

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

MEETING OF SENATE

**Minutes of a meeting held on
Wednesday 2 October 2024**

Present: Nishan Canagarajah (Chair), Ayomide Irene Akinsinmide, Nicola Bateman, Tilly Blyth, Claire Brock, Steven Bull, Steve Conway, David Cousins, Hilary Coyle, Matthias Dahm, Sarah Davies, Nuala Devlin, Tracey Dodman, Frank Dudbridge, Stewart Fishwick, James Fitchett, Ian Forristal, Simon Gay, Zoe Groves, Sandeep Handa, Liz Jones, Dan Ladley, Grace Lewis-Bettison, Isuri Dimasha Mannapperuma, Jayne Marshall, Ljiliana Marjanovic-Halburd, Catherine Morley, Andre Ng, Henrietta O'Connor, Carlo Panara, Gemma Parker, Deborah Price, Gabrielle Provan, Linda Ralphs, Tom Robinson, Teela Sanders, Emma Sleath, Alison Snape, Leena Sodha, Timi Joshua Soetan, Richard Thomas, Simon Vaughan, Joshitha Venkataraman, Chris Wilkins, Steve Williams, David Wright, Ruth Young.

In attendance: Geoff Green (Registrar and Secretary), Alison Dubas (Governance Office), Rebecca Lord (Head of Strategic Planning), Andrew Petersen (for 24/M/26(b)), Alex Scown (Governance Office support).

Observers: Caren Frosch (UCU), Arjan Giga (Unite)

Apologies for absence were received from Phil Baker, John Challiss, Krista Cowman, Pranabashis Haldar, Eamonn Mallon, Kevin Paterson, Mark Purnell, Jacqui Shaw, Geerten Vuister and David Wright.

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

24/M17 **WELCOME**

The President and Vice-Chancellor welcomed Senators, attendees and observers to the meeting, in particular those who were attending their first meeting of Senate.

24/M18 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest.

24/M19 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING**

Senate **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 24 June 2024 as an accurate record.

Senate **noted** the responses to the matters arising.

24/M20 **ANNUAL REVIEW OF POWERS AND STANDING ORDERS OF SENATE**

Senate **approved** the powers of Senate and the Standing Orders of Senate.

24/M21 **SENATE MEMBERSHIP**

Senate **approved** its membership for 2024/25. It was **noted** that the Head of Molecular and Cell Biology was John Challiss and the correction would be made within the paperwork [ACTION: Governance Office].

24/M22 **CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

The President and Vice-Chancellor provided a report on key developments within the University and the wider higher education sector.

The President and Vice Chancellor thanked colleagues for their contributions during the previous academic year and reported a number of successes, which included the University of Leicester being awarded University of the Year 2025 by the Daily Mail and that it had been shortlisted for the Times Higher Education University of the Year award.

Senate **noted** the continued progress towards improving the student experience and student outcomes, which had delivered a positive impact to both the University's reputation and league table position. The Telegraph had completed a comparison and analysis of data related to world rankings, UCAS applications and graduation outcomes and reported that the University of Leicester had out performed Russell Group universities. An article reporting on the University's success with regard to graduate outcomes would be published shortly.

Senate **noted** the ongoing challenges within the University, and the higher education sector.

At its recent meeting, Nominations Committee had agreed that a member of Senate would be appointed to the memberships of both Finance and Infrastructure Committee and People, Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Wellbeing Committee. A nomination and election process would be progressed by the Governance Office and Senators were encouraged to participate [ACTION: Governance Office].

Senate **discussed** the closure of the Physics and Bennett buildings. Members were assured that the buildings had been under regular review, including regular surveys by external structural engineers. A survey of the building in June 2024 had found the risk of structural collapse of the buildings had changed from 'very unlikely' to 'unlikely'. At that point, the Executive Board made the decision, on health and safety grounds, to progress a controlled decant of the buildings during the summer vacation period.

24/M23 **CHAIR'S ACTION TAKEN SINCE THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Senate **noted** that the President and Vice Chancellor had approved, as Chair of Senate, the conferral of an undergraduate degree upon one Physiotherapy student, to enable the student to legally practice in Hong Kong.

24/M24 **PROVOST'S BUSINESS**

Senate **received** an update from the Provost and Deputy Vice Chancellor.

Matriculation ceremonies had taken place the previous week, which had been well attended in particular by students. Feedback would be sought from Heads of School, to help understand how the ceremonies could be utilised in the future. A vote of thanks was noted to the Students' Union for its support.

The Provost and Deputy Vice Chancellor and the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Professional Services) had published a blog providing an overview of the University's financial position. The blog acknowledged the ongoing financial challenges and outlined the actions being taken to overcome them. Focus was upon areas of key importance, such as quality of teaching delivery, and understanding how activity could be undertaken differently.

24/M25

STRATEGIC BUSINESS TO CONSIDER**(a) Annual Review of Strategy and Progress and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)**

Senate **received** a report on the progress of the strategy and KPIs and **noted** the following key points:

- The performance of the ten institutional strategic KPIs had been measured and rated using red, amber, green (RAG) ratings against both overall target and year- on- year milestones. Seven KPIs had been rated green, one was rated amber and two were rated red;
- The target to achieve Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) gold by 2030 had been exceeded. Work to maintain the gold ranking continued and a progress update would be reported to the Executive Board in November 2024;
- Despite relatively low response rates to the University's internal student survey, the overall student satisfaction rate had increased to 85.3%. The target was to achieve 90% by 2030;
- Although the education outcomes awarding gap had been rated red, it was recognised there had been a sector wide increase in the awarding gap. The University remained below the sector average; however, the aspiration to achieve 0% by 2025/26 was seen as no longer achievable within the timeframe and therefore this target would be reviewed and refreshed. Targeted work would be implemented within Schools to address the awarding gap and this was an area that continued to be closely monitored by the University;
- With respect to the Research Excellence Framework (REF), the original target had been to achieve a top 25 grade point average (GPA) position by 2030. In REF 2021, the University had ranked 30th and the ambition for this KPI had been reset to achieve a top 25 GPA position by 2030;
- Although progress towards the student engagement KPI milestone had decreased slightly since 2022/23, it remained on track to achieve the target milestone of 80% by 2030;
- The achievement of net zero carbon emissions by 2040 remained on track, albeit continued work was required to meet the target;
- Successful delivery of the financial sustainability target remained challenging and the associated KPI was therefore RAG rated red.

(b) Strategic Theme Update: World Changing Research

Senate **received** a report on the progress against the World Changing Research theme strategic aims and associated KPIs. Senate **noted** that there had been good progress made against each of the four strategic aims. Key achievements were highlighted, including:

- The University had experienced a record year for income generated by intellectual property licenses and two new spin out companies had been established;

- 2023/24 had been an exceptional year for postgraduate research recruitment and there had been successes in Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council funding and Natural Environment Research Council funding;
- There had been significant improved performance in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey 2024, with overall satisfaction scoring 82%, compared to 73% in 2022.

The priorities for 2024 delivery were outlined, which included increasing the number of very large and large consortium bids, implementing an institutional framework and roadmap for research culture, and continued focus upon Trusted Research and export control.

(c) National Student Survey (NSS) 2024 Results

Senate **considered** a report on the analysis of the NSS 2024 results and the action planning in response to institutional priorities.

In comparison with the previous two years, the University had improved its performance to rank within the top 30 UK higher education institutions, achieving 27th place according to analysis by the Times Higher Education. Senate **noted** the improvement compared to 39th position in 2023.

The University's positivity scores had increased across each of the seven NSS themes, resulting in an improvement in decile position for 'organisation and management' and 'student voice' metrics.

Although significant gains had been made in NSS results, Senate **noted** there were areas where further work was required to improve decile positions. This included, in particular, 'teaching on my course' and 'assessment and feedback'. To ensure the marking and feedback of assessment process was clear to students, information was being embedded within student induction.

To maintain TEF gold, there must be consistency across all subject areas and priority areas for further improvement would be set out for all individual Schools via education meetings, led by the Pro-Vice Chancellor Education.

The positivity gap between black and white students was highlighted as another priority area of focus. Although narrowing year-on-year, the gap still remained and therefore actions were being implemented to address and reduce it.

Senate **noted** and commended the positive NSS results and recognised that ongoing work was required to maintain and improve future scores.

(d) Students' Union Priorities 2024/25

Senate **received** a presentation from both the President of the Students' Union and the Community and Wellbeing Officer, which outlined each of the Officer priorities for 2024/25.

It was reported that the Education Officer had left their role and the Students' Union was progressing identifying a replacement.

Senate **noted** the Officer priorities highlighted, which included the following:

- Advocating for student rights and fair treatment by the University;
- Increased funding for mental health resources. This also encompassed increased signposting of the various resources available;
- To lobby for a revised examination resit timetable, with no more than one examination per day;
- Ensuring an operational campus foodbank. In addition, exploration of supporting students not on campus to access a foodbank was underway;
- Reimplementation of the student Nightline service.

24/M26

SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

(a) Senate Effectiveness Review

Senate **received** a report following the conclusion of the Senate Effectiveness Review.

Senate **approved** each of the recommendations presented within the report and **noted** that an implementation plan would be developed. Should any regulatory adjustments or changes be identified following the development of the implementation plan, these would be submitted for Senate's consideration at its June 2025 meeting [ACTION: Registrar & Secretary and Governance Office].

The low response rate to the survey was **noted** and it was suggested that future surveys be anonymised to encourage greater engagement.

(b) Summary Report of Items for Approval

Senate **considered** a summary report of items for approval.

Senate **approved** the following:

- The Education Committee terms of reference 2024/25;
- The Research and Enterprise Committee terms of reference 2024/25;
- The proposed amendments to Ordinance 34, which would also be submitted to Council for its approval.

Senate was also invited to approve proposed amendments to Senate Regulation 10 governing academic appeals, which included the establishment of a single deadline for full time, campus based taught students of 10 calendar days from results release and a slight reduction of the appeal deadline for postgraduate research, part time campus based and distance learning students to 20 calendar days after results release. Members **discussed** the timeframe and **considered** whether the deadline could be extended to allow students more time to submit an appeal.

It was **reported** that the Education Committee had considered this issue. Senate **noted** that the guiding principle of the review had been to ensure that the timeframes for appeal ensured that students could get an outcome in time to either undertake re-sits or return to study in a timely manner. The Committee had concluded that, if appeals were submitted over a longer period it would not be possible to ensure that students received timely outcomes, which would have a significant negative impact. Various models had been considered to ensure the correct balance between allowing students sufficient time to submit an appeal, with allowing sufficient time for appeals to be resolved. The Committee recommended 10 calendar days as the best option.

Senate **approved** the amendments to Senate Regulation 10 as presented within the paper, but **agreed** that the deadlines for appeal should be reviewed after 12 months to determine whether this was the best model.

Senate **noted** the proposed amendments to Statute Six and, following due process, that the amends would be submitted to two Council meetings for approval and finally submitted to the Privy Council for approval [ACTION: Governance Office].

(c) Access and Participation Plan (APP)

Senate **noted** the institutional APP 2025/26 and 2028/29, which had previously been approved by Council.

24/M27

REPORTED BUSINESS

Senate **considered** the following reports from Committees:

a. Education Committee

Senate **noted** reports from the meetings of the Education Committee held on 24 June and 16 September 2024.

Senate **noted** that, at its 24 June 2024 meeting, the Education Committee had approved a proposal to alter the terminology in the Senate Regulations to no longer refer to 'blind' marking. The terminology would instead be amended to 'independent' marking.

b. Research and Enterprise Committee

Senate **noted** the report from the meeting of the Research and Enterprise Committee held on 19 September 2024.

c. Senate Student Discipline Committee

Senate **noted** the report of the meeting of the Senate Student Discipline Committee held on 19 September 2024.

d. Reputation, Recruitment and Performance Board

Senate **noted** the report of the meeting of the Reputation, Recruitment and Performance Board held on 26 June 2024.

- e. Academic Promotions
Senate **noted** the staff who had been successfully promoted in the 2023/24 academic promotion cycle.
- f. University Officer Appointments
Senate **noted** the senior recruitment appointments made since the previous meeting held in June 2024.
- g. Programmes Approved and Withdrawn
Senate **noted** the summary of programmes in development, approved and withdrawn.
- h. Summaries of Senate Student Discipline Panels
Senate **noted** the summaries of the most recent student discipline panels held on 18 June, 27 June, 4 July, 15 July, 18 July, 1 August and 5 August 2024.

24/M28 **DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Senate **noted** the remaining meeting dates scheduled for 2024-25 as follows:

- Wednesday 12 February 2025 at 2pm
- Wednesday 11 June 2025 at 2pm

Duration of meeting: 115 minutes