Minutes — Meeting of the Senate

Date: 9 October 2024

Present: The President & Vice-Chancellor in the Chair

Dr A Akram, Professor T Baldwin, Professor P Bath, Professor A Beckerman, Professor B Birdi, Professor R Blakeley, Professor A Blom, Professor L Brooks, Professor S Brown, Dr J Burr, A Clements, Dr C Codina, J Coley, Dr T Cooper, Dr SJ Cooper-Knock, Professor J Cordiner, Professor L Cross, Professor J Derrick, Professor N Dibben, J Ekogiawe, Professor S Fitzmaurice, Professor A Fleming, Professor J Flint, Professor G Gee, N Ghani, Dr L Gray, Dr S Hale, Dr V Halliday, Professor R Hand, Professor P Hatton, A Henderson, Dr F Henshaw, T Hodgson, Professor J Hodson, Professor G Jewell, N Jones, Professor V Kadirkamanathan, Professor S A Khurram, Professor J Kirby, Professor R Kirkham, M J Lourido Moreno, Dr S Marsh, Professor M Marshall, Professor F McLeay, Professor C Miller, Professor R Mokaya, Professor T Moore, Professor N Morley, Professor D Mowbray, Dr C Nic Dháibhéid, Dr S D North, Professor C Ó Brádaigh, Professor J Oakley, Dr R Orfitelli, Professor G Panoutsos, Dr L Preston, Professor D Robinson, T Rocha Lawrence, Professor S Rushton, M Scannell, Professor M Strong, R Sykes, Professor M T Vincent, D Watson, Professor L Wilson, Professor H Woolley.

Secretary: J Strachan

In attendance: E Allan, S Callan, K Clements, C Fraser, R Frith, A Priestley, Dr E Smith, K Sullivan, D Swinn, S Taylor.

Apologies: The Senate received apologies from 14 members.

Welcome

The President & Vice-Chancellor (P&VC) welcomed members to the meeting. There were 19 new members of Senate. Christine Fraser was in attendance for item 4, AdvanceHE Report.

1. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

1.1 It was recognised that there would be a number of actual, potential or perceived conflicts of interest arising from item 4, below, and, while individual members were invited to declare any such conflict if they wished, the Chair acknowledged the matter as potentially affecting all staff and student members of Senate. It was agreed that all members could participate in the discussions and decision-making process.

1.2 No further conflicts were declared.

1.3   Pre-Submitted Questions

1.3.1   Two questions had been submitted in advance of the meeting, which would be covered under the relevant items.

1.3.2   Three further questions had been submitted after the deadline for pre-submitted questions; due to mitigating circumstances it had been agreed to respond to these questions, which would also be covered under the relevant items.

1.3.3   One of the pre-submitted questions had been submitted shortly after the June 2024 Senate meeting. It related to the Council Effectiveness Review, which was underway at the time, and included three questions. The University Secretary had responded directly to the first two questions and deferred the final question to this meeting, the following was noted:

1.3.3.1   It was clarified that the Council Effectiveness Review had concluded; the full report had been published and was available on the University website.

1.3.3.2   In response to a question about whether Senators would be able to feed into the review, it was confirmed that the results of the Senate Questionnaire (which was an item on the agenda for Senate 28 June 2023) were fed into the Council Effectiveness Review. All members of Senate had an opportunity to complete the questionnaire.

1.3.3.3   In response to a question about whether a Senate Effectiveness Review was scheduled, and if so, when, it was highlighted that it would be premature to carry out a senate effectiveness review before Senate has considered the AdvanceHE recommendations (see minute 4), provided advice to Council, Council had made a decision on the recommendations, and the recommendations had been implemented and bedded in.

2.   **President & Vice-Chancellor's Report to Senate**

2.1   The President & Vice-Chancellor (P&VC) presented the report. To allow time for discussion on other important agenda items the report was taken as read but attention was drawn to the following:
   ● The Education Secretary had endorsed the findings of an independent review of the OfS that it should 'more sharply focus on key priorities', which included: monitoring financial sustainability; ensuring quality; protecting public money and regulating in the interests of students.
   ● The University was expecting more positive engagement with the new Government, which had changed its tone towards the sector.
   ● The team which develops guidance for the REF, on behalf of the four national funding bodies, had announced that Open Access publishing for long form publications (typically books) would not be a requirement for the next exercise. This was a welcome development because it would have been a significant financial pressure for the sector.

- The University's Access and Participation Plan 2025-26 to 2028-29 was approved by the Office for Students in August 2024 and had been published on the University website.

2.2   During discussion the following was noted:

2.2.1   Concern was raised about the cancellation of a recent Sheffield University and College Union (SUCU) teach-in for University students titled 'What Is Happening in Gaza?' which was due to be held on campus, and which some members had been due to attend. It was highlighted that it was important for the University to ensure there was a balance between allowing SUCU, or any other organisation, to hold events and assessing the potential impact of those events on others. In particular, it was important to ensure that appropriate safeguards were in place to protect the safety and wellbeing of all staff, students or visitors, and learning and teaching activities. For these reasons, all University events were subject to a risk assessment, with organisers required to follow the event safety guidance, which was available on the University website and had been shared with Trade Unions. On this occasion, the correct process had not been followed and a risk assessment had not been conducted, meaning the University had no choice but to cancel the event. There had been a discussion with SUCU representatives and the University was happy to have a further discussion about this at the next Joint University Campus Committee (JUCC) meeting to ensure there was a clear understanding of the processes.

2.2.2   A member highlighted that, in light of the significant reduction in international student recruitment some activities for international students had been cancelled and concern was raised about the impact this would have on international student experience. It was noted that the significant reduction in overseas recruitment reflected a dramatic downturn in applications from mainland China. A key factor in this year's position was the change in QS ranking position for the University outside of the top 100 but there were a number of wider geo-political factors including negative Government rhetoric around international student mobility, which were affecting all universities. The experience of international students at the University remained a priority and the University would do all it could to ensure their experience was the best it could be. It was highlighted that an All Staff Briefing was due to take place the following day, where this would be discussed in more detail.

2.2.3   In response to a question about staff recruitment, it was clarified that while vacancies were being actively managed, the University had not implemented a staff recruitment freeze.

3.   Matters Requiring Approval

Senate received and noted a summary of the matters for which Senate's formal approval was sought.

4.   AdvanceHE Report - Support for implementing [the Halpin] Governance Review Recommendations

4.1   The AdvanceHE report was provided in its entirety along with additional feedback from subsequent discussions and recommendations from University stakeholders, in order that Senate had sight of the fullest available information.

4.2   It was highlighted that two pre-submitted questions had been received in relation to the report; these would be responded to after the report had been presented.

4.3   Senate considered the AdvanceHE Report. It was highlighted that over the summer of 2024 the University commissioned AdvanceHE to support the further consideration and implementation of recommendations made by the Halpin Partnership in its earlier governance review, and to make recommendations about how those changes could be delivered. It was also highlighted that the Schools Governance Group had discussed the AdvanceHE recommendations and additional feedback from the Senate's Academic Assurance, Education and Research & Innovation Committees, and agreed to the proposals set out in the report, subject to the amendments and changes proposed in the supplementary cover note. Senate also received a presentation from Christine Fraser, AdvanceHE, which provided further context and updates on the four workstreams which supported their work, key definitions, HE Sector context, an update on the recommendations relating to the recommended changes to the powers and membership of Senate.

4.4   The report requested that Senate, subject to the amendments and changes proposed in the supplementary cover note, provided advice to Council on AdvanceHE's recommendations to:

- Agree the proposed definitions and the hierarchy of governance documents and endorse their use throughout the workstreams.
- Consider and approve the updated version of the Powers of Senate and agree to the changes of the relevant Regulation, and to agree the development of a comprehensive Scheme of Delegation in Regulation III to support the updated Powers.
- Agree to changing Senate membership (as set out in Option 2a in the report) or provide direction on another option.
- Agree the proposed amendments to the Regulations, or request revisions to reflect decisions on other workstreams.

4.5   Pre-submitted questions:

4.5.1   In response to a pre-submitted question from the SU, which related to the proposed hierarchy of governance documents, and sought clarification and assurance about the level at which changes to certain policies would receive oversight, in particular policies relating to the remit of Senate and its sub-committees, it was clarified that it was envisaged that all education policies would be approved by Senate Education Committee. It was also clarified that the Work Related Learning baseline (which had been given as an example) was part of the employability strand of the education pillar, which also sat under the remit of Senate Education Committee.

4.5.2   It was noted that a pre-submitted question, about the proposed options for the future membership of Senate (which had been partially responded to directly) highlighted concern that the membership categories in Option 2 of the AdvanceHE would mean there would be no elected member of the AMG, which sat in the Extra-Faculty category. This was briefly discussed and it was agreed AMG representation on Senate would be considered further before making a recommendation to Council. **[Action by: JS]**

4.6   Senate considered the report in detail, including the rationale for the recommendations. Senate was invited to share views on the report and there was an in-depth discussion during which Senators shared their feedback. Several concerns were raised. Feedback from Senators included:

4.6.1   Concerns about procedural matters and transparency
- The AdvanceHE report was based on a previous report, the Halpin report, which had not been made available to members of the Senate, despite requests; this raised concern with some members about a lack of transparency in decision-making processes.
- It was noted that at the last meeting of Senate, when the recommendations of the Halpin report were discussed, Senate was advised that the Halpin report was commercially sensitive and that the report would not be shared with Senate members. However a presentation was shared, which included all the recommendations from the Halpin review. The classification of the Halpin report was Highly Restricted and the description of that classification was 'Information only accessible to a small number of people that had approved permissions.'
- Not all members of the University Executive Board (UEB) had seen the full Halpin Report, although they had received the presentation setting out the substantive findings and recommendations, as had members of Senate. This gave rise to further concern about a lack of transparency in decision-making processes.
- There was concern that the Halpin report, which was partly informed by focus groups made up of a small group of individuals from the University, may not have been representative.

4.6.2   Representation and Equality Concerns
- The proposed changes to Senate's powers and membership raised concern with some members about the university's commitment to equality and diversity.
- The proposed changes to Senate's composition and powers were not accompanied by an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA), which was considered by some members to be a significant procedural issue and in conflict with the university's own policies.
- The failure to conduct an EIA in this instance raised doubts about the university's commitment to inclusive decision-making processes.
- Increasing ex-officio positions, which were felt to be more commonly held by higher-grade staff and full-time staff, could reduce access to bodies in the University's governance structure for staff from equality groups.
- This concern was heightened by a perceived recent reduction in the representation of EDI groups across the new Equality, Diversity and Inclusion governance structures. This combination of changes suggested to some members a potential weakening of the university's structures for promoting equality and diversity.
- Reducing the number of elected members on the Senate could result in a loss of the diverse expertise viewpoints necessary for effective governance. This loss was particularly concerning because it could further marginalise the perspectives of staff from equality groups, who may rely on elected positions to ensure their voices were heard.

4.6.3 Impact on Governance and Scrutiny:
- The proposed changes to Senate's powers, particularly the removal of the power to discuss any matter, were a major concern. While some recognised that the remit of Senate encompassed a broad range of topics, some senators feared this step could restrict Senate's ability to proactively address legitimate concerns in the future. This was seen as a potential threat to the Senate's role in providing advice to Council and ensuring good governance.
- Some Senators also expressed a concern that the combination of a reduced membership and the powers of the Senate could lead to it becoming less effective in providing scrutiny and challenge.

4.7 Reflections

4.7.1 The Chair acknowledged the concerns raised, which would be shared with Council to support its consideration of the report later in November. Reflecting on the feedback from Senate, the following was agreed:

   a. Recognising the concerns raised about representation and potential equality impacts, it was agreed to undertake an Equality Impact Assessment, which would be shared with Council alongside the report.
   b. Recognising the concerns raised about potential future implications on Senate, it was agreed to retain the power of Senate '*To discuss and declare an opinion on any matter whatsoever relating to the University*'.
   c. AMG representation on Senate would be considered further before making a recommendation to Council (see minute 4.5.2).

4.7.2 Some strong views had been shared but not everyone had expressed an opinion. The Chair invited Senate to consider whether it should take a vote on whether Senate recommended the proposals to Council, subject to the amendment agreed at 4.7.1b; this was agreed. One elected member objected to the vote going ahead.

4.8 Voting

Senate agreed to vote on the following motion: *Does Senate recommend to Council the AdvanceHE recommendations, subject to the changes proposed by the Sub-Committees and subject to the retention of the power to give an opinion on any matter whatsoever relating to the University?* (Members could answer 'Yes', 'No' or 'Abstain')

The votes were carried out anonymously during the meeting using OpaVote and only Senate members in attendance at the meeting were invited to vote.

67 members of Senate attended the meeting and were invited to vote.

67 votes were cast.

The Result was:

- 36 voted Yes; 27 voted No; and 4 abstained

4.9 After the vote the SU Liberation Officer objected on behalf of the SU and liberation groups to the vote, on the basis that an EIA was not available to support a decision. The result of the vote would be shared with Council alongside the feedback from Senate.

5. Semester Dates

5.1 Senate received and approved the report, which highlighted that standard semester dates had been set and approved up to the 2027/2028 academic session and included the proposed dates covering 2028/2029 through to 2031/2032. It was noted that the dates followed a similar pattern as set in previous years. Following a similar approach to that taken in 2019/2020, when Senate last considered Semester Dates, it was agreed to establish a Senate Task and Finish Group to review the dates, with a view to reporting back to the December Senate meeting. Senate also approved a proposed set of Terms of Reference for the T&F Group, including a proposed membership. **[Action by: JS]**

6. Senate Annual Academic Assurance Report

6.1 Senate received the report and agreed for it to be submitted for consideration and approval at Council's meeting on 28 November 2024, noting that a Joint Sub-Group of Council and Senate would be convened in the intervening period to discuss the report. Senate was updated on the background to the report, feedback received from Council on last year's report and the report's high level conclusions; the following was highlighted:

6.2 Background - Council was responsible for overseeing quality and standards in education and research. It delegated this function to Senate and as such it required assurance on an annual basis that Senate effectively and robustly fulfilled its delegated function to maintain and enhance academic quality and standards. The annual report, prepared by SAAC, was the main way Senate provided Council with that assurance.

6.3 Feedback from Council on the previous year's report - Providing assurance on academic matters to governing bodies was a shared challenge across the sector and Senate had been on a learning journey in recent years about how best to provide assurance to Council on academic quality and standards. It was pleasing to note that feedback from Council on the previous year's report had been very positive; Council had commended Senate's work to maintain quality and standards and the report, which Council felt provided the necessary assurance that the University's academic governance was robust and effective. There was further positive feedback in the recent Council Effectiveness Review, an externally led review, which highlighted significant improvements in the way Senate provided academic assurance to Council.

6.4 Senate noted the following high-level conclusions of the report:

(a) Based on Senate's work in 2023-24, it was assured that:

- Academic governance continued to be robust and effective;

- Academic quality and standards were being maintained, as evidenced by compliance with relevant external regulatory requirements;
- Appropriate work was being undertaken and/or was planned to enhance academic quality and standards as part of the University's commitment to continuous improvement;
- Relevant academic risks were being identified and effectively managed; and
- The move to a New School Structure—and the related work to align governance structures at the school, faculty and university level, was likely to increase the effectiveness of academic governance and to help the University more fully realise its academic potential.

6.5   In response to a pre-submitted question from the SU, which highlighted concern about the level of oversight of the international student attainment gap and sought assurance that robust mechanisms were in place to monitor and address this, the following was highlighted:

- In the Annual Reflection meetings, which were a key way of assuring Senate about the quality of taught programmes, schools reviewed a wide range of data including attainment data, which included the performance of Home and International students. In these meetings, schools were supported to reflect on the attainment data and to consider actions to address gaps, where they existed.
- Faculty Directors of Education reported on outcomes from the annual reflections to the relevant Faculty Education Committee in the first instance and then to the Senate Education Committee, which discusses themes and actions emerging from the schools and faculties, and in turn reported to Senate.
- In addition to the Annual Reflection process, it was highlighted that scrutiny of attainment data had a heightened prominence in the new Business Cycle, which education committees at all levels of the University now worked to. Education committees would scrutinise attainment data in the spring and Senate would receive an update on attainment data from the Senate Education Committee in June.
- Ensuring that international students succeeded on taught programmes was important, both for the sector and for the University, which is why SAAC examined this matter in 2023-24. For 2024-25, SAAC's Draft Business Plan included examining the University's Degree Outcomes Statement and International award gaps were likely to feature in SAAC's examination of this.

6.6   During discussion, it was recognised that some programmes had small numbers of international students, which could make attainment gap data less statistically meaningful. This was noted and it was agreed that aggregating the data would be taken into consideration.

6.7   During further discussion a point was made about the choice of language used in Senate's assurance statement relating to the move to a New School Structure, specifically the word 'likely' (see bullet point 5 of minute 6a); it was clarified that this statement was based on an assessment of the likelihood of the move to a New School Structure, and the related work to align governance structures at the school, faculty and university level, resulting in an increase of the effectiveness of academic governance.

REPORTS FROM STATUTORY BODIES

7.   Report on the Proceedings of the Council
(Meeting held on 8 July 2024)

Senate received and noted the Report on the Proceedings of the Council.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES OF THE SENATE

8.   Report of the Senate Academic Assurance Committee
(Meeting held on 17 September 2024)

8.1   Senate received and noted the Report of the Senate Academic Assurance Committee (SAAC) noting that there were two matters requiring approval; SAAC's Business Plan and its 2024-25 Terms of Reference and Membership.

8.2   Senate approved the SAAC Business Plan for 2024-25 noting that several areas had been identified for deep dives including PGR Experience, the University's Degree Outcomes Statement, REF Impact, Academic Tutoring and Apprenticeships. It was highlighted that SAAC played an important role in assuring Senate and Council that quality and standards were upheld across research and education and one way SAAC did this was via deep dives which examined select areas of activity to assess whether the University was meeting regulatory requirements and its commitment to continuous improvement.

8.3   Senate approved SAAC's 2024-25 Terms of Reference and Membership noting that there had been one minor, non-material change. It was highlighted that SAAC had benefited greatly from the input of the SU Officers, two of whom were continuing from last year, which was very welcome.

9.   Report of the Senate Education Committee
(Meeting held on 18 September 2024)

9.1   Senate received the Senate Education Committee (SEC) report and the following was noted:

9.1.1 Senate approved the institutional policy on the use of zero credit modules, which set out that taught modules must be assigned a credit value in line with the Institutional Framework for Taught Programme Structures. It was highlighted that this step had been taken in the light of current practice and it recognised the need to consider the associated workloads for students (particularly with students increasingly working part-time to fund studies). It was clarified that there were two exceptions to the new policy where it was essential to satisfy a specific and explicit requirement for a zero-credit module from a professional, statutory or regulatory body over and above the prescribed credit bearing modules, or to facilitate study abroad or a professional placement in accordance with the institution-wide offer, or as a standalone year integral to the advertised programme. It was recognised that work would need to be done with faculties and schools to transition away from existing zero credit modules over a sensible time frame. It was noted that one member opposed the motion to approve the policy.

9.1.2 Senate approved the new, significantly amended, and closed programmes and title changes approved by Faculties between 21 May and 11 September 2024.

9.1.3 Senate approved programme title changes for two postgraduate taught programmes in the Management School, approved by Chair's Action between 11 September and 24 September 2024.

9.2 Further to discussion at the June 2024 meeting, about the rationale behind the decision to calculate all degree classifications for 2023-24 using the new algorithm (approved by Senate in 2023), rather than awarding the best result calculated by the old or new system, and about the process put in place for students to request a classification check once their results had been published, Senate was updated on the number of requests received and the number of classifications uplifted. It was highlighted that the current position showed a decrease in the number of uplifts when compared to the two previous years. In light of this, it had been agreed to extend the timeframe for students to request a classification check indefinitely and recommended that further work be undertaken to look at whether students impacted in the historic data had any particular characteristics associated with them; this would enable any patterns to be contrasted against the current appeals and identify any gaps. This work was underway.

9.2.1 Senate discussed the update at length and in detail. During discussion members considered the variance between the level of degree classification uplifts in the current year compared to previous years. Several members raised concern that underrepresented groups, protected characteristic groups and groups less likely to challenge their award were more likely to be affected. Concern was also raised about the effectiveness of the communications plan for informing students how to request a classification check and whether the communications had been consistent across the faculties. Further concern was raised about potential regulatory and/or legal implications.

9.2.2 Senate was updated on work undertaken so far to identify any patterns / gaps. It was noted that this work had found no bias in respect of faculty, department, programme, bachelor's or integrated masters. It was highlighted that this work was still underway and would continue until the University could be satisfied that any patterns/gaps had been identified.

9.2.3 With regard to the effectiveness of communications with students about the process for requesting a classification check, this had been done centrally, to mitigate variance at faculty and department level. A link to the classification check request form had been communicated extensively through a number of channels and had been clearly signposted on the student results page, made visible when students viewed their classification. Further communications were planned to raise awareness that requests would continue to be accepted indefinitely.

9.2.4 In response to concern raised about whether students impacted in the historic data had any Equality, Diversity or Inclusion (EDI) characteristics associated with them and whether that data could be analysed, it was highlighted that EDI data was not being analysed at this stage; however work to analyse a range of other data was ongoing. So far, no bias had been found, but it was recognised that there may be disproportionately affected groups that were unknown at this stage, which was why that work was continuing and had been broadened.

9.2.5   In response to concerns raised about potential regulatory / legal implications and a suggestion to run both algorithms for all students, it was highlighted that this would require reversing Senate's previous decision and what had been communicated to students and would be a reportable event. While this action was possible it therefore carried a significant risk.

9.2.6   It was agreed to share an update at the next meeting and to share with Senate the steps taken to communicate with students and the advice given. **[Action by: MV]**

10.   Report of the Senate University Research Ethics Committee
(Meeting held on 18 September 2024)

10.1   Senate received the report and approved the Committee's Terms of Reference (ToRs) and Membership for 2025-25, which had been updated to reflect the new School's structure.

10.2   Senate also received and approved an update on changes to two sections of the 'Ethics Policy Governing Research Involving Human Participants, Personal Data and Human Tissue'. The changes, which were detailed in the report, related to the policy notes on 'Research Involving Social Media' and 'Demonstrating the Impact of Research'.

11.   Report from the Chair of the Senate Research and Innovation Committee

11.1   Senate received and noted an update and the following was highlighted:

i.   A key action had been to bringing together the new and continuing School Directors of Research and Innovation to review progress on the University's KPIs and agree priorities for the academic year,

ii.   The research excellence KPI was to be ranked in the top 10 in the next REF; this was being supported through further work on enabling high quality outputs, prioritising support for impact case studies and responding to the People, Culture and Environment element of the REF assessment Framework. A research culture action plan had recently been launched to support this work.

iii.   The University had refreshed and relaunched the Good Research and Innovation Practice (GRIP) Policy, and launched the Office for Open Research and Scholarship.

iv.   Work was ongoing to embed new School Research and Innovation Committees and support the new School Directors of Research and Innovation (SDRI), with the first meeting of the new SDRIs Network being held recently.

OTHER MATTERS

12.   Provisional Business Schedule 2024-25

12.1   The Provisional Senate Business Schedule for 2024-25 was received and noted.

13.   Returning Officer's Report

13.1   A report on the outcome of the election of a member of Senate to serve on the Council was received and noted. It was highlighted that the result was the election of Professor Mark

Strong as the Senate's nominee for appointment to the Council and Senate congratulated Mark on his appointment.

14. Report on Action Taken

14.1 Senate received the report and noted that the President & Vice-Chancellor, acting on behalf of the Senate and on the recommendation of the relevant Committees of Senate, had approved amendments to the Regulations relating to the Discipline of Students. The report included a summary of the changes, information provided to the President & Vice-Chancellor in support of the approval request and the rationale for the out of cycle request for approval.

14.2 In response to a pre-submitted question, which sought clarification on the nature of the changes and clarification on the University's definition of 'misuse of University systems' or 'damage caused to Property or Interests' the following was noted:

    i.   It was clarified that there had been no material change to paragraph 68 of Regulation XXI; the change made had been simply to align the wording to paragraph 64.

    ii.   With regard to definitions, it was highlighted that the regulations were about principles and standards, so there wouldn't be any greater specificity in the regulations. Broader guidance on expectations was set out in the Student Code of Practice and other documents including the Student Code of Conduct and the Regulations on the use of IT facilities. It was clarified that misuse of University systems or damage caused to property or interests included the material interests of the University, its assets, intellectual property and reputation.

15. Major Research Grants and Contracts

15.1 A report listing major research grants and contracts awarded since the last meeting of the Senate was received and noted.

16. Minutes of the Previous Meeting
(Meeting held on 26 June 2024)

16.1 The Minutes of the meeting held on 26 June 2024 were approved.

17. Matters Arising on the Minutes

17.1 Updates were provided on the matters arising on the minutes that that were due and were not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

Matters Arising not covered on the agenda:

17.1.1 <u>Minute: 1.4.5</u> - As agreed at the previous meeting, members had been sent a diary invitation for an information on 'Good Governance and the Regulatory and Compliance Landscape'. The session would be led by Smita Jamdar, a partner at Shakespeare Martineau Solicitors. It would cover governance, an overview of the OfS B conditions and how to operate within the

regulatory landscape. Chairs of Faculty and School Education and Research and Innovation Committees had also been invited. The session would be recorded for those unable to attend in person.

17.1.2   <u>Minute 2.6</u> - An update was shared on Senate's role in providing advice to Council on research. It was noted that the Senate Research and Innovation Committee was delegated by Council and Senate to have oversight of all research and innovation activities in the University (and this included PGR activities). The core governance mechanism was the School Research and Innovation (R&I) Committees; and standard terms of reference had recently been agreed for these committees. These committees had responsibility for ensuring regulatory compliance, academic assurance and alignment with university strategy. Each School R&I Committee reported to a Faculty R&I committee and the Vice President's Strategy Group provided strategic oversight of all research and innovation activities. In addition to School and Faculty R&I committees, several other formal committees existed to provide governance oversight of areas of R&I activity, including the University Research Ethics Committee, the University Post-Graduate Research Committee and the University Early Career Research Committee. In addition, the Senate Academic Assurance Committee regularly reviewed progress against the University's KPIs for research and innovation. In addition, new steering groups had been established to enable strategic oversight of emerging areas of activity or challenge, for example the Research Culture Steering Board and the Research Integrity Steering Board. Regular operational oversight of all research and innovation activities was provided by the Research and Innovation Cabinets, chaired by the Vice President for Research and Innovation, which met weekly. In terms of the responsibilities of Council, Council received updates on the assurance outlined through the Senate Annual Academic Assurance Report at special Joint Council-Senate Sub-Group, which met in November each year. It also received updates through the minutes of the Senate meetings and the President and & Vice Chancellors Report.

A follow up question was raised about Council's role in guiding the university's R&I strategy, for example in relation to research activity linked to potentially controversial research areas such as defence and security. It was noted that all projects, especially those with dual civil and defence/ military use potential were subject to rigorous oversight and due diligence checks, and complied with the relevant aspects of the University's Code of Ethics, national and international legislation, and with the University's own new Defence and Security Framework. The Framework carefully assessed R&I activities in defence and security and was overseen by a sub-committee of the Senate Research and Innovation Committee. A Research Integrity Steering Board had also been established to provide oversight to ensure the University's research was responsible, transparent and ethical. An overview of the various levels of scrutiny was shared.

17.1.3   <u>Minute 2.7</u> - In response to concern raised at the previous meeting with regard to some messages being relayed which conflicted with the assurance provided to Senate that the University had not lowered academic or English language requirements for any PGT programmes this year, it was noted that following discussions with the individual concerned, colleagues were assured that the University's position was understood and the process agreed by UEB, and outlined to Senate, was being followed.

17.1.4   <u>Minute 9.6</u> **-** At the previous meeting Senate discussed a section in the Academic Appeals Policy relating to the evidence required from students to substantiate grounds for appeal

and concern was raised that a student may not be able to provide evidence in circumstances where they suspected an error or misconduct and did not have access to the information required to substantiate the grounds. The matter had been investigated and it was clarified that, while there was an expectation that evidence should be provided, the University could and did progress cases where no evidence was provided, for example in cases where it was reasonable to assume that a student may find it challenging to access evidence.

17.1.5   Minute 13.1 - As agreed at the previous meeting, the list of nominees agreed by the Honorary Degrees Committee for the conferment of Honorary Degrees at Degree Congregations in 2024, had been shared with Senate.

18.   Dates of remaining meetings of Senate in 2024-25

The dates of the remaining Senate meetings for 2024-25 were confirmed on the agenda.