

The Senate, 19 March 2025

President & Vice-Chancellor's Report

Main Report

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 the University Vision's four Pillars and their respective Priorities, after a section about the external environment. Where information relates to more than one Pillar or Priority it is included under the most relevant theme. Where appropriate, reference is made to other papers that appear separately on the Senate agenda. The report now comprises two parts, the main report and a supplementary report with additional information and updates, available in the Reading Room.

1. EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

1.1 Public finances under pressure, with funding for science and higher education at risk; “far reaching” reform of the sector to come.

- The Government's Spending Review, expected to be announced in June 2025, will [set budgets for government departments](#) from 2026-29, with ‘unprotected’ spending areas, including science and higher education, at [risk](#).
- Whilst [an inflation-linked rise in Home Undergraduate tuition fees and increases in some student support](#) has been announced, it is clear any additional resources for the sector will be pegged to the ‘[far reaching reform](#)’ planned by the Education Secretary. The [five priorities set out in a letter](#) from Education Secretary, Bridget Phillipson MP, where legislation, regulation and funding levers are expected to be used to achieve change are:
 - expanding access and improving outcomes for disadvantaged students
 - raising teaching standards
 - increasing universities' contribution to local economic growth
 - playing a greater civic role in their communities
 - Making efficiencies
- Further details on the reforms are due in the summer. In relation to efficiencies, Universities UK (UUK) has established a [Taskforce on Efficiency and Transformation](#) in response to [calls from the Education Secretary to ‘rethink business models’](#).
- UUK has urged the Government to “[double-down on investment to the UK's world-class higher education sector](#)” in its submission to the Spending Review. The Russell Group's submission calls for “[ambitious, targeted investment](#)” from the Government.

- The University will work to persuade policy makers that investment in higher education is crucial to deliver economic growth and work with the Government on its reform agenda for the sector.

1.2 University welcomes Chancellor's focus on innovation-led growth and invites Science Minister to visit to discuss

- Chancellor Rachel Reeves MP, has said the Government would go "[further and faster](#)" to deliver economic growth with plans for an Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor to drive "investment, innovation and growth". The [University has welcomed the focus on innovation-led growth](#), and invited the Science Minister Lord Vallance to Sheffield to discuss opportunities to work with the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor to offer companies the expertise and space required to scale-up their operations in South Yorkshire. This reflects the [evidence](#) Professor Ash Tiwari (Deputy Vice-President for Innovation at the University) recently gave to the House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Select Committee.

1.3 Regulator sets out strategy up to 2030 but sector urges alignment with government's plans for regulator expected in summer

- The Office for Students (OfS) has published a [strategy for 2025-30 for consultation](#) which it suggests "sets out a sharper purpose for the regulator". However the draft strategy looks to broaden the remit of the regulator in certain areas, for example in relation to student interest.
- The timing of the draft strategy has faced criticism, with Universities UK's response to the consultation urging the strategy to be an interim one. This is because fundamental changes to the regulator and its work can be expected in the coming months, for example, when the Government sets out its 'far-reaching' [reform of higher education](#). This could include legislative changes to the regulator's role.
- The University worked to influence both the Universities UK and Russell Group responses to the consultation, ensuring, for example, they raise questions about the regulator planning action in areas where it does not have legal powers.

1.4 Defence R&D spending could rise, but using overseas aid budget shows limited room for manoeuvre in public funding decision-making

- [Defence spending will be increased](#) from its current level of 2.3% of national income to 2.5% by 2027, the Prime Minister has announced, in order to "[protect British people in a new era for national security](#)". This will be funded by cutting the overseas aid budget from 0.5% of national income to 0.3%. [Cutting the aid budget is seen as controversial](#), particularly in light of recent US decisions to cut its development aid and the [International Development Minister Anneliese Dodds has resigned](#) over this cut. Cutting overseas aid may be seen as going against one of Labour's manifesto commitments to increase the overseas aid budget to 0.7% of national income as soon as fiscal circumstances allow. The decision shows the limited room for manoeuvre the Government has in decisions on public finances, due to a combination of factors including the [fiscal rules it has set for itself](#).

- The decision could see defence and security R&D spending rise, with the University a potential beneficiary. [The University partners with organisations that work in the defence sector](#), helping them overcome productivity and sustainability challenges and supporting UK security and sovereign capabilities. The University receives a small amount of funding from the overseas aid budget, which has reduced following [cuts to the Global Challenges Research Fund in 2021](#), so there could be a small impact on this following the announcement.

1.5 CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

1.5.1 Public Affairs updates

- Regional and national political stakeholders were kept proactively updated on a range of issues, including the University's financial position and voluntary severance and the resignation of the former AMRC CEO. This engagement activity has helped to strengthen key relationships and their advocacy for the University and sector.

2 EDUCATION

2.1 STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- UEB has started a piece of work to develop a set of strategic priorities for the next 2-3 years. The intention is to draw out a small number of priorities drawn from our existing Vision, with their selection informed by the changing environment and Government priorities.
- The priorities are intended to balance against now powerful financial imperatives, helping to ensure that we are not driven solely by financial considerations, and providing focus to help colleagues prioritise in advance of the development of a new University strategy for 2027/28 onwards. We aim to share information about the strategic priorities in April.

2.2 DELIVERY OF THE PORTFOLIO

2.2.1 Strategic Planning

- Phase 1 Schools are developing new medium-term plans. These plans will articulate the academic vision for each School, key areas of focus and medium-term targets. The plans are due to be completed by early May. In the meantime, Schools continue to work on the actions outlined in their 2024/25 Action Plans.

2.2.2 Strategic objectives for the student population and student intake targets

- Following the refresh of our strategic objectives for the student population (update provided in Autumn), associated student intake targets for all Schools were rebalanced in December 2024. The updated targets reflect the fact that the University expects to admit smaller international student populations in future years, due to the changes in the recruitment environment with projected downturns in youth populations and difficult economic conditions in key overseas markets. The target reset ensures that our student intake targets reflect these changes in the environment and are realistic for internal planning and financial forecasting.

2.2.3 Registration of New Students

▪ **Table 1: New Student Registrations Against Targets as of 1 December**

Category	2024 Intake Target	2024 Actual Intake (1 December 2024)	Variance
Undergraduate Home (UGH)	4,728	4,709	-19
Undergraduate Overseas (UGO)	1,383	1,006	-377
Undergraduate Total	6,111	5,715	-396
Postgraduate Taught Home (PGTH)	1,621	1,542	-79
Postgraduate Taught Overseas (PGTO)	4,426	2,701	-1,725
Postgraduate Taught Total	6,047	4,243	-1,804
Postgraduate Research Home (PGRH)	403	326	-77
Postgraduate Research Overseas (PGRO)	294	153	-141
Postgraduate Research Total	697	479	-218
University Total	12,855	10,437	-2,418

Data source: Reporting Service [New Registrations vs Intake Targets](#)

▪ **Table 2: New and Continuing Student Numbers as of 1 December**

Category	Total Registrations
Undergraduate Home (UGH)	16,440
Undergraduate Overseas (UGO)	3,730
Undergraduate Total	20,170
Postgraduate Taught Home (PGTH)	2,471
Postgraduate Taught Overseas (PGTO)	2,947
Postgraduate Taught Total	5,418
Postgraduate Research Home	1,417

(PGRH)	
Postgraduate Research Overseas (PGRO)	869
Postgraduate Research Total	2,286
University Total	27,874

Data source: Reporting Service - Student Registration Trends report - [B6.1.9](#)

2.2.4 Undergraduate Admissions

- The UCAS equal consideration deadline (29 January 2025) has passed therefore we have now received the majority of our undergraduate applications ahead of September 2025 entry.
- The undergraduate home application (+11%) and offer (+14%) position remains encouraging with early acceptance rates (+16%) reflecting the improving market position, visibility and reputation of the University domestically following sustained profile raising through the city campaign and delivery of a more coherent prospective Sheffield student experience.
- Despite seeing a reduction (-8%) in undergraduate overseas applications we have been able to make more offers (+5%) compared with this stage in the cycle during 2024. This indicates that despite the reduced applicant pool, the proportion of students with the required attainment level for an offer has increased.
- UCAS recently announced some changes to the 2026 entry cycle key deadlines; next year the UCAS January Equal Consideration Deadline will be Wednesday 14th January 2026. UCAS will also reintroduce the end-of-March advisory deadline to encourage earlier decision-making. The reject-by-default deadline is set for 13 May 2026.

2.2.5 Postgraduate Taught Admissions

- Postgraduate Taught Home applications are marginally (-8%) lower when compared with last year noting actual numbers remain relatively small at this stage. Encouragingly, we have issued the same number of offers (0%) with accepts (-6%) again, slightly below 2024 levels.
- Postgraduate Taught Overseas applications (-38%) and offers (-23%) remain lower than the comparable point in previous years, a small recovery from December's reporting. As a result of the increasing proportion of applicants receiving an offer, we continue to work towards mitigating the deficit in sector wide demand. The number of offers made represents an application to offer ratio of 62% this year, compared to 48% last year and we continue to monitor early indications of conversion from this pool closely.

2.2.6 Student Recruitment & Marketing

- The 2026 entry Undergraduate Prospectus will be delivered in early February with our new creative concept, focusing on the student-centric '*made from every experience*' proposition with strong and diverse student voice embedded. We have also improved the

clarity of subject requirements listed for each course, as well as EPQs and information for Access+ eligible students.

- A collaborative Teachers and Advisors conference will be held at the University of Sheffield in June 2025, in partnership with Sheffield Hallam University. This is part of our aim to build longer lasting relationships with teachers and advisors to secure the future pipeline.
- We are working to increase our progression rates from UG to PGT study from 8% (2023) and have undertaken a market research project to help us understand our target audience (current UoS UG students) better and inform our campaign to help improve our overall progression conversion rate.
- A targeted 'Apply now' digital advertising campaign began straight after our final 2025 entry undergraduate on-campus open day on the 23 November 2024 and ran up to the UCAS equal consideration deadline on the 29 January. The objective was to encourage Home undergraduate applicants to submit their application by the UCAS deadline. Results will follow.
- Invitation emails to undergraduate offer holders began on Monday 6th January, and will be sent to any new offer holders on a twice-weekly basis. So far over 1100 student bookings have now been taken for the first event on 22nd February - 37% up on this point last year. Combined bookings for all four events now total 2754 students - accounting already for 45% of the total bookings taken across last year's offer holder cycle which runs until 12th April. This cycle of events will see the introduction of numerous developments, including improvements to webpages, city partnerships and discounts, expanded accommodation tours, travel discounts and much more.

2.2.7 QS League table

- We have successfully submitted the maximum number of contacts to this year's QS Academic and Employer Reputation Survey as part of our approach to the QS World University Rankings 2025. Our 400 academic and 400 employer contacts who have consented to receiving the survey will have the opportunity to nominate institutions that they believe excel in research and employability when the survey opens next month.
- We had a fantastic response from colleagues across the University, with thousands of contacts identified overall. This gave us the added benefit of being able to prioritise those academic and employer contacts that will give us the highest likelihood of the best score. As votes are valid for five years, this also provides a great start to next year when we can submit another list of contacts.
- The reputation survey results make up 45 per cent of the overall QS score, meaning it could really help to maximise our chances of moving back into the QS Top 100 when the results are published in June. A further 20 percent of the overall QS score is based on citations per faculty member; we have optimised our data in this area, which will hopefully provide a further significant boost to our ranking this year.

2.2.8 Portfolio Simplification

- The Vice President for Education has launched a consultation outlining proposed changes to the way in which programmes are designed and delivered and has invited input from educational leaders, via School and Faculty Education Committees and Faculty Executive Boards. The proposals align with a direction of travel that has been in

place for some time but seek to accelerate plans in response to the external pressures. The need to make these changes has been agreed by UEB, in the light of the University's financial position and the student population. It will be important to deliver the changes required, whilst minimising any disruption to students and continuing to deliver a high quality, student centred, academic experience.

2.2.9 Graduation ceremonies

- Graduation ceremonies for higher degrees took place between 13 - 17 January. A total of 13 ceremonies took place, 5,887 students had degrees conferred, of which 2,817 attended in person.

2.2 DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

2.2.1 Data Futures and statutory returns

- The University has successfully completed and submitted the Student (Data Futures) and the Higher Education Student Early Statistics (HESES) Statutory Returns. These returns represent the majority of our student data sharing with statutory customers (e.g. OfS, DfE). As previously reported, an extension was required for the Student (Data Futures) Return. The University was not alone in asking for an extension. Nearly three-quarters of universities required an extension this year, reflecting continuing challenges with the introduction of this Return in 2023. The OfS has published an [independent review by PWC on the Data Futures programme](#), which includes an overview of the issues and a range of lessons learned.

2.2.2 Laptops for Students Scheme

- Following success in Computer Science, the University's laptops for students' scheme was extended to Architecture and English at the start of the Academic Year. This is part of the Digitally Enabled Adaptive Teaching (DEAT) programme to improve student experience and enable flexible teaching to make the best possible use of the teaching estate.

2.2.3 Student Assessment and Module Marks

- Marks Management will provide a single solution to process and manage student assessment and module marks. This will improve the efficiency and accuracy of data processing, improve student experience, and ensure we meet our regulatory obligations. Supporting this work is the highest priority piece of delivery within IT Services and remains on track to meet objectives and timelines.

2.2.4 New Schools - IT Enabling Work

- Enabling work for the New Schools was completed in late 2024. This was a complex and critical piece of work to ensure that data and systems were updated to support the changes in Schools structure.

3 RESEARCH

3.1 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

3.1.1 Research Growth

- The Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC), part of UKRI, has placed the University in its top 10 funded partners based on the average value of the

University's BBSRC research grants portfolio. This is a direct result of the increase in the larger value of BBSRC grants and our strength as one of its top 5 funded universities in the area of bioscience for sustainable agriculture and food. Our position as a strategic partner gives us greater influence with the funder in terms of its direction and also gives us greater insight - through invitations to roundtables and through regular discussions with senior BBSRC leaders.

- In April, the Executive Chair of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council (EPSRC), Professor Charlotte Deane MBE will visit the University, meeting senior leaders to discuss EPSRC's future vision and priorities. EPSRC is our largest single research funder and Professor Deane's visit will provide an opportunity for the University to showcase research and innovation strengths.

3.1.2 Postgraduate Research Students

- In the largest real terms increase in doctoral stipend rates for research students since 2003, UKRI has announced an 8% increase to £20,780 from 1 October 2025. These come with a raft of further changes to its terms and conditions of funding in line with its commitments on the new deal for postgraduate research which include allowing students to take up to 28 weeks paid medical leave, making it easier for students who take medical or additional leave to get an extension to their studentship and removing barriers that might prevent disabled students from getting support.

We have historically mirrored UKRI terms and conditions for doctoral students funded by the University. The implications of these changes will be presented to UEB for consideration.

3.2 Corporate Communications

- [A new digital platform](#) to accelerate the search for a cure for people living with motor neuron disease (MND) received coverage on ITV News and the Yorkshire Post, highlighting our world-leading research in this strategic area.
- University [research](#) into whether real Christmas trees may be a more eco-friendly option compared to artificial trees was featured in The Guardian and Daily Mirror.
- A [groundbreaking University trial](#) to test a device designed to help people regain arm strength after a stroke was featured on BBC News and the Yorkshire Post.
- A Wild Justice Report survey of new housing developments involving researchers at the University, which revealed developers are installing just half of the legally-binding ecological features to protect wildlife was featured in The Guardian and local/trade press.
- [New research](#) into how one of the most loved Christmas films, White Christmas, has a secret tribute to a US president, was featured on BBC Radio 3, as well as the national tabloid press.
- A [major clinical trial, led by the University](#), revealing improved survival rates for bladder cancer patients by adding an immunotherapy drug to treatment, was pitched out and covered widely, including in The Times, The Telegraph, BBC News, and The Independent, amongst many others.
- Research by the University on cost-effective technology to clear leaves from railway tracks and prevent delays was featured on BBC Morning Live.

- The University's role in the world's first transatlantic flight using sustainable aviation fuel (SAF) and our ongoing leading work to test SAF was featured in detail on ITV Calendar.

4 INNOVATION

4.1 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

4.1.1 Knowledge Exchange and Partnerships

- The Cabinet Office Minister for public service reform, Georgia Gould MP, visited Sheffield to hear more about the [Sheffield Policy Campus](#) and how the city can be a focus for the Government's new '[test and learn](#)' approach to national policy. The Minister met some of the University's students who were on placement at central Government Departments based in Sheffield, and the Deputy Vice Chancellor (DVC) joined an education roundtable with other regional partners. Ongoing work is taking place to continue to build links and inform policy-making.

4.1.2 City, Culture and Public Engagement

- Professor Vanessa Toulmin, Director of City, Culture and Public Engagement, is providing her academic expertise in early cinema and heritage restoration consultancy to Sheffield-based True North Brew Co. who have acquired the iconic Abbeydale Picture House on Abbeydale Road, Sheffield.
- The University Player Content Development Fund has been launched to provide small grants of between £1,000 and £6,000 to academic staff to enable them to create high-quality, digital content (i.e. films, podcasts, digital exhibitions, 360 degree videos, games) based on current research, for showcasing on the [University of Sheffield Player](#). The Player currently has more than 500 pieces of content and has had more than 265,000 hits since its launch in 2022.

4.1.3 Global Engagement

- [IIT Bombay Visit and Alumni / Stakeholder Event](#)

In late January, the Vice-Chancellor met with his counterpart at IIT Bombay, Professor Shireesh Kedare. This visit was timed as colleagues from the Faculty of Engineering (EEE and CMBE) and GE were attending a two-day workshop at IIT Bombay to discuss how to take the partnership to the next stages. The meeting was a success and - as well as continuing to fund the partnership via the Partnership Development Fund - there was a consensus that IIT Bombay and the University of Sheffield would start to develop joint-MSc and joint-PhD programmes together. This marks a great step-forward in the partnership, and the University of Sheffield's internationalisation objectives.

The visit to India also included an alumni and stakeholder event held in Mumbai. This was a vital opportunity to engage with various external stakeholders and was attended by over 50 people.

- [Alkafeel University and the University of Al-Ameed](#)

On Wednesday 20th January the University of Sheffield signed Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) with the University of Al-Ameed and Alkafeel University in Iraq. These agreements build on 15 years of collaboration, primarily within the Faculty of Health. The discussions focused on advancing education, particularly curriculum development, to support Iraq in strengthening its medical education system.

- University of Alberta visit

In January 2025, a small delegation led by the Vice President for Research and Innovation from the University of Alberta visited Sheffield. The University of Alberta is one of Sheffield's University-level strategic partners. Our recent strategic planning emphasised the potential synergies between our two institutions to the extent that The University of Alberta is now one of our priority partners for growing future collaboration. During the meeting, we discussed a number of ideas on how we may collaborate further, including research in Health & AI, Energy, Vaccines, Defence and Manufacturing. We also discussed professional services and academic staff exchanges to build capacity for Horizon Europe grants.

4.1.4 Corporate Communications

- Deputy Vice-President for Innovation Professor Ashutosh Tiwari [gave oral evidence to the Science, Innovation and Technology Committee](#) as part of its inquiry: 'Innovation, growth and the regions'. Extensive briefing material was prepared, including key messages, questions and answers, case studies and statistics, in collaboration with colleagues from the Public Affairs Group and a follow-up written submission provided to the Committee. His contribution highlighted the importance of regions having the right infrastructure to scale spin-outs in the UK and raised the profile of the University's work in driving innovation-led growth in our region. A video clip of the session was [shared on LinkedIn](#).

4.2 ADVANCED MANUFACTURING GROUP

- Forgemasters are in the process of expanding their physical footprint in Sheffield to meet their growing commercial demands. They are strengthening the existing partnership with the AMRC-TC by having two AMRC-TC Engineering Skills Coaches full time at their site (salaries will be fully funded by Forgemasters) in a newly purchased building which will be dedicated to training apprentices. This is an excellent opportunity to deepen our existing relationship with Forgemasters and is expected to generate other opportunities for the wider university. This partnership will give us exclusivity to deliver all their machining apprentices and related training for the long term. This will be a formal arrangement from early Feb 2025. There will be comms and celebrations around this.
- Some of our new apprenticeship employers for September 2025 include John Crane, Warburtons, EON, MTL, Haltec and AWE.
- Ofsted outcome - 100% of employers surveyed said that they would recommend us.

5 ONE UNIVERSITY

5.1 SUSTAINABILITY

5.1.1 Corporate Communications

- The University [was ranked 27th globally](#) out of 1,751 institutions in the 2025 QS World University Rankings: Sustainability, as well as 10th in the UK and 16th in Europe.

6.1 WORKFORCE**6.1.1 Voluntary Severance**

- A Voluntary Severance Scheme was opened in November 2024 and closed in early January 2025. A total of 389 applications were received. 313 have been approved so far (as at 3 February). If all these approved VSS offers are accepted, this will equate to an approximate saving of £16.5 million. Of the remaining applications 42 were rejected and 31 have been paused whilst further information is sought. The paused cases are all from Schools based Professional Services staff whose roles will shortly be restructured. The pause is to allow time to determine whether approving the cases will alleviate the risk of compulsory redundancies in the restructure.

Breakdown across staffing areas:

Academic, Research and Teaching staff

Applications considered by panels: 115

Approved: 115

School/Faculty Professional Services staff

Applications considered by panels: 160

Approved: 113

Rejected: 16

Decision deferred: 31

Central Professional Services staff

Applications considered by panels: 112

Approved: 86

Rejected: 26

UEB will now take stock of the financial savings made so far, including VSS, paused capital projects and other areas, to establish the revised financial forecast position, to determine what further action is required.

6.1.2 New Schools

- All new schools have submitted proposals for combined, leaner Professional Services teams, realising financial savings and ensuring new schools (especially those that are combinations of multiple departments) have well configured teams to support learning, teaching and research. As part of these structural changes, the University will also bring together all 'procure to pay' financial activities, that are currently unevenly dispersed across Faculties and schools, into four hubs (Arts and Social Sciences will operate from a joint hub) and create five doctoral colleges to manage PG research. These proposals are driving substantial change through large parts of the organisation and understandably, anxiety levels are high in some areas. There are numerous support resources available to staff to support them through what feels like an unsettling time.

6.2 RESEARCH AWARDS

- The total value of new awards for the last 12 months, to the end of December 2024, is now £165m, a fall of £12m compared to £177m in December 2023.
- There has been a decrease in the total number of awards, for the 12 months to the end of December 2024, the number of new awards opened is 764 compared to 862 as at December 2023. There has been a fall in the number of RCUK awards by 69 to 153 in the last 12 months, which is the lowest number for over 3 years, whilst the number of Industry awards has decreased by 13 in the 12 months to December 2024 compared with December 2023.
- The value of new awards for the 12 months to December 2024 is showing the biggest fall in RCUK awards, which has decreased by £13m to £53m and is the lowest value for over 3 years. The value of Charity awards has also fallen. However, the value of Overseas and Other awards has risen by £2m to £16m and UK Government by £2m to £53m.
- Despite the number and value of awards both having fallen in the 12 months to December 2024, compared with the 12 months to December 2023, the average value of an award has risen from £205k to £216k over the same period.
- Excluding Capital Projects, as of December 2024, in addition to the above figures, £76m awards have had notification of being successful, compared to £64m in December 2023.
- In the 3 months since the last report, there have been 7 new awards for over £1m, the largest of these was for £3.5m awarded by Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations to the Faculty of Engineering.
- The value of the Research Net Contribution is £42m for the 12 months to December 2024 compared to £43m for the 12 months to December 2023 a fall of £1m (2%).
- As of December 2024, research grants work in progress (research order book) which excludes capital projects, stands at £354m which is an increase of £9m on the work in progress figure of £345m recorded in December 2023.

6 LEGAL AND REGULATORY MATTERS

7.1 OFSTED

7.1.1 Ofsted Inspection

- Ofsted inspected the University's apprenticeship provision in November 2024. The final inspection report as agreed and published on 14 January 2025 <https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/43/133872>
- The overall outcome was positive and all aspects were graded at least as "Good", with behaviour and attitudes being graded as "Outstanding". The following four areas for improvement were identified in the report:
 - Revise the sequence of teaching for apprentice registered nurses so that teachers do not refer to topics that apprentices have not studied.
 - Identify and implement actions to improve achievement on the very small number of apprenticeships where it is low.
 - Provide support plans for apprentices with SEND from the beginning of their courses.

- Ensure that teachers of hybrid lessons check the understanding of apprentices who are online as well as they do for those who are physically present.
- In addition to the above, a number of potential areas for improvement were identified during inspection but were not included in the final report. Individual School and University of Sheffield Quality Improvement Plans (QIPs) will record progress and timeline of any actions highlighted.

7.2 REPORTABLE EVENTS

- Since the previous report to Senate was circulated there have been no reportable events notified to the OfS.

The Senate, 19 March 2025

President & Vice-Chancellor's Report

Supplementary Report

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 the University Vision's four Pillars and their respective Priorities, after a section about the external environment. Where information relates to more than one Pillar or Priority it is included under the most relevant theme. Where appropriate, reference is made to other papers that appear separately on the Senate agenda. The report now comprises two parts, the main report and a supplementary report with additional information and updates, available in the Reading Room.

1. EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

1.1 Parts of the Free Speech Act to be introduced but the right to sue universities will be removed

- The Education Secretary has announced [parts of the Higher Education \(Freedom of Speech\) Act 2023 will be brought into force](#), following a government review. The University is committed to freedom of speech and academic freedom and had prepared for the introduction of the Act under the previous administration, including a review of the [Code of Practice and External Speaker Policy](#). This preparatory work places the University in a good position to implement, or adapt as necessary, its approach following the government announcement.
- Under the proposals, universities will be required to take reasonably practicable steps to secure and promote freedom of speech within the law and introduce a free speech code of conduct. Both of these requirements build on existing obligations. Non-disclosure agreements in cases of bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct would be banned and this would mark a continuation of existing University practice. The role of the [Office for Students Director for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom](#) would be retained.
- A new complaints scheme, administered by the Office for Students, would be introduced but for staff, university members and external speakers only, and not for students as originally planned. Students would continue to be able to submit a free speech complaint to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA). The right to sue universities would be removed, [as requested by the sector](#), with the government [citing](#) that the statutory tort had the potential to “create costly litigation that would risk diverting resources away from

students at a time when university finances are already strained”. The Act’s duties towards Students Unions would no longer apply, although universities would be required to ensure that their free speech code of conduct is followed by their Students’ Union. The University will work with the SU on this.

- The Act was paused by the new Labour government last year on account of it being [burdensome on institutions and the Office for Students](#) and in response to [concerns](#) about the impact it could have on the welfare of vulnerable students, as well as concerns from Jewish students about the ability of universities to protect them from hate speech. The Act’s reintroduction comes amidst growing pressure on the government in [public polling](#) from Reform as well as high profile criticism of the UK government’s approach to free speech from parts of the new US administration. The government is also being [challenged about its approach to the Act in court by the Free Speech Union](#).
- The government’s proposals will need to go through Parliament and so will not be implemented imminently, but are expected to be approved by Parliament.

1.2 Government reiterates ambition to reduce net migration with action to ensure ‘systems are not being misused’

- The Home Secretary, Yvette Cooper MP, recently [outlined to the Home Affairs Select Committee the importance of universities ensuring that ‘their systems are not being misused’ and of reducing overall net migration](#). Labour has a [manifesto commitment to reduce net migration](#) and although its [language towards international students has been welcoming](#) since the General Election it will continue to implement the [immigration changes proposed by the previous administration](#). These changes include greater regulation of international recruitment agents and requiring institutions to confirm international students’ course outcomes. The government has also retained the policy preventing most international students from bringing dependants to the UK. The University is a signatory to the [Agent Quality Framework](#) and is planning for the introduction of requirements to uphold the integrity of the student immigration regime, which are expected to be included in the Home Office’s Sponsor Guidance.
- Both the [Home Secretary](#) and [Education Secretary](#) have stressed that universities should plan with local authorities for any increases in international student numbers to alleviate pressures on local infrastructure, including housing. In last year’s [review of the Graduate visa route](#) the University’s collaboration with Sheffield Hallam University and the City Council was [cited](#) as an example of good practice in shaping housing development in the city.
- A [refreshed International Education Strategy](#) and immigration White Paper setting out the government’s plans on managing legal migration is expected in the coming months, which the University will feed into via sector bodies.
- The University continues to work with policy makers to make sure any measures designed to ensure a robust immigration system do not disproportionately impact UK higher education competitiveness and associated benefits to students, society and the economy.

2. EDUCATION

2.1 DELIVERY OF THE PORTFOLIO

2.1.1 QS League table

- Corporate Communications support for QS World University Rankings: As part of the QS World Rankings Academic and Employer Survey process, Corporate Comms emailed academic and employer contacts supplied by University staff, to seek consent for their contact details to be passed to QS and to be subsequently emailed the survey. A total of 770 employers and 2,360 academics gave consent to take part in the QS survey. In addition, all academics who consented were asked if they wanted to opt-in to receive further communications from the University, so far almost 500 have consented.

2.1.2 Access

- In collaboration with Brilliant Club, we have been successful with an OfS Equality in Higher Education Innovation Fund Bid totalling £189,000 to progress with our pilot of the Scholars Programme with students on a Children in Need Plan across a (yet to be identified) South Yorkshire Multi-Academy Trust. This represents research-led, robustly evaluated interventions with the potential to make real change in South Yorkshire.

3. RESEARCH

- No Supplementary content.

4. INNOVATION

4.1 GLOBAL AND REGIONAL ENGAGEMENT

4.1.1 Corporate Communications

- Reputation marketing campaign: A campaign targeted at employers in the UK and global academics in Brazil, South Africa, Canada, United States, India, Ghana is in progress (1 November - 31 March) to coincide with the reputation ranking surveys for both QS and THE rankings, with the aim of putting UoS front of mind.
- Academic comment was pitched out in response to the breaking news agenda on a number of occasions including: the political situation in South Korea, the Los Angeles wildfire and the Government's AI plan. This received widespread national coverage in BBC Radio 4 and 5, ITV News, Reuters, Financial Times, Malay Mail, and LNG in Northern BC, Channel 4, and The Independent US.

4.2 ADVANCED MANUFACTURING GROUP

- The AMRC has undergone a leadership change with the departure of Steve Foxley and the appointment of Professor Ben Morgan as Interim CEO. The Interim role is for a minimum of 6 months whilst a full-time recruitment process is undertaken.
- The Nuclear AMRC restructure has concluded with 42 staff being integrated into the AMRC. The new 8th group will be called the Nuclear Manufacturing Group and are in the process of being integrated into the AMRC structure. Formal completion of this will be in line with the new High Value Manufacturing Catapult year starting 1 April 2025.
- The AMRC Governance review was concluded and recommendations made. The AMRC CEO is working with Commercial and Professional Services colleagues on campus to further the details and implement the recommendations.

- The AMRC has taken formal handover of the new COMPASS (COMPosites At Speed and Scale) facility. It is now being populated with large scale composites and automation equipment and will be fully operational by February 2026. It will be the largest composite R+D facility of this type globally.
- The AMRC is performing well in terms of its contribution to the High Value Manufacturing Catapult and is ahead of progress across all its KPIs.

5. ONE UNIVERSITY

5.1 COLLABORATE AND SUPPORTIVE CULTURE

5.1.1 Senior Recruitment

- **University Secretary** – Following the resignation of Jeannette Strachan, David Swinn has been appointed to the role of Interim University Secretary until the end of July 2025. David has been the University's Head of Governance since 2018.
- **CEO of the AMRC** – Professor Ben Morgan has been appointed on an interim basis for an initial period of 6 months. Ben was previously Research Director at the AMRC.
- **Vice-President and Head of Faculty of Health** – Following an internal selection process, Professor Tracey Moore has been appointed as successor to Professor Ashley Blom on an interim basis until July 2026. Professor Moore is currently Dean of the School of Allied Health Professionals, Nursing & Midwifery in the Faculty of Health.
- **Director of IT Services** – Chris Willis has been appointed to the role of Interim Director of IT Services until November 2025. Chris was previously Chief Information Security Officer in IT Services.

5.1.2 Digital

- eRecruitment replacement (SAP Successfactors) was successfully launched in December to 1) replace a degraded system that was reaching end-of-life and 2) provide candidate anonymity to support the University's commitment to EDI.
- UEB has approved the Device Management Roadmap and IT Asset Management policy. These set clear strategic direction, principles, and policy for the safe, effective, efficient, and sustainable usage of University IT hardware and software.

5.1.3 Internal engagement – Corporate Communications

- A comprehensive approach to build awareness and understanding of the importance of reputation is in progress through staff communication channels. This includes a new reputation hub which signposts to related activity and guidance sharing regular reputation content in This Week In Focus, particularly in relation to the current reputation campaign and with a clear call to action for staff to reshare content with their networks.
- To keep colleagues informed about priority activities in relation to our financial position, we shared a series of topic-based articles, including, for example, an in-depth look at our [student recruitment and rankings activity](#).

5.1.4 Golden Thread – Corporate Communications

- As part of the University's approach to enhancing reputation and improving awareness, work continues on developing the Golden Thread and future campaigns with input from

staff and other stakeholders. Workshops were held with staff, students, and alumni in October - November to seek input to how we can strengthen our brand and confidently articulate what we stand for as an organisation, as well as to capture stories that reflect the Golden Thread. Eight workshops were held with 245 attendees. A new brand toolkit and brand campaign is now in development. This subject appears as a separate agenda item at Council on 26 February, with Corporate Communications colleagues in attendance.

5.2 PHILANTHROPY

5.2.1 Milestones and Developments

- Reputation and rankings

Our high-profile, targeted promotion of the QS rankings led to almost 850 alumni employers and 200 alumni academics consent to take part in the survey. The University has identified 400 employers and 400 academics to put forward to QS and follow-ups are now underway to secure participation.

- Campaign launch

Plans are well advanced for two in-person events to showcase the 'Forged in Sheffield' campaign to our US alumni. Invitations for VIP receptions in New York (7 May) and San Francisco (9 May) have been issued and received warmly. Both events will be hosted by the Vice-Chancellor and attended by our US alumni Board members.

- University philanthropy

Applications are open for the University's flagship Community Fundraising Event, the Big Walk, which this year will have a choice of two routes through the Peak District. Over 250 staff have already expressed interest in taking part. Funds raised from the 27 June event will go towards furthering the University's neurological research.

- International alumni engagement

CAR's enhanced support for strategic partnership-building and international recruitment is continuing with three in-person alumni engagement events at the start of 2025. A joint reception for alumni and recruitment agents in Mumbai (30 January) hosted by the Vice-Chancellor attracted ~40 guests. We will launch a new alumni chapter in Indonesia at the end of February with a VIP dinner, and co-host alumni receptions in Shanghai and Beijing during the Vice-Chancellor's visit to China in March.

Following our promotion of the prestigious British Council/Study UK Alumni Awards, Sheffield had 5 regional finalists and 1 regional winner (Saudi Arabia).

- International recruitment support

Over 100 alumni have expressed an interest in supporting conversion events taking place in Thailand, Indonesia, Malaysia and Japan in February and early March. Whilst almost 80 alumni have so far expressed an interest in supporting the Sheffield Live Alumni Panels for offer holders taking place in April and May.

5.2.2 Alumni Engagement and Volunteering

Financial Year	Volunteer hours (target)		Total hours to date	Campaign Forecast
	2023/2024	2024/2025		
Volunteer hours**	14,971 (15,000)	3,821 (13,000)	85,100	109,279
Volunteer hours (students)***	42,027 (20,000)	11,202 (20,000)	180,250	209,048
	56,998 (35,000)	15,023 (33,000)	265,350	318,327

** Figures have been updated to include hours contributed by Alumni and friends. 'Friends' are defined as non-alumni who are not UoS staff.

*** Data on student volunteer hours covers the period 01.08.18 – 19.12.24. Further data on student volunteer hours will be included in subsequent reports as it becomes available.

- Graduate employability

In November, over 50 alumni volunteers working in the mechanical engineering sector gave their time to the 'Interview an Engineer' programme. The initiative provides an opportunity for all first-year mechanical engineering students to interact with a practicing engineer and find out more about their day- to-day work, career development and achievements. The conversations took place online.

- Graduate employability

The annual Engineering project weeks (Global Engineering Challenge and Engineering, You're Hired) took place at the end of January and early February. These curriculum-based projects provide all first- and second-year engineering students with the chance to work in multi-disciplinary teams tackling real world engineering problems. Over 100 alumni mentors returned to campus to guide students through the weeks and assess the final projects.

- Alumni Engagement

A post-covid record of over 400 alumni from around the globe registered to attend the latest Bright Minds online webinar on 5 February. PhD student Lucy Burke explored the links between why we drink alcohol, who is drinking alcohol-free and low-alcohol drinks, and the implications for health inequalities.

5.3 SUSTAINABILITY

5.3.1 Corporate Communications

- Issued [November](#) and [December](#) sustainability newsletters, including a redesign of the email template. Issued [sustainability special edition newsletter](#) in January.
- Issued communications supporting several University sustainability initiatives, including the [LEAF programme](#), new [Textiles Policy](#) and [campus decarbonisation plan](#)
- Published the [sustainability annual progress report](#)

- Issued communications supporting the new campus masterplan project.

6 FINANCE

- No Supplementary content.

7 LEGAL AND REGULATORY MATTERS

- No Supplementary content.