UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

MEETING OF SENATE

The meeting was held on Wednesday 1 October 2025
at 2.00 p.m. in the Council Room, Fielding Johnson Building

MINUTES

Attendees: Nishan Canagarajah (Chair), Henrietta O'Connor, Richard Thomas, Linda Ralphs, Teela Sanders, Dirk Schaefer, Dan Ladley, Carolyn Tarrant, Eleanor Jackson, Rebecca Draper, Steve Williams, Mitesh Subhash Vaghela, Hilary Coyle, Mary Ann Lund, Alison Snape, Leena Sodha, Emma Sleath, Matthias Dahm, Chris Wilkins, Ljilijana Marjanovic-Halburd, Stewart Fishwick, Ruth Young, Carlo Panara, Simon Gay, Deborah Price, Steve Conway, David Cousins, Simon Vaughan, Kevin Paterson, Claire Brock, Edward Jones, Sandeep Handa, Simon Gill, Julie Morrissey, Neil Greening, James Fitchett, Paul Baines, Adam C. Povey, Caren Frosch, Sarah Knight, Nicola Bateman, Cleo Cornou, Grace Lewis-Bettison, Joshua Soetan, Fatma- Zahra Hassan and Pragna Srinvas

In attendance: Geoff Green (Registrar and Secretary), Railene Barker (UCU observer), Andrew McGee (Unite observer) and Sally Priddle (Assistant Secretary)

Apologies: Thompson Robinson, Steven Bull, David Wright, Krista Cowman and Matt Schofield

INTRODUCTORY BUSINESS

1. Welcomes and declarations of interest

1.1 Senate welcomed new members:

- Linda Ralphs, Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education)
- Mitesh Subhash Vaghela, Professional Services representative
- Simon Gill, CSE representative
- Julie Morrissey, CLS representative
- Neil Greening, CLS representative
- Adam C. Povey, elected Science and Engineering representative
- Caren Frosch, elected Life Science representative
- Sarah Knight, elected Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities representative
- Andrew Johnstone, Head of School HYPIR
- Matt Schofield, President of Students Union
- Cleo Cornou, Students Union representative
- Pragna Srinivas- Business School student representative
- Joshua Soetan – CSE student representative
- Grace Lewis- Bettison- CSSAH student representative
- Fatma- Zahra Hassan- CLS student representative
- UCU- Railene Barker (UCU) and Andrew McGee (Unite)

1.2 Senate noted that there were no declarations reported in advance.

2. Minutes of previous meeting

Decision:

2.1 Senate APPROVED the minutes of the meeting held on 11 June 2025 as an accurate record.

2.2 Senate NOTED that all actions from previous meetings had been completed.

3. Annual Review of Powers and Senate Governance Framework

3.1 Senate CONSIDERED the powers of Senate, Senate Governance Framework and Membership 2025-26 and noted that the document had been revised to improve clarity of operations.

Decision:

3.2 Senate APPROVED the powers of Senate, Senate Governance Framework and Membership 2025-26

4. **Chair's Business, including:**

4.1 Senate noted a verbal update from the President and Vice-Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor had circulated a start of term welcome message and thanked colleagues for their work to recruit and welcome students.

4.2 The Vice-Chancellor had attended the Labour Conference on behalf of the University, sessions had included the role of civic universities, health and how universities had contributed to growth in the Country. It was a positive opportunity to engage with ministers and local MPs. Bridget Philipson announced that maintenance allowance would be reintroduced for disadvantaged students studying subjects that aligned with the industry allowance. The Vice-Chancellor and leaders of other institutions had pushed for a review of the maintenance allowance and although the proposal was welcome, there were concerns it was only for certain subjects. The allowance would be funded by the international student levy which was problematic and made institutional finances worse, the levy would be £4m for University of Leicester. There was ongoing lobbying to review the international levy. The previous government's target was no longer necessary, the revised target was two thirds of students would go to Higher Education or a gold standard degree awarding apprenticeship.

4.3 The guidance for the next Research Excellence Framework had been delayed although the timeline for submission and assessment had not changed.

4.4 Senate noted that the Chair had undertaken one action on behalf of Senate since the last meeting. The Chair had approved the conferment of degrees on 19 June 2025.

5. Provost's Business

5.1 Senate received a verbal update from the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor. An update on the Strategic Review was provided, it was reported that no decisions had been made including any decisions on redundancies. Strike action was taking place as a result that the University could not rule out compulsory redundancies. There was ongoing dialogue with campus trade unions. The next stage was that, if any decisions were required, they would be announced in November. The University had a 90-day consultation period. Senate's role in the review was shared, if any decisions were required, Senate would play a consultative and advisory role assessing the risk to teaching quality, research output and student experience. Senate would need to be assured that decisions were academic ally sound, aligned with the University's educational mission, in the context of financial position. The Strategic Review was integrated into the educational and research risks on the University's Strategic Risk Register.

5.2 During the discussion the following points were made:

5.3 Senate discussed how it would feed into decision making for the strategic review.

5.4 A concern was expressed about Executive engagement with unions on the specific point on compulsory redundancies.

5.5 A question was raised as to how Senate could take a sensible look at proposals and make informed decisions, without feeling like "have" to approve it. It was reported that there were clear governance processes in place which set out how and when Senate would be asked to make decisions around the Strategic Review. In addition, if consultation was launched, then all members of the community could feed into the proposals.

5.6 Senate received a verbal update on the Freedom of Speech obligations. The revised Code of Practice had approved by Council in July and it was shared with the community ahead of its implementation date on 1 August 2025. A detailed action plan has been developed and sets out steps the University needs to take to ensure compliance with regulatory guidance. The requirements impact all areas and operations within the University. Training would be provided to staff and students to support them in their understanding of their duties and the rights of others. The University had a Freedom of Speech working group who were overseeing the institutional response to the requirements and ensuring the University had the necessary controls in place.

STRATEGIC BUSINESS

6. Annual Review of Strategy and Progress and Key Performance Indicators

6.1 Senate received a presentation on the institutional progress towards the University's Strategy and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). It noted that there had been positive progress on 4 KPIs including 3 of the academic KPIs- the Internal Student Survey, Research Income (per FTE) and Student Engagement. Senate noted that there had been a negative progress on one of the academic KPIs, Doctoral Completions (per FTE), it was reported that it was envisaged that this downward trend would be reversed when the strategic investment in 150 (F100/F50) studentships complete their PhDs (25/26 & 26/27).

6.2 Senate discussed how research excellence was considered in performance and promotions, it was agreed that University mechanisms should enable leaders to support research performance and excellence.

6.3 Senate discussed the disappointment that the awarding gap had widened between 2022/23 and 2023/24 and noted that internal data forecast an improvement but further work was required to understand the reasons behind the changes.

6.4 Senate asked for additional commentary in future reports as to the likelihood of achieving targets in the future and welcomed proposals to raise awareness of the institutional priorities and KPIs.

6.5 Senate discussed how the annual report was shared and brought to the community's attention. It was noted that the report was published on the University's website and the aims were embedded in the responsibilities of the Education and Research Committees.

6.6 Senate noted that the University was five years into the implementation of the ten-year strategy, it was an opportunity to review and refresh to ensure the aims were fit for purpose and represented the University's ambitions. It was noted that the strategy review would take place following the conclusion of the Strategic Review.

7. Research and Enterprise Matters

7.1 Senate CONSIDERED the World Changing Research Annual Report and noted the positive progress against all four themes, including record level of Research Awards (£106.3m) and Research Income (£84.9m), revised structure to support research centres and strengthening of research governance. There had been a strong PGR recruitment of 350 students and significant progress in Postgraduate Researcher Experience Survey (PRES) – 81% expressing overall satisfaction (73% in 2022). There had been increased innovation and enterprise activities including establishing two spin-out companies: Perpetual Atomics (SPL / CSE) and Museum Data Service (CSAAH). Senate discussed the challenging funding landscape and considered how processes could support smaller grant awards as these were essential for early career researchers. Senate noted that the Research Excellence Framework 2029 guidance had been delayed.

7.2 Senate discussed the work underway to strengthen the frameworks in place to support Postgraduate Researchers (PGRs) and Early Career Researchers (ECRs), nurturing the next generation of researchers.

7.3 Senate discussed the need to prioritise the allocation of institutional resources to support larger grants but noted that smaller grants were essential for earlier careers and some subjects only attracted smaller grants.

7.4 Senate CONSIDERED the proposed Visiting Research Policy, it would provide a robust, consistent approach for considering visiting academic requests, mitigate the risk of a lack of oversight and ensure adherence to compliance requirements. The Policy would ensure that approved visits were at least cost neutral, although it allowed for flexibility in exceptional circumstances for example, supporting visits from the global south. It was noted that the Policy did not apply to PGRs as there was an existing policy in place for the management of these visits. It was noted that visits approved as part of partnership arrangements should still utilise the policy as it would ensure that individuals understood the University's compliance requirements and the obligations, they were subject to whilst working at the University. It was reported that the policy would be implemented from January 2026.

7.5 Senate CONSIDERED the Research risks on Strategic Risk Register**.** The risks had been updated to include the potential impact of the Strategic Review. It was noted that the Review may affect research morale and increased the risk of high performing researchers leaving the University; Senate discussed the effectiveness of the proposed mitigations. Senate noted that research productivity may have already been impacted in academic areas affected by the Strategic Review.

Decision:

7.6 Senate **APPROVED** the proposed Visiting Research Policy.

8. Education and Student Matters

8.1 Senate CONSIDERED an update from the Education Committee including recommendations to revise the terms of reference for Education Committee to include the requirement to record and address Freedom of Speech concerns in decision making and note the new teaching quality guidance. Senate considered the recommendation to revise Regulation 7: Regulations governing the assessment of taught programmes to update the terms surrounding external examination to reflect the recommendations arising from the most recent review of Undergraduate external examining reports.

8.2 Senate considered and NOTED the annual student mental health and wellbeing report. It noted that a high number of students were seeking mental health support for financial stresses and these were affecting so many aspects of their experiences. The national cost of living challenges were increasingly affecting students, the Education Lead for College of CSSASH was leading a project to better understand the financial pressures faced by students and make recommendations for how the University's resources could be best utilised to have the greatest impact.

8.3 Senate NOTED the outcome of the Ofsted inspection of the University's degree apprenticeship provision, carried out on 4 to 6 June 2025. The overall outcome of the inspection was Good, and all inspection themes were individually graded Good. The report outlined a wide range of effective practice and recognised the positive attitude of University of Leicester apprentices, a highly inclusive culture, effective leadership, highly qualified and expert staff, and high student attainment.

8.4 Senate CONSIDERED the Research Inspired Education Annual Report and that there was strong progress towards the achievement of aims. The Education Academy and Communities of Practice were driving innovation and best practice in teaching and learning. Senate discussed the need for further work to close the minority ethnic awarding gap. Senate considered the current challenges around the changing demographic of the student profile, student skills gaps and variability of performance across Schools. Senate noted that the priorities for 2025-26 were Teaching Quality, Assessment and feedback, 100 hours work-related learning, digital skills (especially AI literacy), and inclusive education.

8.5 Senate CONSIDERED the National Student Survey 2025 Results and next steps. The University had achieved continued improvement, with positivity up to 85% in 2025 (from 83.2% in 2024), five of seven NSS themes now meet or exceed the institutional target (top 3 deciles) whilst two priority areas remained below target: teaching on my course (improved but slipped from decile 5 → 6) and assessment and feedback (improved +2.5pp but stayed in decile 6). Senate considered how academic areas could understand what about teaching provision was not resonating with students, focus groups would be scheduled in Schools with particularly low scores to understand more about students' views.

8.6 Senate CONSIDERED the Education Risks on the Strategic Risk Register and noted that the potential impact of the Strategic Review had been integrated across the risks including the implications of industrial action.

8.7 Senate CONSIDERED an update on the Students Union Priorities and noted that the priorities for the year were: providing targeted support for students in departments affected by the university's strategic review to maintain a high-quality student experience, lobbying to increase meaningful on-campus student employment, building a stronger Postgraduate Research (PGR) student community, undertaking analysis of NSS addressing areas where student experience scores were disproportionately low, and tackling loneliness particularly among groups such as LGBT+, Disabled, and Mature Students through targeted community-building initiatives.

Decisions:

8.8 Senate **APPROVED** changes to Senate Regulation 7.

8.9 Senate **APPROVED** changes to Education Committee Terms of Reference and Membership.

9. Freedom of Speech Update

9.1 Senate CONSIDERED update on the new Freedom of Speech requirements and the proposed steps the University would take to ensure compliance. A number of academic processes would have to be reviewed including admissions, curriculum development and research ethics, the outputs of the reviews would be reported to Senate for consideration and approval over the course of the 2025-26 academic year. Senate noted that there was an institutional responsibility for ensuring compliance with the new requirements, therefore training and communication would be key to enabling a compliance culture in this area.

SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

10. Senate Effectiveness Review

10.1 Senate CONSIDERED the final update on the Senate Effectiveness Review implementation plan. It was noted that the majority of the actions had now been implemented. The post Senate communication, report to Council and development sessions would be implemented in the 2025-26 academic year after the first Senate meeting so were currently RAG rated amber but Senate noted they would be completed within the year.

11. Sexual Misconduct and Harassment Policy

11.1 Senate CONSDIERED the revised Sexual Misconduct and Harassment Policy that had been updated to ensure the University meet the new Office for Students (OfS) E6 sexual misconduct and harassment condition of registration. Following consideration by Senate, the policy would be reviewed at People, EDI and Wellbeing Committee ahead of submission to Council in December for final approval.

Decisions:

11.2 Senate RECOMMENDED the revised Sexual Misconduct and Harassment Policy to Council for approval.

REPORTED BUSINESS

12. Research and Enterprise Committee*

12.1 Senate CONSIDERED the report of a meeting held 19 September 2025.

Decisions:

12.2 Senate **APPROVED** revisions to the Research and Enterprise Committee's terms of reference**.**

13. Reputation Performance Board*

13.1 Senate CONSIDERED the report of a meeting held 25 June 2025.

14. Recruitment and Performance Board*

14.1 Senate CONSIDERED the report of a meeting held 8 July 2025.

15. For Senate to Note*

15.1 Senate NOTED the University Officer appointments.

15.2 Senate NOTED the programmes approved and withdrawn.

15.3 Senate NOTED the outcomes of Student Discipline Panels.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

16. Forward Business Schedule*

16.1 Senate NOTED the Forward Business Schedule

17. Dates of future meetings*

17.1 Senate NOTED the meeting dates scheduled for 2025-26 were Wednesday 25 February 2026 and Wednesday 10 June 2026.

18. Any Other Business

18.1 No additional business was raised.

The meeting lasted 120 minutes.