UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

MEETING OF SENATE

Meeting was held on Wednesday 12 February 2025
at 2.00 p.m. in the Council Room, Fielding Johnson Building

MINUTES

Present: Nishan Canagarajah (Chair), Ayomide Irene Akinsinmide, Paul Baines, David Bartram, Nicola Bateman, Claire Brock, John Challis, Steve Conway, David Cousins, Krista Cowman, Hilary Coyle, Matthias Dahm, Sarah Davies, Rebecca Draper, Frank Dudbridge, Sandra Dudley, Stewart Fishwick, James Fitchett, Zoe Groves, Pranabashis Haldar, Sandeep Handa, Eleanor Jackson, Don Jones, Liz Jones, Aishwarya Kote, Dan Ladley, Grace Lewis-Bettison, Ljiliana Marjanovic-Halburd, Jayne Marshall, Henrietta O'Connor, Carlo Panara, Gemma Parker, Deborah Price, Gabrielle Provan, Mark Purnell, Teela Sanders, Alison Snape, Leena Sodha, Joshua Soetan Simona Storchi, Simon Vaughan, Geerten Vuister, Chris Wilkins, Ruth Young.

In attendance: Geoff Green (Registrar and Secretary), Alison Dubas (Governance Office), Sally Priddle (Head of Governance, minutes)

Observers: Marialuisa Crosatti (Unite), Caren Frosch (UCU), Elizabeth Warhurst (Deputy Secretary and General Legal Counsel)

Apologies for absence were received from Grace Lewis-Bettison, Steven Bull, Tracey Dodman, Simon Gay, Reed James, Eamonn Mallon, Isuri Dimasha Mannapperuma, Catherine Morley, Andre Ng, Kevin Paterson, Linda Ralphs, Tom Robinson, Emma Sleath, Richard Thomas, Joshitha Venkataraman, Steve Williams, David Wright

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

25/M01 WELCOME

1.1 The Chair welcomed new members of Senate and deputies to the meeting.

25/M02 STANDING BUSINESS

2.1 Declarations of Interest

2.2 There were no declarations of interest.

2.3 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

2.4 Senate **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2024 as an accurate record.

2.5 Matters Arising

2.6 Senate **noted** the responses to the matters arising and that all items had been closed.

25/M03 CHAIRS' UPDATE

3.1 The Vice-Chancellor provided an update on strategic and sector matters. During the discussion the following points were made.

3.2 Court had been held on Friday 7 February 2025 which was an annual meeting of community leaders and University stakeholders. It was an opportunity to update members on progress against the University's strategy, achievements and challenges.

3.3 The current Chair of Council's term of office would conclude at the end of the academic year, recruitment for a replacement was underway.

3.4 The Government announced the Higher Education Reform Bill in November 2024 which aimed to support students and stabilise the university sector. The University was actively feeding into the shape of the Bill, including welcoming a delegation from the Department for Education (DfE) to demonstrate how the University delivered on the Government's priorities.

3.5 The Government had announced a comprehensive spending review and Universities UK (UUK) had published their submission to the government focused on growth, opportunity and sustainability. The submission identified the challenges with real term reductions in funding from tuition fees, QR funding and strategic priority grants.

3.6 It was **noted** that the DfE had removed the success measure for Schools that tracked the number of students who went to Russell Group institutions, this was a welcome change for the University. Schools would now be assessed on entrance to high tariff universities.

3.7 The Vice-Chancellor reported that the University was focusing on boosting student recruitment as it was key to supporting all institutional activities.

25/M04 PROVOST'S BUSINESS

4.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost provided an update on key matters for Senate's attention. During the discussion the following points were made.

4.2 Teaching quality remained an institutional priority. Members were asked to revisit the institutional teaching quality guidance including checking the contents of Blackboard and reading lists.

4.3 Teaching peer observations were underway in Schools. Schools were thanked for their full participation.

4.4 Heads of School had a significant leadership role in education quality and therefore it was asked that any concerns or anomalies that may arise were escalated at the earliest opportunity.

4.5 The Provost drew Senate's attention to the blog that had been published sharing that, in light of the institution's financial position, academic promotions had been paused. It was **noted** that, as reported at previous meetings, Senior Staff Pay Awards had been paused earlier in the academic year. The University's ordinances set out a series of measures that could be implemented to avoid redundancies and after appropriate consideration, these were being taken. The Provost confirmed that the Executive was aware that these were difficult decisions but the Executive wished to be transparent about the challenges and the strategies being taken to ensure the longer term sustainability of the University.

4.6 Members **noted** the challenging financial circumstances in which the University was operating. It was suggested that colleagues would welcome the data on the cost of promotions round in previous years to understand the level of savings. A question was raised about the mode of communication and whether emails would have been preferred. The Provost reported that the Executive had published a series of blogs about the financial circumstances and following concerns colleagues had not seen the blogs, a request had been made to senior leaders to cascade the messaging.

4.7 A concern was raised about the impact of the decision on the career progression of junior colleagues and whether an exceptional approach could be implemented. A further concern was raised about the retention of certain grades who may be able to get progression opportunities elsewhere.

4.8 A question was raised about whether the promotions round could go ahead without implementing the pay increases. The Provost reported that HR was investigating whether this was possible, it was **noted** that it would be difficult to implement because of implications for pay equality.

4.9 It was **noted** that Heads of School and other senior leaders would welcome more information to be able to be transparent with, and support, staff.

25/M05 STRATEGIC BUSINESS TO CONSIDER

5.1 <u>Strategic Theme Update: Our Citizens</u>

5.2 Senate **received** an update from the Our Citizens lead, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Head of College and Executive Dean of University of Leicester School of Business.

5.3 Senate **noted** the key achievements of 2023/24 academic year, including: development of a Partnership strategy, identifying top 20 partnerships, launch of the Policy Institute and development of Strategic Influencing Plan, supporting and encouraging student and staff volunteering via the Volunteering Hub, furthering work with the Universities Partnership Development, and, aligning the curriculum with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and launch of the Social Values Portal, that required suppliers to align with the University's values.

5.4 Senate **noted** that the University was on track to achieve its three Our Citizens strategic key performance indicators (KPIs).

5.5 Senate **noted** that the priorities for 2024/25 academic year were: development of systems and processes to maximise partnerships, development of Public Engagement Strategy, build community engagement and awareness, and, increased focus on engagement with sustainability.

5.6 A member highlighted the importance of integrating the University's enterprise work into Our Citizens Strategy.

5.7 A member asked about the sustainability of the strategy's implementation in light of the University's financial challenges. It was reported that the strategy was core to the University's mission and strategic commitments, furthermore it had a small non-pay budget.

5.8 A question was raised about the University's approach to student attendance and engagement. It was confirmed that engagement with the strategy was tracked differently to student engagement with academic activities. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education reported that the University was looking at how students' attendance was tracked, particularly considering inclusivity needs.

5.9 Senate **noted** the Strategic Theme Update: Our Citizens.

5.10 <u>Reorganisation of Museum Studies and Archaeology and Ancient History</u>

5.11 Senate **considered** the proposal to merge two Schools within The College of Social Science, Arts and Humanities (CSSAH), School of Museum Studies and School of Archaeology & Ancient History. The proposal aimed to protect and enhance their research possibilities and provide additional opportunities for students. During the discussion the following points were made:

5.12 It was important that students understood the impact of the changes on their degrees and experience. It was reported that student experience was at the forefront of considerations, for the majority of students they would not see a difference but for some students it would be an opportunity to share supervisors.

5.13 Maintaining the strength of the brand of courses would be managed throughout the merger.

5.14 The staff survey had highlighted staff's concerns about how change processes were managed and communicated. The merger management group had not had union representation and this could have been an easy way to ensure communication around change. It was reported that the unions had been appropriately consulted via alternative routes. The union observer expressed concern that the University's response to union's feedback had not been received ahead of the papers being circulated. It was reported that the proposal was the initiation of the change process and the union would continue to be engaged with throughout the process, providing opportunities to discuss specific concerns.

5.15 Senate **approved** the reorganisation of Museum Studies and Archaeology and Ancient History.

5.16 <u>Annual Academic Assurance Statement</u>

5.17 Senate **considered** a presentation on the Higher Education regulatory context including how quality and standards are regulated, how the University ensures compliance with requirements and lessons learnt from recent inspections at other institutions.

5.18 Senate **noted** that the Annual Academic Assurance Statement sets out how the University's quality assurance processes ensured compliance with the relevant ongoing conditions of registration, prescribed by the Office for Students. The assurance statement was provided annually through the academic governance framework from Education Committee to Senate for recommendation to Council, as the University's governing body.

5.19 Senate **approved** the Annual Academic Assurance Statement for recommendation to Council.

25/M06 SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

6.1 Senate Effectiveness Review

6.2 Senate **noted** the progress of the response to the Senate Effectiveness Review and that additional recommendations on next steps would be reported to the Summer term Senate.

6.3 Summary Report of Items for Approval

6.4 **Annual Review of Student Protection Plan**

6.5 The Student Protection Plan was a requirement under the C conditions of registration with the Office for Students that set out the manner in which the University would protect students' interests in a number of circumstances relating to the ability of the University to deliver their programmes.

6.6 A question was raised about how the risk to teaching facilities was articulated as 'very low'. It was reported that this had been considered in the drafting process and the document focused on extreme circumstances, however it was important to have a robust understanding of the utilisation of space on campus and any required business continuity plans. This would be considered further in the drafting for future plan versions.

6.7 Senate **approved** the Student Protection Plan 2025-26 for recommendation to Council.

6.8 **Degree Outcomes Statement**

6.9 Senate **approved** the Degree Outcomes Statement for recommendation to Council.

6.10 **Academic Governance Code of Practice (Terms of Reference)**

6.11 Senate **noted** the need to reflect the Students' Union's new officer structure in the University's governance structure for 2025-26 academic year. **[Action: Head of Governance]**

6.12 Senate **approved** the Academic Governance Code of Practice (Terms of Reference).

6.13 Ordinances, Statutes and Regulations

6.14 Senate **noted** the proposal to revise Council's constitution set out in Statute Four (the Council) and the recommendation to increase the student representation from one to two, with the hope that the second representative would be a Postgraduate Researcher to provide a different insight to Council.

6.15 Senate **considered** a proposal to revise Regulation Two (Resumption of Studies) which would give students the opportunity to be readmit to a different academic pathway if they did not succeed on their original pathway. It was **noted** that the safeguards to protect students re-entering the University would be tailored to the individual student's needs.

6.16 Senate **considered** a proposal to revise Senate Regulation Nine (Research Degrees) which included revising the number of hours Postgraduate Researcher Students would be able to work, in line with UKVI regulations, and confirming that the probationary report was not optional.

6.17 Senate **noted** the proposal to amendments to Statute Four (Council).

6.18 Senate **approved** the revisions to Senate Regulation Two (Resumption of Studies).

6.19 Senate **approved** the revisions to Senate Regulation Nine (Research Degrees).

6.20 <u>Programme Development</u>

6.21 Senate **noted** the Annual Report – Programme Development, Approval and Modification.

25/M07 REPORTED BUSINESS

7.4 <u>Education Committee</u>

7.5 Senate **noted** a report from the Education Committee.

7.5 <u>Research and Enterprise Committee</u>

7.6 Senate **noted** a report from the Research and Enterprise Committee.

7.6 <u>Recruitment Performance Board</u>

7.7 Senate **noted** a report from the Recruitment Performance Board.

25/M08 For Senate to Note:

8.1 <u>Programmes Approved and Withdrawn</u>

8.2 Senate **discussed** the number of programmes approved versus the number withdrawn and the need to keep a holistic view of the institutional portfolio. When establishing new programmes, a process for evaluation and review needed to be agreed to maintain the quality and viability of programmes. It was **noted** that a new University Portfolio Management Group had been established and would oversee course review. Furthermore, the new curriculum management system would include course evaluation.

8.3 Senate **noted** two errors in the report, the MSc Management, Finance and Accounting was in not the School of management and the BA Journalism and Marketing was not in the School of History Politics and International Relations.

8.4 Senate **noted** the Programmes Approved and Withdrawn report.

25/M9 FORWARD BUSINESS SCHEDULE

9.1 Senate **noted** the forward business schedule.

25/M10 DATES OF FUTURE MEETING

10.1 Senate **noted** that the next meeting of Senate was scheduled for Wednesday 11 June 2025 at 2pm.

25/M11 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

11.1 A member expressed concerns about staff morale and ongoing concerns about job security. It was reported that the University was not taking any action lightly, it was necessary action to ensure the University did not end up in a worse financial position. The Voluntary Severance Scheme had now closed, any further actions would be transparently shared with Senate and Council.

11.2 The Chair welcomed members to celebrate International Women in STEM subjects, International Women's Day and the range of events celebrating LGBT history month, across the coming weeks.