Sunday Times Article was considered and Trustees were provided assurances around the quality of the University's provision and entry routes.
 - 3.2.6 The Key University Risk Register was reviewed, and there were discussions about the risks that remained in the red zone on the risk heat map – these were cyber security, pensions, and a new risk – Isambard AI, the latter of which the Board discussed in detail.
 - 3.2.7 REF 2029 preparations and the importance of the REF in relation to financial sustainability of the university and league table positioning.
 - 3.2.8 The University's cash position as the sector approached some challenging years ahead.
 - 3.2.9 Gender and Ethnicity Pay Gap Report (also on today's Senate agenda for consideration).
 - 3.2.10 Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom – the University would shortly be introducing a mandatory training module about free speech for all staff to assist in providing clarity around the definitions of free speech, academic freedom, what is entailed, and what the university's obligations were in relation to other responsibilities e.g. Public Sector Equality Duty. An internal audit had recently been commissioned in this area and the report had come back with a substantial assurance – this meant that the University was well prepared in relation to its compliance with the Freedom of Speech Act, although of course there was still much to do and it was an extremely challenging area. More updates would be provided to Senate as appropriate.

Haylie Carr and Rachel Shimeld joined the meeting

4. NEW EMERITUS ACADEMIC REGULATION

- 4.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED**: paper ref (SN/23-24/018) (*on file*).
- 4.2 The Chief Operating Officer, Registrar & University Secretary introduced the report.
- 4.3 It was **NOTED** that the Emeritus policy was last reviewed in 2011. In consequence of the current review, a number of issues had been identified, intended to be addressed by introducing proposed new Emeritus Academic Regulations, as set out in the Appendix (*on file*). All existing Emeritus must sign the new Emeritus contract by January 2025. The proposed new Regulations sought to:
 - Clarify that the award and rescission of an emeritus title was at the discretion of the University;
 - Clarify the criteria for awarding Emeritus Professorships; and
 - Separating an emeritus title from the award of honorary status; requiring emeritus academics to sign an honorary contract as a prerequisite for IT access (including a User ID) and campus access (U-card). This would align the requirements for emeritus academics with the IDAM project requirements and improve on appropriate governance.
- 4.4 It was **NOTED** that the paper contained a proposal to phase out the use of the title of Emeritus Dean. This was so that 'Emeritus Dean' remained in use for those already awarded or agreed, but all new awards were otherwise made only for 'Emeritus Professor.'

- 4.5 It was also **NOTED** that in order for the approvals above to go ahead, the Board of Trustees at its meeting on 2nd February had unanimously approved some proposed amendments to Ordinance 6 (2.1.6(b)) to provide Senate with express delegated authority to rescind an Emeritus title (Senate already had delegated powers in relation to awarding Emeritus Titles).
- 4.6 The following was **DISCUSSED**:
- 4.6.1 At the appropriate juncture, and after this new process had been implemented, there should be an opportunity to review whether the University ought to put in place a continuous reassessment process for those with Emeritus titles, in alignment with the current Honorary Professors process.
- 4.6.2 It might be helpful to also undertake a follow-up review more broadly around the grounds upon which individuals could apply for Honorary status particularly given some concerns raised by Senators of internal contradictions in the existing honorary process.
- 4.7 **APPROVED**: the implementation of a new Emeritus Academic Regulations (on file), to replace the current HR Emeritus Professors Policy.
- 4.8 **APPROVED**: the proposal to phase out the use of the title of Emeritus Dean.
- 4.9 **APPROVED**: any subsequent associated amendments to the Senate Delegation schedule.

*Rachel Shimeld left the meeting
Chris Bowden joined the meeting*

5. EDUCATION & STUDENT EXPERIENCE PROGRAMME

- 5.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: paper ref (SN/23-24/019) and PowerPoint slides (*on file*).
- 5.2 The Chief Operating Officer, Registrar & University Secretary introduced an update on the student attendance and engagement project, which formed part of the Education & Student Experience Programme and the Programme Manager delivered some PowerPoint slides.
- 5.3 The following was **DISCUSSED**:
- 5.3.1 There was broad support for the initiative from both staff and students but there were some inaccuracies and technical glitches that required fixing. Some of the concerns raised were as follows:
REDACTED: S43 Commercial Interests
- 5.4 Senate thanked Chris Bowden and Lucinda Parr for a helpful update on Programme progress.

*Chris Bowden left the meeting
Jon Hunt and Sadaf Alam joined the meeting*

6. ISAMBARD AI PROGRESS UPDATE

- 6.1 RECEIVED and **NOTED**: paper ref: (SN/23-24/020) and PowerPoint slides (*on file*).
- 6.2 The Executive Director for Research & Enterprise and the Director of Advanced Computing delivered some PowerPoint slides which highlighted the academic opportunities afforded to the University by the Isambard AI project.
- 6.3 The following was **DISCUSSED**:
- 6.3.1 The criticality of HPC investment for teaching and research in biological sciences.

- 6.3.2 Data governance and being open to different types of data through this project e.g. drug development and the importance of taking into account privacy requirements of the NHS, for example when dealing with sensitive data.

Jon Hunt and Sadaf Alam left the meeting

7. ANNUAL GENDER & ETHNICITY PAY GAP REPORT

- 7.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: paper ref (SN/23-24/021) (on file)).

- 7.2 The Chief People Officer introduced the report. The headlines were:

- 7.2.1 There was currently no statutory requirement for an Ethnicity Pay Gap report but there was government guidance that aligned to the Gender Pay Gap guidance. The University had chosen to take a proactive approach to voluntarily report its disaggregated ethnicity pay gaps to continue to build stronger relationships with its workforce through openness and transparency.

- 7.2.2 The report focused on government prescribed data as of 31st March 2023. As such there was a time lag between initiatives taken and their effect on data. In October 2024, the University would provide an internal diversity monitoring report for staff which would include data on representation, OD data analysis of GPG and EGP data based on positions (spine points and allowances where appropriate) and the Impact of key HR processes on such data. This report would become the Annual People Analytics Report, providing insight into gaps and barriers to inform targeted action that would ultimately help to reduce pay gaps.

- 7.2.3 The percentage of females in the organisation had increased from 56% in 2022 to 58% in 2023.

- 7.2.4 The University continued to make progress in reducing its gender pay gap and had seen a reduction in both the median and mean pay gaps. The median gender pay gap of 10.6% in men's favor had reduced by 5.6% since the first report in 2017. The mean gender pay gap in men's favor of 14.4% had also reduced by 6.7% compared to 2017.

- 7.2.5 Since last year, the median gender pay had decreased by 0.4% to 10.6%. This remained below the national average of 14.3% but above the HE (Higher Education) median of 10% (ONS (Office for National Statistics) provisional figures for 2023).

- 7.3 It was noted that the link to access the gender action plan was not working and should be fixed before publication of the report on the external facing website.

- 7.4 The Chair thanked the Chief People Officer for the detailed report.

Haylie Carr left the meeting

Jason Parr joined the meeting

8. ANNUAL REPORT ON STAFF & STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

- 8.1 RECEIVED and **CONSIDERED**: paper ref: (SN/23-24/022) and PowerPoint slides (on file)).

Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

- 8.2 The Executive Director of Education & Students delivered some PowerPoint slides on the key headlines from the report, existing initiatives, and next steps.

- 8.3 The following was **DISCUSSED**:

- 8.2.1 Support for continued inclusion of the student voice in all that the University did, especially in decisions around student mental health. A strong example of embedding the student voice was the co-authoring of the new Access and Participation Plan, between the University and the Students Union.

- 8.2.2 The UK Government's consultation and guidance for Schools and Colleges on [Gender questioning](#) and the impact that this might have, particularly on the number of students coming into the University requiring additional wellbeing support.

- 8.2.3 The new Student Liaison Service which was due to soft launch at the end of academic year 23/24 – there was broad support for such a significant intervention and Senate and the student members in particular expressed great appreciation for its introduction.
- 8.2.4 The importance of continuing to offer training programmes to young people to help them manage their own wellbeing and deal with stressful situations. The wellbeing service offered proactive group activities as well as individual support and there were also other modules available to students in the broader curriculum such as '[The Science of Happiness](#)' module. Other interventions included the introduction of the '[Bristol Skills Profile](#)', the new assessment strategy which aimed to reinscribe the value of inclusion and design for all as an assessment approach, and in personal tutoring where there was an interactive tool focussing on mental health and wellbeing.
- 8.2.5 Dates for this year's Open Day were due to be discussed at the Recruitment Committee which would undertake the final approval, after taking soundings from UCU colleagues and Programme Directors.

8.2.6 **REDACTED: S43 Commercial Interests**

Staff Mental Health and Wellbeing

- 8.3 The Chief People Officer and the Director of Health and Safety introduced the Annual Report on Staff Mental Health & Wellbeing.

8.4 The following was **DISCUSSED**:

- 8.4.1 Whether there were any opportunities to increase the staff mental health and wellbeing budget given that it was originally set in 2018 and has not been increased since then.
- 8.4.2 A blog would be published imminently outlining the ways in which the University was responding to the focus group feedback as a result of the teaching bureaucracy review exercise.
- 8.4.3 The external bureaucracy placed on the University by external bodies e.g. regulators, UK government etc. Also, the internal pressures arising from significant university-wide structural and process changes e.g. US2030, Professional Services Operating Model, SAY etc which, whilst in the long term would improve staff workload and staff mental health and wellbeing, did in fact increase pressure and uncertainty on staff in the short to medium term. Senate emphasised that this should be acknowledged by the Executive. It was **AGREED** that the report should be amended to better reflect this pressure and uncertainty and to highlight how the University intended to lessen the impact on staff.

ACTION: Chief People Officer

- 8.5 Senate thanked the Chief People Officer and the Dir. Health & Safety for their report.

*Jason Parr and Paula Coonerty left the meeting
Jon Hunt & Megan Wood-Smith joined the meeting*

9. UNIVERSITY RESEARCH COMMITTEE (URC) REPORT

- 9.1 RECEIVED and **APPROVED**: paper ref (**SN/23-24/023**) (*on file*)).
- 9.2 **NOTED**: the report from URC on activity since the last report in December 2023, specifically the overview of the Third-Party Suitability (ATPS) (Due Diligence).
- 9.3 **NOTED**: that Trusted Research & Innovation was a government initiative that was initially proposed by a division within a UK national security agency, which was incorporated into standard terms of conditions proposed by government funders. The initiative started as a voluntary set of principles but the inclusion in terms and conditions of research funding made it mandatory in the higher education environment. They highlight the risks to research collaborations and engagements which may occur when working with organisations or research partners with links to nations whose democratic and ethical values are different from the University's own values. The adoption of a three-

step process (Identify, Risk Management, and Due Diligence), as proposed by the National Protective Security Authority (NPSA), was suggested to help promote the matter across the institution.

9.4 **CONSIDERED:** two proposed solutions as recommended by URC:

- a) To adopt the NPSA's three step process outlined in the paper and help promote the matter and;
- b) To acknowledge there could be consequences for how this activity can be supported, where resources will need to be moved from elsewhere given decreasing budgets.

9.5 **APPROVED:** the adoption of the NPSA's three-step process.

Jon Hunt and Megan Wood-Smith left the meeting

10. EDUCATION COMMITTEE REPORT

10.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: paper ref (**SN/23-24/024**) (*on file*)).

11. ANNUAL REPORT FROM UNIVERSITY PROMOTIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

11.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: paper ref (**SN/23-24/025**) (*on file*)).

MEETING CLOSED. Next meeting 22nd April 2024, 2pm.