



The
University
Of
Sheffield.

Office
Of The
President &
Vice-Chancellor.

The Senate, 11 December 2019

President & Vice-Chancellor's Report to Senate

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report provides summary information on current and forthcoming developments, both internal and external, for the information of Senate members. The President & Vice-Chancellor will introduce the Report at the meeting and members will have the opportunity to raise questions. This report is structured around each of the themes in the University Strategic Plan, after a section about the external environment. Where information relates to more than one strategic theme it is included under the most relevant theme. Where appropriate, reference is made to other papers that appear separately on the Senate agenda.

1. EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

1.1 General election

- On 31 October 2019, Parliament passed legislation to provide for a parliamentary general election to be held on 12 December 2019. Parliament was dissolved on 6 November 2019.
- Analysis is being undertaken on the political parties' manifestos to understand the potential impacts on the institution.
- **TUoS interest:** The University, in conjunction with the Students' Union, has launched a 'register to vote' campaign to encourage all eligible students to register to vote. In new rankings by Vote For Your Future and Times Higher Education, the University was ranked joint first for its student voter registration practices and has signed up to the [Make the Voter](#) pledge initiative.

1.2 Brexit

- A third extension to the UK's departure from the European Union has been agreed until 31 January 2020. The extension provides for the UK to leave the EU earlier than this date if the Withdrawal Agreement is ratified by both the UK and EU.
- The UK Government and the EU reached agreement on a revised Withdrawal Agreement and Framework for the Future Relationship on Thursday 17 October 2019. On 22 October 2019 MPs voted in support of the revised Withdrawal Agreement.
- **TUoS interest:** A Brexit Coordination Group, led by the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Gill Valentine, has been working to ensure that the University could be as prepared as possible for a No Deal Brexit. The Group had its last meeting on 24 October and next meets on 15 January 2020. Dr Tony Strike, University Secretary, delivered a [webinar](#) about the University's preparations for a no deal Brexit following a request from Universities UK (UUK) International.

1.3 International collaboration on research and innovation

- The Government has published Sir Adrian Smith's [independent advice](#) on the design of UK funding schemes for international collaboration, innovation and research. The report states that they were not convinced that a persuasive case could be made for sizeable levels of public spending on activities that replicate, line by line, EU research and innovation arrangements in the UK if the Government decides not to associate with Horizon Europe. Post-Brexit, the cost of this investment would need to be justified alongside competing demands for public spending. However, there should be public investment to stabilise and protect the assets, infrastructure and capabilities that have been created by decades of participation in EU research and innovation. If the UK does not associate with Horizon Europe, the report recommends additional investment on wider forms of international collaboration. Brexit should be used as a catalyst to raise overall R&D investment, to reduce regional disparities and to work towards a new global positioning for the UK.
- The report is likely to inform the shape of the UK's research and innovation sector post-Brexit, particularly if the Government is re-elected.
- **TUoS interest:** The University will monitor developments and any implications for the institution.

1.4 Harassment, hate crime and sexual misconduct

- UUK has published the findings of a members survey as a follow-up to its harassment and hate crime taskforce, [Changing the Culture](#). The Two Years On [report](#) explores progress towards tackling sexual misconduct and gender-based violence, harassment and hate crime. This has been most apparent with regards to prevention and tackling sexual harassment and misconduct and gender-based violence. Further work is required to address hate crime and UUK has launched an advisory group.
- **TUoS interest:** The University has launched an online platform, [Report + Support](#), for staff and students to report and access support about harassment, abuse, bullying, sexual violence and discrimination. Work will be undertaken with the Consent Collective, this included two events for staff and students in November 2019. The University participated in an Office for Students (OfS) funded project, Empowering students to take an active role in the University community – combating harassment, sexual violence and hate crime, which reported earlier this year.

1.5 Racial discrimination

- The Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) published a highly critical [report](#) into racial discrimination at UK higher education institutions. The report argues that universities are unaware of the scale of racial harassment on campus and overconfident in their ability to handle it. The recommendations include a mandatory duty on employers to increase protections for staff from harassment and giving adequate powers to regulators to hold universities to account on their performance to prevent and tackle harassment.
- **TUoS interest:** The Chair of the Race Equality Steering Group, issued a [response](#) on behalf of the University stating the institution's commitment to creating a safe, diverse and inclusive environment for staff and students. Council received an update on the Race Equality Strategy and Action Plan, and wider equality, diversity and inclusion matters, in October.

1.6 Degree classifications and outcomes

- Degree classifications and outcomes continue to generate a high level of government and regulatory interest. The UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) has [launched](#) two new initiatives to put information

about degree standards into the public domain. [Guidance](#) outlines how institutions should publish a degree outcomes statement during the 2019/20 academic year, signed off by the governing body, which analyses their institutional degree classification profile and articulates the results of an internal institutional review on the issue.

- UKSCQA also [published](#) a set of common degree classification descriptions, agreed by sector representative bodies, with agreed general criteria that students should meet in order to achieve the different classes of qualification at bachelor's honours degree level.
- **TUoS interest:** The University's degree outcomes statement will be prepared incorporating consideration of the degree classification system used at the institution. It will be presented to Council for approval in the 2019/20 academic session.

1.7 Value for Money

- The OfS has [published](#) its Value for Money Strategy 2019 – 2021 and identified issues to prioritise in addressing value for money including: improving teaching quality; protecting students as consumers; increasing transparency; and securing positive employment outcomes.
- UUK is [calling](#) on HE institutions to publish "value for money statements" on how they spend their income from tuition fees and elsewhere in order to improve transparency and has produced a [guide](#) for the sector with recommendations on how to present income and expenditure data for students.
- **TUoS interest:** The University is currently reviewing its Value for Money Strategy in light of the OfS publication.

1.8 Office for Students registration analysis

- The OfS has published a [report](#) analysing 523 applications from institutions to join the OfS Register. 387 providers have been registered, with eight providers refused registration and 84 assessments still ongoing. For 42 applications the assessment has either not begun or has been closed due to merger or at the provider's request. Of those registered, the majority (243) have the ability to charge the higher fee limit. Only 12 providers were subject to no regulatory interventions. The remainder had a variable number of regulatory interventions, with one provider having nine separate interventions. These take the form of formal communication (615), enhanced monitoring (464), and specific conditions (30).
- **TUoS interest:** The University is currently subject to enhanced monitoring for its Access and Participation Plan.

2. Vision

- Following publication of the University's Vision Green Paper, 16 staff town hall style events have taken place around the core strategic themes of 'Education', 'One University', 'Partnerships', and 'Research'. The onus has been gathering feedback from staff on the Vision, asking them to make recommendations on the University's priorities, and inviting them to submit their own ideas via the online Ideascale platform. Approximately 800 colleagues have attended the events held so far (data correct as of 14 November) and there have been 388 ideas and 3589 votes submitted on Ideascale. The majority of staff attending the town hall style sessions have been from professional services, with lower representation from academics and from staff on lower grades. Work to engage these constituencies is in train: there has been an EFM-only staff engagement event; Faculty-based Vision events have also been arranged.

There are also separate sessions being run for JUCC and the Alumni Board. The Students' Union, in partnership with the University, is leading the student part of the Vision consultation. There will be a number of events and focus groups where students can provide their input on the Vision Green Paper, including an Ask Your University event scheduled for early December. After all the consultation events have concluded (expected to be mid-December), the Executive will analyse the feedback and ideas received. Four Sub-Groups (one for each strategic theme) will coordinate this work, which the Department of Computer Science's Natural Language Processing Unit will facilitate by providing textual analysis support.

3. EDUCATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE

3.1 Exam support

- There is a new [Exam Support Video](#) for students, which explains the types of examination support available, how to access this support, and key deadlines.

3.2 Suicide mitigation and response

- The UEB Student Mental Health Strategy Group has approved a new [Suicide Mitigation & Response Policy](#).

3.3 Implementing a revised Annual Reflection Process for 2019-20

A revised Annual Reflection process is being launched this autumn and includes the following key features:

- **Use of data**
Annual reflection will be evidence-based, drawing on key internal and external indicators. The Academic Programmes Office (APO) will provide and review the data highlighting areas for focussed discussion. The data will be clearly presented showing trends and offer further granularity. This will be via a soft launch and developed year on year as new systems (and in particular SITS) increase our ability to provide the information that supports departments and moves away from a one size fits all approach.
- **Reduced burden for departments**
Departments will not be required to submit lengthy narratives or proformas and the output of the annual reflection meeting will be a set of action points (not plans) and will capture examples of good practice and impact. This will allow departments to spend time looking forward and implementing action rather than analysing information and writing reflections.
- **Strategic alignment**
The process will be aligned to L&T priorities and remove the need for multiple requests for action plans relating to L&T activity (TEF, NSS, PLA, APP) across the year. Agreed departmental priority areas/actions will be used to inform more targeted services and support. The approach will be evaluated to allow departments to input into what information and support would be helpful so the learning from this session can be used to make improvements going forward.

3.4 Annual Planning Round

- The annual Planning Round was launched in early October. Individual meetings, led by the DVC with support from the VPE, VPR&I and relevant Professional Services Directors, were held with the Executive from each of the five academic faculties and the AMRC to discuss their plans and individual areas of focus for this planning cycle.

- UEB continues to consider the current level and pace of change in the sector across all areas of activity. This has created new challenges to which UK universities must respond while maintaining their financial stability and continuing to deliver innovation and dynamism in student experience, research and knowledge exchange. Since the last planning cycle new challenges have emerged relevant to both this planning cycle and future years, in addition to ongoing political turmoil:
 - UKRI delivery plans 2019/20 highlighted the planned approach to delivering the government's target of 2.4% GDP spend on research and innovation by 2027 with a focus on delivering cross-council research.
 - Government policy post-Augar review remains unclear. The headline Augar recommendation to cut undergraduate tuition fees to £7,500 has been shelved. Aspects relating to fast-track two-year degrees and more part-time courses will be pushed via the Office for Students (OfS) while Further Education is receiving a boost to funding.
 - Although the sector awaits the outcomes of the independent review of the Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes Framework (TEF), communications from Gavin Williamson (Secretary of State for Education) have put renewed focus on subject level TEF with the first results from this exercise being published in 2021 and the next provider level TEF awards announced in 2020.
 - OfS has reiterated its willingness to use its formal powers to resolve issues such as grade inflation and unconditional offers if institutions fail to respond to their current concerns.
 - OfS has emphasised its commitment to equal representation, continuation and attainment within higher education, in terms of ethnicity and students with disabilities, with a 20 year timeline set out for creating equity.
 - The return of 2 year post study work visas for international students starting in 2020/21.
 - The first iteration of the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) is due to be launched, with the first set of results published in 2020. The announcement was accompanied by details of an increase in Higher Education Innovation Funding (HEIF) to £250M by 2020/21 and a £10m fund for projects that evidence the benefits of student involvement in knowledge exchange.
 - Forthcoming reviews for the Higher Education & Community Interaction (HE-BCI) Survey which will underpin the KEF and for the HEIF funding method with an aim to put KEF at the heart of a new approach.

- The 2019/20 planning themes continue to focus on the three large sector initiatives of REF, TEF and KEF. The internal context is informed by the development of a new strategic plan and the internal themes focus on supporting alignment towards the new University vision: financial sustainability and Equality, Diversity & Inclusion.

- Faculties (and where relevant Professional Services) have been asked to respond to the following areas in developing action plans. These include a continuation of themes from the 2018/19 planning steer, where they present fundamental longer term challenges, and new areas of focus:

Research

- Deliver the institutional REF strategy by proactively managing the numbers of 4* outputs and maximising the volume of 4* case studies (for both REF2021 and REF2028), to secure a top ten ranking across all submissions (for November 2020).

- Grow and diversify our portfolio of research grants, with a focus on alignment to departmental research strengths, interdisciplinary themes, and the University's Flagship Institutes.
- Continue to consider the optimum number of PGR students required for a vibrant community and adjust targets to meet this.

Education

- Carefully consider **Student Recruitment** trends and market information with regard to identifying and pursuing increases to overseas undergraduate recruitment and making realistic adjustments to 2020/21 targets, with an increased focus on setting accurate and appropriate 2021/22 targets.
- Undertaking more rigorous review of the programme portfolio to develop new provision and discontinue unsuccessful programmes, balancing undergraduate and postgraduate and considering the implications of a slowly increasing home undergraduate market from 2022.
- Continue to improve on **Teaching Excellence and Student Outcomes** using PLA and TEF action plans to position departments to achieve gold in the subject level TEF. Annual Reflection will provide an opportunity to identify and plan interventions in response to the National Student Survey and align programmes to produce graduates with skills and knowledge as outlined in the Sheffield Graduate attributes.

Innovation

- Develop plans to embed **Knowledge Exchange** as an enabler of excellence in both teaching and research with consideration of student involvement in these activities. Proactively maintain and grow external relationships, integrating these across departments and faculties where possible. Maximise Knowledge Exchange activity, and the accurate recording of this relating to all aspects of the KEF, to ensure good overall performance.

Power of People

- Supporting delivery of the University's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion agenda via delivery of the Race Equality Strategy and Access and Participation Plan (APP) is a key priority.
- Engage in appropriate workforce planning by balancing student staff ratios, managing expenditure budgets against income forecasts and supporting areas of growth.
- Professional Services will also be asked to comment on the quality, efficiency and impact of the service they provide; how they work collaboratively with other departments to reduce duplication of work and how they drive innovation within the service.

3.5 Student Recruitment

- Registration numbers for new full-time students as at 1 November were as follows:

Category	2019 Intake target (1 November 2019)	Intake registered at 1 November 2019	Variance between registrations and target
Home (UK/EU) undergraduate:	4255	4411	156
Overseas undergraduate:	1129.5	1280	150.5
Home (UK/EU) taught postgraduate:	2643	2415	-228
Overseas taught postgraduate:	4092	5022	930
Home (UK/EU) research postgraduate:	427	396	-31
Overseas research postgraduate:	340	339	-1

- The University monitors and reports on registrations regularly until the 1 December census date. PGR students will continue to register so we expect the 1 December position to be a little closer to target.

4. RESEARCH AND ITS IMPACT

4.1 Research Awards

- See Finance (section 7.1, below).

4.2 Research Development

- Postgraduate research student funding**
In collaboration with White Rose partners, we have successfully secured £10M renewed funding for the Centre for Mechanistic Biology from the Biotechnology and Biosciences Research Council (BBSRC) for 150 PhD scholarships over 5 years. These Centres offer an important funding stream but are also critical to our reputation as competition to secure them is fierce.
- Research funding**
£11M from the Faraday Institution to develop lithium-ion batteries with longer lifespans and increased energy density to support the switch to electric vehicles.
- Research Excellence Framework**
Achieving a strong outcome in REF2021 is a key objective as it delivers both reputational and financial benefits. The University will be preparing for its final submission over the next 12 months, with a key area of focus being to maximise our impact case studies.

4.3 Impact, Innovation and Knowledge Exchange

- Off the Shelf festival of words 2019**
Off the Shelf is the second largest literary festival in the North. Since 2017, it has been managed and delivered by the University of Sheffield in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University with support from Arts Council England. Audiences have grown and in 2019 we extended our activity with events in Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster.

5. OUR PLACE: LOCALLY AND GLOBALLY

5.1 Achievements and updates

- **Erasmus+ funding for 2020/21 academic year**

The continued uncertainty over the future of the UK's participation in Erasmus+ impacts upon the ability of current Sheffield students to plan financially for their European exchanges in 2020/21. The University will underwrite Erasmus+ grants if funding is not provided externally.
- **India 'In Country' Office**

Global Engagement has appointed a country manager and a country officer to be based at the 'In Country' office in Delhi. The University can more effectively undertake recruitment events and build relationships with key institutions to increase conversion and brand visibility.
- **UK-China Outward Mobility Internationalisation Partnerships Fund**

The University will receive £30k from the British Council's UK-China Outward Mobility Internationalisation Partnerships Fund to support student mobility, academic and non-academic staff mobility to support our collaboration with Nanjing University, from Spring 2020.

5.2 Outbound visits:

- ○ Nanjing: Dr Malcolm Butler and Lucy Zhao attended the Confucius Institute Board Meeting held in Nanjing. Dr Butler also visited Nanjing University to continue discussions on partnership development, areas for research collaboration and to explore opportunities in engineering and medicine at their new Suzhou campus.
- ○ India: Dr Malcolm Butler and Louise McCarthy (Global Engagement) visited Delhi in September to meet representatives from leading Indian institutions.

6. PUBLIC RESPONSIBILITY

6.1 Communications

- The University received more than 2,000 pieces of coverage in the national and international media between 20 September 2019 and 6 November 2019, notably a University sustainability supplement in the Sheffield Star to show how different areas of research are addressing the climate emergency.

6.2 Success and Achievement

- The University ranked top in the north for graduate employment in The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2020.
- The University was named one of the world's leading universities for arts and humanities in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings by Subject 2020.
- The Grantham Centre for Sustainable Futures at the University received a £1.7 million donation from the Grantham Foundation to continue research into sustainability.
- Professor Neil Hunter, Krebs Professor of Biochemistry, is part of a research team which received over €7 million in funding from the European Research Council.
- The Sheffield Innovation Programme, set up to support business across the Sheffield city region to innovate through collaboration with the University, received a £1.8m funding boost.
- The Research on Research Institute (RoRI) launched at the University.

6.3 Sustainability

- During 2019, we have been working with our professional and academic experts and student representatives on an evidence-led sustainability strategy and action plan. This is due for publication before the end of the year and will set out our approach and what actions we are going to take to make our University more sustainable over the next five years.

7. CHALLENGE OF RESOURCE

7.1 Financial Statements 2018/19 and financial forecasts update

- This is a separate agenda item.

7.2 Research

- New awards for the 12 months to the end of September 2019 stand at £164.2m. This is a decrease of £9.6m (5.5%) on the 12 months to September 2018 largely due to a £15.7m reduction in Catapult funds.
- There has been 1 new award for over £1m in the month since the last report (£1.1m from the Wellcome Trust).
- The value of new awards for the 12 months to September 2019 has risen in the Charities, Industries and Overseas sponsor categories by £0.9m, £2.2m and £6.9m respectively compared to September 2018, with small falls in the value of RCUK (£1.9m) and EU Framework (£2.4m) categories and a larger fall (£15.5m) in UK Government funded awards.
- There has been a rise of 67 in the number of new awards opened (885 compared to 818 for the 12 months to September 2018).

8. POWER OF PEOPLE

8.1 Industrial action

- Three of our recognised trade unions, the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU), UNISON and Unite, balloted their membership to seek a mandate for industrial action - UCU and UNISON over both pay and USS pensions and Unite over national pay negotiations only.
- UCU received a mandate for action on USS at 43 universities (out of 69 balloted) and on pay and related issues at 55 HE institutions (out of 147 balloted), including at Sheffield on both issues.
- UNISON did not secure a mandate for industrial action over the national pay negotiations dispute or USS.
- Unite did not secure a mandate for industrial action over the pay negotiations.
- UCU asked members to take eight consecutive days of strike action over both issues concurrently from Monday 25 November to Wednesday 3 December inclusive, followed by a period of action short of a strike until 29 April 2020 (when their industrial action mandate expires) or sooner if the disputes are resolved.
- We have been working with Heads of Academic Departments to provide support and guidance to ensure that disruption to student learning is minimised, any impact is mitigated and that students are supported in terms of their wellbeing.
- The dispute over the USS relates to the increase in member contributions to maintain current benefits and address the deficit in the scheme. The University has been working very closely with UCU over the past 18 months to better understand and address these issues. For further information, visit: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/staff/news/industrial-action-ballots-1.863921>

- The pay dispute also includes a range of non-pay issues. The University continues to participate in national negotiations between the Universities and Colleges Employers' Association (UCEA) and the recognised HE trade unions, a process supported by our trade unions locally. For further information, visit: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/staff/news/industrial-action-ballots-1.863921>
- The OfS has released a [statement](#) giving its response to potential disruption for students and has updated its [guidance](#) for students whose studies are disrupted by industrial action.
- The President & Vice-Chancellor has met with representatives of the Sheffield UCU branch and Sheffield Students' Union to discuss the issues of student support and impacts on their education, as well as to explore what could be done locally to end the national disputes. The University has continued to press for the national employers representatives to seek a negotiated solution on both issues.
- We will continue to work with our local trade unions on a range of matters which are of concern to them and colleagues across the sector to find ways to address issues such as workload pressures, stress and mental health concerns, casual working and gender and ethnicity pay gaps. To read more about our joint work, visit: https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/polopoly_fs/1.860890!/file/NonPayElementsSummary.pdf
- We have also reached an agreement with UCU over casual teaching arrangements and are committed to further joint work. Our joint statement about the agreement, can be located at: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/staff/news/joint-statement-casual-teaching-1.870495>
- We will continue to work in partnership with the trade unions to address these matters locally.

9. LEGAL AND REGULATORY MATTERS

9.1 Reportable Events

- In its role as principal regulator of HEIs, the OfS requires that serious incidents have been appropriately notified under registration condition F3(i). The OfS defines a reportable event as 'any event or circumstance that, in the judgement of the OfS, materially affects or could materially affect the provider's legal form or business model, and/or its willingness or ability to comply with its conditions of registration'. In the period since the previous meeting of Senate the University has notified two matters to the OfS as follows:
 - 1) Operation of the Student Protection Plan (SPP) - due to the situation in Hong Kong students registered on the MSc Global Marketing Management (GMM) were offered options under the SPP, and the majority will now have the first part of Semester 2 delivered at the University of Sheffield, not HKBU as originally intended.
 - 2) Reportable event of suspected or actual fraud or financial irregularity - the European Anti-Fraud Office ('OLAF') investigated an FP7 project OTOSTEM and as a result the Commission has concluded in a pre-information letter that part of the EU contribution was misused by the University to purchase general laboratory consumables not destined to be used in the project.