

Senate

23/15 A meeting of the Senate was held at 2.15 pm on Thursday 22 June 2023 in Chancellors G06.

Present:

Vice-Chancellor (Chair)
Professor Maarten Ambaum
Professor Tabarak Ballal
Professor Cindy Becker
Professor Ingo Bojak
Professor Peter Dorward
Professor Mark Fellowes
Professor Richard Frazier
Professor Becky Green
Dr MARRISA JOSEPH
Professor Daniela La Penna
Dr Tim Lees
James Lloyd
Dr Shu-Ling Lu
Dr Rachel McCloy
Professor Elizabeth McCrum
Dr John McKendrick
Professor Gail Marshall
Dr Mary Morrissey
Professor Keiichi Nakata
Professor Adrian Palmer
Dr Karen Poulter
Professor Rebecca Rist
Professor Amy Smith
Brian Turner
Professor Carol Wagstaff
Dr Shixuan Wang
Professor Adrian Williams
Professor Paul Williams
Dr Hong Yang
Professor Parveen Yaqoob
Professor Dominik Zaum

Students:

RSU Activities
RSU Education
RSU Inclusion
RSU Welfare Officer

[name withheld, Section 40] *Student Representative*

In attendance:

Penny Egan

Louise Sharman (Secretary)

Andrew Grice

Dr Richard Messer

Ellen Owens

The Vice-Chancellor welcomed new members to the Senate, in particular the new Student Officers.

The Vice-Chancellor outlined the format of the meeting to Senators encouraging them to raise any additional items for discussion under the Vice-Chancellor's report.

The Vice-Chancellor paid tribute to the following who had died since the last meeting of the Senate:

Emeritus Professor Adrian Wright – Adrian was a Lecturer in Physics from 1969, he retired as Professor of Amorphous Solid-State Physics in 2007.

Alison Fenner – Alison was a German and French specialist within the IWLP. Alison joined the University in 1995 and retired in 2018.

Professor Alan Evans – Alan spent the majority of his career at the University and his work focussed on land management and economics of location and land pricing.

Amanda Clark – Amanda joined the University in 2016 and worked as a Senior Programme Administrator in IoE until 2021.

Rita Tyler – Rita was the wife of the late Professor Cyril Tyler, a previous Deputy Vice-Chancellor. Rita was actively involved with the Friends of the University and the SCR.

Dr Martha Marie Kleinhans – Martha Marie joined the University in 2001 as a Lecturer in Law, she later progressed to Senior Lecturer and was finally appointed the Vice-Provost at the University of Reading Malaysia. Martha Marie left the University in 2014.

Janet Allen – Janet joined the University in 1995 as a member of the careers service at Bulmershe and retired in 2011.

23/16 Minutes of the last meeting

The Senate approved Minutes 23/01 to 23/14 of the last formal meeting held on 1 March 2023.

Items for Presentation and discussion

23/17 Presentation of the Agrifood Scoping Exercise – interim update

The Senate received a presentation from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Dr Kate Hough on the work undertaken to date on the Agrifood Scoping Exercise.

The Senate noted that the exercise had launched in Autumn 2022 and would end Spring 2024.

The presentation highlighted to the Senate:

- The agrifood scoping project was established to 1) explore potential initiatives which could enhance the University's position as a global leader in agrifood research 2) gain a further understanding of the future directions that research in this area might take.

- The reasons for the project included:
 - The University had made a strategic commitment to addressing global problems in its teaching, research and partnerships. Feeding and sustaining the growing global population in a sustainable way, in the face of a climate crisis. Given the University's strengths in agriculture and food, the University was well placed to make a substantial contribution to addressing these challenges.
 - [Redacted, Section 43]
 - [Redacted, Section 43]

- What had happened so far:
 - The main emphasis of the project so far had been on developing the strategic direction for agrifood research at Reading. To do this several analyses to inform the strategic direction had been undertaken. This had included:
 - [Redacted, Section 43]
 - [Redacted, Section 43]
 - [Redacted, Section 43]
 - [Redacted, Section 43]
 - Two large workshops for colleagues had also been held to contribute to strategic thinking. These workshops intentionally focused on future opportunities and used as an input horizon scanning information and the consensus themes that emerged from the internal deep dive regarding future research direction.

- Emerging Strategic Direction:
 - Across the analyses and the strategic thinking workshops a large amount of information and views on what the future research direction should be was gathered.
 - [Redacted, Section 43]
 - [Redacted, Section 43]
 - [Redacted, Section 43]
 - [Redacted, Section 43]
 - [Redacted, Section 43]
 - [Redacted, Section 43]

- What was happening now?

- Emphasis of the project now needed to shift to developing propositions for each of the four areas of opportunity.
 - The work had benefitted greatly from the high-levels of input with colleagues, and the Group wanted to continue finding ways to keep colleagues up to date and to provide opportunities to continue to contribute to the thinking as the areas of opportunity took shape. But in doing this, it needed to continue the forward looking and collegiate approach observed at the workshops where colleagues were able to think beyond their own areas and own career spans.
 - To develop the detail around the areas of opportunity, a suggestion could be to establish 4 small working groups, one for each of the 4 areas. These groups would work with the project team, and perhaps a member of the Steering Group, to develop the detail of what could be achieved and what was needed. Those working group members would be asked to liaise with colleagues and cascade information across the relevant subdisciplines.
 - There was a need to make sure that colleagues were kept informed about work across the piece. This could include regular updates such as this one at School or Division/Department meetings, or short monthly Teams briefings might be of value, particularly in the disciplines that were not central to agrifood.
- What happens next?
 - Emphasis of the project now shifts to strategic actions – developing outline propositions for each area of opportunity
 - These outlines would be reviewed by the advisory panel in November. The outlines would be developed by the working groups and the Project team, effectively taking a SWOT analysis of each area that considered the opportunity from all perspectives of PESTLE.
 - The Advisory Panel would review, prioritise and filter the outline propositions, allowing a focus on further work to develop the full propositions over the remaining few months to February.
 - In February there would be a final meeting of the panel to develop final recommendations. In the final months of the project, a confidential business plan would be produced that presented the detail of the recommended areas of opportunity and investment propositions.
 - Alongside all of this, the strategic direction would continue to be iteratively refined by the strategic actions workstream.

The Senate thanked Dr Hough for the presentation. The following questions and comments were raised:

- The presentation given had provided the Senate with a useful summary of the work undertaken to date.
- In terms of the scope of the work would animal welfare be included anywhere? It was confirmed that this was an area included in the framework.
- A consultation on REF 2028 had recently been announced. Would there be any tangible outcomes that might influence the next REF within the timeframe? [Redacted, Section 43]
- Was there any cope to look at the historical perspective? Engagement had taken place with colleagues in Archaeology, English, History and Typography. Colleagues would be welcome to engage further with the working groups.

- In the presentation it was noted that 6 Research Divisions had not been involved so far – were these genuinely out of scope? They were not necessarily out of scope, the exercise had tried to engage colleagues as widely as possible. There was a need now to focus on defined areas in order to have a significant impact.
- It had been positive to share ideas across the broader University community in the workshops – this type of activity should be encouraged. What had made the workshops successful was that colleagues were willing to think beyond their own disciplines and careers.
- [Redacted, Section 43]

A further update would be given to the Senate in the next session.

23/18 Individual Expectations Framework

The Senate at its last meeting on 1 March 2023 had spent time considering the Individual Expectations Framework (Minute 23/03) and had requested further time for discussion on this topic given the late circulation of the paper. The paper received in March 2023 was represented and Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Zaum) gave an update to the Senate.

By way of context it was noted that at its meeting on 23 June 2022, Senate had received the Individual Expectations Framework developed as part of the Expectations and Workloads Workstream. The Individual Expectations Framework was an institutional approach to setting individual expectations for academic staff. Recognising that academic excellence was a collective endeavour, the Framework aimed to support the setting of expectations that support people’s academic ambitions and performance and those of their teams, Departments and Schools, fostering in this way a sense of community and collective responsibility. The Framework was aligned to the Excellence and Community elements of the University Strategy. The proposed approach was a nested framework that spanned from University level to individual level, and a set of principles that all expectation-setting should follow. This approach would enable every member of staff on an academic contract to have a clear agreement with their reviewer on what was expected of them in a defined multi-year period in terms of teaching, research and other activities (in terms of quality and productivity), for this to be done on an equitable basis, and to be supported appropriately (e.g. training, workload allocation, mentoring) to meet those expectations and plan for their career development. The Framework was approved by Senate in June 2022. As reported then, in order to address the challenges linked to operationalising the framework, a pilot took place between June and November 2022.

Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Zaum reported on the work of the pilot studies and updates since the last meeting of Senate. In particular, it was noted that:

- The pilot studies had aimed to understand:
 - Whether the proposed indicators were appropriate and whether the data supported the implementation of the framework.
 - Whether the process for setting expectations could be effectively and efficiently run and whether the process could be integrated into wider staff management practices
 - Whether the process provided clarity of expectations to staff

- How the processes developed through the pilot could be scaled up, and what were the systems requirements to do this.
- The Institute of Education and Climate Division had participated in the pilot.
- The pilot showed that it was possible to implement the framework through the PDR process, and that statements containing disciplinary expectations were helpful for staff and for the expectations setting process. It also showed that the core indicators piloted were generally appropriate, and that it would be possible for data currently collected by the University to support the framework's implementation utilising the core set in the pilot. The survey and feedback from Heads of School showed that some staff (particularly those early in their careers) benefited from more clarity on what is expected of them. Importantly, feedback indicated that staff found particularly helpful the alignment with promotion criteria, which provided additional clarity and support for their career development.
- The pilot also identified a number of challenges including inaccuracy of some of the data, particularly around 15-day turn-around; ability to adequately represent individual contributions to collective activities such as collaborative grants and collaborative teaching on modules/programmes, and ability to scale up generation data at individual and unit level on an accessible and efficient manner with current systems. The impact of different approaches to staff and line management together with the varying level PDR process as it currently stood and its effectiveness were identified as challenges that would need to be addressed if the expectations setting process was to be undertaken as within the PDR. A further challenge identified was the varying degree to which Schools had sufficiently articulated and effectively communicated medium term priorities for teaching and research, which was seen as necessary in order to provide relevant context to expectations setting as intended in the framework.
- The outcomes of the pilot and revised framework had been discussed with UCRI, UBTLSSE and the Strategic Programme Board as part of a broader business case for the Expectations and Workloads Pathway of the Strategic Foundations Programme.
- Since the meeting of Senate in March 2023 work had focussed on developing an institutional level framework and statement; this would be brought back to the Senate in November 2023.
- Difficulties around the use of data had been recognised. Only data currently collected would be used, but this type of data might change over time.
- There would be a need for a phased implementation of the framework – the focus would initially be on institution and discipline level statement; individual level data would need to be pushed back.

The following comments and questions were raised by the Senate:

- The proposals were positive in supporting colleagues, particularly those early in their careers. How would expectations be managed for e.g. if colleagues were not promoted? It was important to remember that no process could guarantee a particular outcome, but the framework would be aligned with the criteria for probation and promotion. The framework would ensure that colleagues were supported in order to deliver what was asked of them through line management support and PDR.
- The paper mentioned systems implementation and multiyear processes. All systems were expensive and many did not link, would the proposals include systems work? One system that was already in development through the Digital Strategy that would support the process was CRIS. The University was one of a few institutions that did not currently have its own research

information system. Data was being collected in lots of different ways but there were no other proposals other than CRIS.

- Was there a tension within the framework between staff development and performance review, how could the University ensure that the framework stayed on the right side of staff development? The framework was a continuum it was primarily to support colleagues and their career development. There was a need to deal with a very small number of cases of performance issues as these impacted on other colleagues; the framework could help support in managing performance issues as through the process it would set clear expectations and consistency. In the pilot no cases of underperformance were identified. In order to manage performance colleagues needed to be clear on what was expected of them.
- In the pilot, Early Career Researchers had found having a clear framework of what was expected of them useful Professorial staff less so.
- At present PDRs relied on self-reporting. There was inconsistency in how diligent managers were in probing this information. At some point would centrally collected data be available or would there still be self-reporting? It would be desirable if centrally collected data could populate PDRs but this was a significant way off and would require investment. The framework should enable the start of a cultural shift though in which some contextual information was available to be considered alongside self-reporting.
- The institution level and discipline level statements were a start, but it would be a number of years until further granular level information was available. Expectations would need to be managed.
- Would there be one contextual statement that could be used for this activity but also for Personal Titles? It was proposed that discipline level statements would be produced for each grade and contract type – these could then be pulled into other processes e.g. probation and promotion.

The Senate thanked Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Zaum for the update and agreed that it was content for work to continue on developing the framework. In terms of next steps it was expected that the Institution level statement would be available for the November meeting of the Senate and that work on discipline level statements would also be shared in due course.

23/19 Report of the Vice-Chancellor

The Senate received the Vice-Chancellor's address to the Senate, noting in particular:

Community:

- Dr Caroline Baylon had been appointed as Pro-Vice-Chancellor International and would start in August.
- Claire Rolstone had been appointed as HR Director
- Katja Strohfeldt has been appointed as T&L Dean for a second period of six years.
- Stuart Black would act as interim Head of School for SAGES.
- A recruitment process was now underway for the Dean of Henley Business School.
- Mental Health - Earlier in the month, the University had a two-day appraisal for the University Mental Health Charter developed by Student Minds.

- International Students - The Home Office proposal to stop dependents of international students for taught programmes coming to the UK had attracted considerable media attention in the past month. Whilst the numbers of such students at Reading was small, this was of concern given it created a very negative image of the UK in terms of welcoming international students.
- Diversity and Inclusion - Since March 2023, a range of events had been held for LGBT+ inclusion. This included the annual flagpole event in recognition of the International Day Against Homophobia, Biphobia and Transphobia. The annual Wolfenden Lecture acknowledged the importance of focusing on LGBT+ inclusion through a global lens. In May 2023, the Dean for Diversity and Inclusion provided an update on Diversity and Inclusion activity and awards. This included progress on race equality including decolonising the curriculum, LGBT+ inclusion, sex equality, and disability & neurodiversity inclusion. On 26 June 2023, the 'Helen Gordon: In Conversation' event, organised by our Women@Reading Network, will be held.

Excellence:

- In the recently published THE Global Impact Rankings, the University was ranked 61st out of over 1600 participating institutions, and 15th of 57 participating UK institutions. The position represented a significant improvement on the University's 2022 performance (which was outside the top 100) in an increasingly competitive ranking. At individual SDG level, the University was ranked in the top 50 for 8 SDGs with top 10 global rankings for Responsible Production/Consumption (SDG12), Life on Land (SDG15) and Climate Action (SDG13).
- Complete University Guide - the University was ranked 34th overall, a fall of three places on last year's table.
- The QS World University Ranking would be published towards the end of June.
- Freedom of Speech - The Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 had received Royal Assent, which signalled a number of important changes on the horizon for English higher education providers and students' union. This included for example: extended duty on institutions to take steps to secure freedom of speech and the extension of free speech obligations to students' unions and a creation of a free speech champion. There were also new rights for individuals to claim compensation arising from a breach by an institution of its duties; a new complaints scheme and extended functions and powers of the Office for Students, including updated conditions of registration.

Sustainability:

- Addressing financial challenges – Senators were aware of the University's financial challenges through the all-staff briefings. Last month the University Executive Board held a half day meeting with the Leadership Group to brief them on the work underway to bring the University back to surplus by the end of the planning period. There were now pages on the staff portal which included all the information relating to how the University was addressing its financial challenges. Council would be reviewing plans in early July and further communications to colleagues would follow.
- USS update - UUK and UCU had reaffirmed their commitment to restore benefits subject to 2023 valuation. The valuation was still underway. Although the news remained positive, the process to get to the restoration by 1 April 2024 did require very close working relationship with UUK and UCU.

- Climate Education - The University continued to play a key contributing and advisory role to the ongoing development and implementation of the DfE's Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy.
- Reading Climate Festival - Runs from 10-21 June. The centrepiece was hosting Luke Jerram's GAIA in the town hall.
- Show your Stripes Day – Was held on 21 June 2023. The University promoted the latest version of the climate stripes. Climate stripes were projected onto iconic landmark buildings in key cities around the world.

Engaged University:

- University of Sanctuary - Earlier this month, the University had its appraisal meeting to become a university of sanctuary following submission of an application over a year ago.
- Join the Globe Trail Project - Students, staff and supporters of the University of Reading could join the Globe Trail project to help fund, select and unveil the new works of art, which will collectively create a thought-provoking art trail reflecting the legacy of the transatlantic slave trade will create a striking permanent public art exhibition on the University of Reading's campuses.
- Celebration of volunteering - In April, the Chancellor hosted more than 150 students, staff, alumni and supports at our inaugural Celebration of Volunteering awards in partnership with Reading Students Union (RSU).
- Shinfield - The University had been delivering a targeted programme of engagement to Shinfield residents on sport and recreation proposals in the local area.

Items for report and approval

23/20 Report of the University Executive Board

There was no report from UEB on this occasion as items had been covered in the Vice-Chancellor's address or elsewhere in the papers.

23/21 Report of the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience

The Senate received the Report of the meetings of the University Board for Teaching, Learning and Student Experience (UBTLSE) held on 14 March, 25 April, 15 May and 6 June 2023.

The report contained recommendations/actions in respect of the:

- Provisions in the event that assessment marks are not available as a consequence of major disruption

and updates on:

- Changes to policies

- Education for Sustainable Development
- Office for Students' Student Outcomes measures
- Safeguarding, Online Safety, and Under 18s policies and guidance
- Portfolio Review Pathway
- Examinations 2023 and future plans
- Surveys
- University Mental Health Charter
- International Student Experience
- Industrial Action Contingency Group
- Sector bodies and national initiatives

In particular, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor McCrum thanked all those colleagues who had supported the University Mental Health Charter submission.

The Senate was asked to approve and commend to Council proposed amendments to the provisions in the event that assessment marks were not available as a consequence of major disruption. The Senate noted that a small group had been reflecting since the pandemic on provisions for various scenarios that might cause major disruption. More detailed proposals would be submitted back to Senate in due course.

The Vice-Chancellor assured the Senate that for any scenario the powers of Senate would remain with Senate.

Senate approved the proposed amendments for transmission to the Council.

23/22 Report of the University Board for Research and Innovation

The Senate received the report of the University Board for Research and Innovation held on 12 June 2023.

In particular the Senate noted that the Board had:

- Reviewed its Terms of Reference in advance of the next academic year
- Received updates from the PVCs (R&I) including:
 - University work on research culture
 - QS World Rankings by Subject
 - THE Impact Rankings
 - Research-related elements of the Strategic Foundation Programme
 - Funding body plans for the next REF
- Received information about the plans for allocation of internal research funds in 2023/24.
- Received the business case for the Current Research Information System.
- Approved the Research Division award targets, subject to further discussion with Heads of School and potential adjustment for selected Divisions.

- Reviewed research-related diversity and inclusion data.
- The Board received minutes and summaries of recent meetings from the University Committee for Research and Innovation, the Committee on Researcher Development and PGR Studies, and the Committee on Open Research and Researcher Integrity.
- Received the annual report from the Research Travel Grant sub- group
- Approved the annual statement of compliance with the Concordat to Support Research integrity and the annual report for the Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers for onward transmission to Senate and the Council.

Senate, for its part, approved the two Concordats for submission to the Council.

The Senate noted that UKRI had recently published their initial decisions on the high-level design of the next Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2028:

<https://www.ukri.org/publications/ref2028-initial-decisions-and-issues-for-further-consultation/>

It was noted that:

- There was some degree of continuity with Units of Assessments (UoAs) not changing and peer review remaining at the heart of REF.
- Institutions would no longer submit individual members of staff, and there would be no census date.
- The submission would draw from HESA 24/25.
- There would be no minimum or maximum output requirement.
- There was a stronger emphasis on equality and diversity.
- There were significant changes to weightings and greater emphasis on research culture.
- The range of staff permitted to submit work to REF would now include research-enabling staff.
- Impact would continue to represent 25% of the final quality profile.
- The requirement for a minimum of two impact case studies would be reduced to one.
- Further consultation would follow.
- Work would need to take place shortly to determine which UoAs the University would submit to

The REF should not impact the work on the Individual Expectations Framework – REF was an important, but not the only consideration, in respect of research.

The Senate asked for a further update on the changes to REF in due course.

23/23 Report of the Global Engagement Strategy Board

The Senate received the report of the Global Engagement Strategy Board held on 6 October 2022, 30 November 2022, 21 March 2023, and 18 May 2023.

In particular the Senate noted that the Board had:

- Reviewed its membership and terms of reference, with particular changes to:
 - Review and set priorities for sustainable transnational education
 - Review and set priorities for international partnerships and international student recruitment, reporting to the Planning and Change Board
 - Maintain oversight of the international student experience in the UK and offshore
- Considered the results of the International Student Barometer.
- Reviewed the Global Engagement Strategic Priorities.
- Reviewed partnership activity.
- Discussed activity at the University of Reading Malaysia and governance arrangements for the NUIST project.
- Received updates on the progress of the India Office.

23/24 Student Recruitment and Admissions Update

The Senate received and noted a report from Global Recruitment and Admissions on the current recruitment position. Pro-Vice-Chancellor Professor Fellowes informed the Senate that the University was in a good position for this round of undergraduate recruitment but there were still issues with PGT.

23/25 Report from RSU

The Senate received reports from the outgoing RSU Officers highlighting their achievements over the last year, including:

- Work on addressing the cost-of-living crisis
- Reading University Student Sustainability Summit
- Community Festival
- Work on Renters Reform
- Withdrawing from NUS UK
- Work to showcase clubs and societies
- TEF student submission
- Course Rep Review
- Anti-sexual harassment campaigns
- Free period products

Members of Senate thanked the Officers for all their work and wished them well in the future.

The Senate welcomed the incoming RSU Officers and noted their plans and manifesto pledges for the coming year.

Items for note

23/26 Reports of Examiners for Higher Degrees by thesis

The Senate approved recommendations for the award or otherwise of Higher Degrees.

23/27 Examinations for Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates

The Senate authorised the Vice-Chancellor to approve May/June/July 2023 examination results on its behalf.

23/28 Chair's Action

The Senate noted that the following items had been approved by Chair's action:

- Addition to Ordinance C3 of Master of Law (MLaw)
- That Dr Karen Poulter can act as alternate Chair for SSCER hearings
- Amendments to the Ordinances 2022/23

Senate endorsed the amendments to Ordinance for transmission to the Council.

23/29 Appointments to Committees and other bodies

In respect of appointments, the Senate noted that:

- There were two vacancies available from 1 August 2023 for members of the Senate to join the Joint Honorary Degrees Committee
- There were two vacancies available from 1 August 2023 for members of Senate to join the Senate Agenda Group
- There was one vacancy on UBRI from 1 August 2023
- There would shortly be a call for nominations for the vacancy for Senate representative on the Council from 1 August 2023

Senators interested in any of the vacancies should contact the Secretary.

23/30 Retirement of Professors

The Senate approved that under the provisions of Ordinance B7 the title of Emeritus/ta Professor be conferred with effect from the date indicated on:

Professor John Board (30.4.23)

Professor Roger Flanagan (31.7.23)

Professor Judith Ellis (31.8.23)

Professor Brian Cheyette (31.8.23)

Professor Sarah Brewer (31.8.23)

Professor Richard Sibly (30.9.23)

Professor Barbara Goff (30.9.23)

23/31 Other retirements

The Senate approved that that the following be accorded the title of Honorary Fellow for a period of five years with effect from the date indicated:

Philip Jones (31.03.23)

Lynn Moore (11.4.23)

Ann Frank (21.4.23)

Dr Shalini Sinha (16.5.23)

Neil Blanchonnet (28.7.23)

Denise Powell (31.8.23)

Darrell Marchand (31.8.23)

Dr Anthony Worrall (30.9.23)

23/32 List of meetings in 2023-24

The Senate received the final version of the list of meetings for 2023-24 for its information.

23/33 Date of next meeting

Wednesday 1 November 2023 at 2.15 pm