

MINUTES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL SENATE
MEETING HELD: WEDNESDAY 20 NOVEMBER 2024, 2:00 PM — 4:00 PM GMT
THE BRETT BUILDING, OXFORD STREET

Present:

Professor T Jones (Vice-Chancellor, Chair), Professor T Ali, Dr H Arnolds, Professor J Balogun, Professor M Baylis, Dr C Belfrage, Dr M Berenbrink, Professor N Berry, Professor R Black, Professor G Brown, P Brown, Professor P Buse, Dr V Chauvet, Professor R Chiverrell, Professor P Clegg, Professor K Coleman, Professor D Colquitt, Professor L Colton, Professor S Das, Professor M D'Onofrio, Professor P Drake, Professor G Endfield, L Everest, Professor C Eyers, Dr K Furman, Professor M García-Fiñana, Professor B Gibson, Dr N Helassa, Professor P Hunter-Jones, Professor D Lane, Dr H Little, Professor W Liu, Professor G Lynall, Professor D Mair, Dr J Major, Professor S Maruna, Professor J McInerney, Professor V Mitsilegas, Professor M O'Flaherty, Dr S Parameswaran, Professor E Patterson, Dr M Rose, Professor H Scott, Professor C Semple, Professor P Shirlow, Professor J Slupsky, Professor J Surroca, Professor J Sweeney, Professor T Teubner, Professor F Vis, Professor S Voelkel, Professor F Watkins, Dr B Wilm, Dr J Woolf. Student Representatives: R Bradbury, O Crosby, N Elbana, O Ibrahim, J Inturi, H Thompson, Y Wells.

Apologies:

Professor K Bennett, Professor F Beveridge, Professor J Bridgeman, Professor I Buchan, Professor L Crolley, Professor J Curran, Professor M Gairing, Professor L Harkness-Brennan, Professor A Hollander, Professor D Jeater, Professor L Kenny, Professor B Konev, Professor C Mallanaphy, Professor S Sheard, Professor R Stokes, Professor M Towsey, Professor M White.

In Attendance:

Professor J Scott (Advance HE), K Ryan (University Secretary and General Counsel), E Leonard (Head of Governance and Deputy Secretary), K Blundell (Governance Officer), K Cross (Governance Officer), T Barker (Director, Academic Quality and Standards Division), Dr P Harrison (Director of Student Life), J King (Associate Director, Admissions, Enquiries and Fulfilment).

1. Committee and Membership Matters

1.1. Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership 2024/25

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a) The new Senate Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership for 2024/25. The powers as detailed in ordinance 19.5 had been placed into the institutional Terms of Reference template for completeness.

AGREED:

- b) To recommend for approval to Council, the Senate Terms of Reference, Constitution and Membership for 2024/25.

1.2. Senate Standing Orders 2024

RECEIVED:

- a) The Senate Standing Orders, with a number of minor changes proposed through track changes.

NOTED:

- b) SEN11 – voting, clarity was requested on whether electronic ballots would be anonymous.
- c) SEN6 – confidentiality and sharing of papers. Issues were raised on the use of Convene, specifically accessibility and transparency with no option to download/print papers. This was for data security and sustainability purposes and to streamline the process for distribution of papers.

AGREED:

- d) Subject to clarity on anonymous electronic voting, the Senate Standing Orders should be approved.
- e) Further information to be provided on the Convene features.

1.3. Roles and Responsibilities in Relation to Diversity and Equality 2024/25

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a) A guidance document (circulated annually to committees and boards) on how to demonstrate consideration of diversity and equality matters in their activities when populating report templates, as well as clarifying the role and responsibilities of committee/board members in ensuring that the University upheld diversity and equality compliance in its decision making.

1.4. University Policy on Disclosure of Interest

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a) The revised University policy and supporting procedure for Disclosing and Managing Conflicts of Interest, circulated annually to committees and boards.

1.5. University Scheme of Delegation

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a) The University Scheme of Delegation.

1.6. Disclosures of Interest

NOTED:

- a) Members of the Committee were invited to disclose any interests in relation to the items on the agenda. None were received.

2. Minutes

2.1. Minutes of the Meeting Held 26 June 2024

RECEIVED and AGREED:

- a) The minutes of the meeting held 26 June 2024 should be approved.

2.2. Matters Arising on the Minutes

NOTED:

- a) Minute 7 vii, Review of PDR Narrative Statement Pilot and Proposals for Wider Adoption. A concern was raised that output evaluation scores may be used as a form of performance management in capability cases and not just specifically for REF purposes. It would be helpful if the agreed policy on REF scores was communicated to managers along with the rationale.
- b) Minute 15, Reimagining Libraries, Museums and Galleries: Our Strategic Plan for 2024-2031, this item had been deferred at the last meeting due to time restrictions. The information was now outdated and would not now be presented.

AGREED:

- c) Any instances where output evaluation scores policy was being breached to be drawn to the attention of Professor Richard Black, Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, for investigation.

3. Report on Action Taken by the Chair on Behalf of Senate

RECEIVED:

- a) A paper summarising the activity taken by the Chair on behalf of Senate.

REPORTED:

- b) Since the last meeting, Chair's action had been taken on the following matters:
- i) To approve minor changes to the Fee Payment Policy 2024/25 relating to payment dates.
 - ii) To approve the renewal of the following collaborative partnerships for a further five years:
 - Truman Bodden Law School, Cayman Islands – franchise arrangement for delivery of the single UoL awards of LLB Law and LLM International Finance: Law and Regulation;
 - Wirral Metropolitan College, UK – franchise/articulation arrangement for delivery of Year 0 and Year 1 of the UoL 2+2 BSc Psychology.
 - iii) To approve an amendment to Ordinance 43 (Degrees of Bachelor of Medicine and Bachelor of Surgery) following a recommendation from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) adjudication stating *“that the University clarifies its regulations regarding full year re-takes and whether this includes the usual two (first sit and re-sit) attempts at assessments”*.
 - iv) To appoint the members to Boards of Discipline in relation to exam misconduct cases.
 - v) To approve appointments to the Standing Committees for Personal Chairs & Readerships, for the period 1 August 2024 – 31 July 2027.

AGREED:

- c) The actions taken by the Chair on behalf of Senate should be endorsed.
- d) Boards of Discipline Members to be updated to *Dr James Bainbridge*.

4. Vice-Chancellor's Report**RECEIVED:**

- a) A report from the Vice-Chancellor on University, sector wide and political news, covering:
 - i) University Updates: Rankings, Knowledge Exchange Framework, Economic and Social Impact Report, Staff Survey Results, Global Conflict, British Science Festival, Sir Peter Rigby Centre for Enterprise, Hub for Advanced Long-acting Therapeutics, Liverpool Literary Festival.
 - ii) Sector & Political Updates: Government Budget Announcements, University Tuition Fees, Labour Party Conference, Government Chief Scientific Adviser, Heseltine Institute Report, Sector Publications and Reports.

5. Academic Governance/Senate Effectiveness Review – Final Report

RECEIVED:

- a) A presentation from Professor Jon Scott, Advance HE, on the Senate Effectiveness Review Report which was finalised in June 2024.

REPORTED:

- b) Senate provided assurance to Council, who were the accountable body.
- c) There had been significant changes within the sector both institutionally and nationally since the last effectiveness review 10 years previously.
- d) The review had focussed on three key themes:
- Membership - composition, representation and roles
 - Culture - engagement, inclusion and relationships
 - Governance Processes and Arrangements - reporting, responsibilities and confidence.
- e) Findings and Recommendations: what was working and a summary of the recommendations were noted.
- f) The key strategic recommendations were the overall size of Senate (which was large in size compared to the sector), the balance between elected and ex-officio members and the structure of the sub-committees.

NOTED:

- g) There was a suggestion to include Postgraduate student representation on Senate and for Senate representation on Education Committee and Research and Impact Committee (RIC). It was noted that there was already Faculty representation on both Committees. Careful consideration would be required to ensure the balance of membership was representative without Committees becoming too large which may impact on effectiveness.
- h) Concerns were expressed that there may be a loss of opportunity to scrutinise the detail of sub-committee business if these were subsumed into Education Committee / RIC. The re-structure should give Education Committee and RIC a broader picture of all education / research activity, with the key issues still being debated at Senate.
- i) Several Senate papers were starred or to note and these were valuable to receive. Minutes and full paper packs from sub-committees could be made available to Senate if they wished to see these, however, there was a balance between efficiency (and receiving very large paper packs) and transparency. Reporting lines were not within the remit of the review and would be agreed internally.

- j) There was a question raised regarding transparency around Senate elections. The number of votes cast was not made public so as not to discourage/deter applicants and also for data protection and professional etiquette reasons. The number of votes received could potentially be made available to individuals upon request.
- k) As part of the 2024 elections, additional communications were sent to eligible staff in order to encourage a broader range of staff to apply. A question was raised on whether there was a low engagement of voting within the electorate, which could be investigated.
- l) There were a number of other suggestions made within the report which should be considered for implementation, including the use of a green/white paper approach to managing strategic or substantive proposals and decisions, the suggested minute template and circulation of unapproved minutes to Senate (*in confidence*) once approved by the Vice Chancellor.
- m) Thanks were expressed to all colleagues who participated in the review.

AGREED:

- n) Senate agreed the operational recommendations. The more strategic recommendations were agreed in principle, with a Task and Finish Group to be established to further consider implementation and report back to Senate in March.

6. Institutional Survey Results 2024 NSS Overview

RECEIVED:

- a) A presentation providing an overview of the University's National Student Survey (NSS) results for 2023/24.

REPORTED:

- b) The survey ran annually from February to April and was targeted at final year undergraduates. The revised version of the survey was launched in 2023, so a direct comparison with the previous year was now possible. The overall satisfaction question had been removed from the survey.
- c) Scores across the 7 themes were positive overall. The University was above the OfS benchmark for five of the seven sections and improvements had been made across all seven sections.
- d) In comparison to 2023, the percentage positive scores had improved for 25 of the 27 questions. There was no change on Q2 'How often do teaching staff make the subject engaging?' and a very slight decrease (-0.1%) for Q20 'How well have the library resources (e.g. books, online services and learning spaces) supported your learning?'

- e) The University was ranked third in the Russell Group based on average score across the core questions, but ranked 62 out of 130 across the sector.
- f) Looking across the survey themes, all ranks had improved, some significantly.
- g) The HEI percentile rank had improved for 20 of 27 questions, with improvements across all Assessment and Feedback. UoL was positioned in the top quartile for nine questions and two were in the lower quartile (*Q2 How often do teaching staff make the subject engaging?* and *Q14 How often does feedback help you to improve your work?*). The largest percentile drop was Q5 (*To what extent have you had the chance to explore ideas and concepts in depth?*).
- h) Split metrics (age, gender, disability, ethnicity, domicile) were compared with the previous year and the benchmarks for 2024. Positivity scores had improved for students with a reported disability, but there were still some considerable gaps.
- i) Assessment and feedback were a more prevalent theme for negative free text comments in comparison to 2023. For positive themes, questions relating to teaching were the most prevalent along with academic support and timetabling.
- j) Teaching by subject quartiles were variable year on year. There were a number of programmes in the bottom quartile for assessment and feedback.
- k) Data dashboards were available from the OfS and the University could provide further analysis of internal data upon request.

NOTED:

- l) The curriculum review project would address some of the issues around over-assessment and assessment design.
- m) Hygiene factors could make a difference on improving feedback, e.g. keeping students up to date if marking were to be late, ensuring they were aware when feedback was being given, detaching the reality of feedback from grading and ensuring feedback was given before the next piece of work was due.
- n) There was some internal good practice (Engineering), but sharing of good practice via the NSS action plans was currently inconsistent.
- o) Canvas on mobile phones only displayed grade and not feedback.

AGREED:

- p) Investigate the issue on Canvas/mobile phones only displaying grades and not feedback.

7. *Item redacted due to commercial sensitivity*

- a) *Minutes redacted due to commercial sensitivity.*

8. Annual Quality Report

RECEIVED:

- a) The Annual Quality Report, produced to assure the University that quality assurance processes were in place to maintain quality and standards and to enhance the student experience.

REPORTED:

- b) The report covered activity during 2023/24, approvals of new activity, monitoring and review activities, development and enhancement activities and evaluation and oversight of processes, student voice and compliance with OfS ongoing conditions of registration (B1 – B5, Quality and Standards).
- c) A Task and Finish Group had been established to consider the expectation under Condition B4: Assessment and Awards to retain five years of student assessed work after completion of their award. This requirement was not currently being met across the sector.
- d) The OfS was looking at partnerships and sub-contractor partnerships. It was anticipated that there would be more information from the OfS in relation to its aim to further monitor TNE activity.
- e) The PwC audit of the External Examining Process was undertaken and completed within the year and actions arising from this were being taken forward via the Quality Assurance Process Review Group.
- f) The presentation of the report would be reviewed for future.
- g) Senate raised concerns that changes to policies had been presented to them to note after implementation. Some of the changes in processes had caused issues for Professional Services staff who were not well represented on Senate, but were represented on the sub-committees reporting to Senate.

AGREED:

- h) To recommend for approval the Annual Quality Report to Council.

BUSINESS FROM FACULTIES

No business was received from the Faculties.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

9. Collaborative Provision Committee (CPC)

RECEIVED:

- a) A report on the meetings of CPC held on 4 July and 2 October 2024.

NOTED:

- b) The Committee's recommendations to renew the partnerships with Wirral Metropolitan College (WMC) and Truman Bodden Law School (TBLS) were approved by Chair's Action on behalf of Senate.
- c) Professor J Sweeney was now Chair of CPC.
- d) The Kaplan Online Learning (KOL) Annual Monitoring Visit (AMV) had taken place in June 2024. The Visit Panel had raised concerns related to quality and standards and had agreed five requirements that must be addressed. Several Working Groups, tasked with taking the requirements forward, had been established.
- e) A strategic Microcredentials Pilot Proposal from KOL was submitted to CPC for consideration. Given that a full update on the requirements agreed at the last AMV was not due until February 2025, the Committee felt it was not appropriate to approve the proposal before the February review of progress.

10. Education Committee

RECEIVED:

- a) A report on the meeting of the Education Committee held on 1 October 2024.

NOTED:

- b) Working groups on the Curriculum Project were currently looking at approach, systems and recruitment to modules. Consultation on timetabling would take place early 2025.
- c) The reference to the financial recovery plan was in the context of new programme development activity and current cost controls.

11. Postgraduate Research (PGR) Committee

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a) A report on the meeting of the PGR Committee held 10 October 2024.

12. Research and Impact Committee (RIC)

RECEIVED:

- a) A report on the meeting of RIC held on 1 October 2024.

NOTED:

- b) RIC received an update on the most recent announcements regarding the Open Access (OA) requirements for outputs to be submitted to REF2029. After consultation, the proposals for OA requirements for long form outputs were dropped. The proposed changes to the OA requirements for journal articles and conference proceedings would go ahead and further information was expected before the end of 2024.
- c) The REF pilot assessments would be running in the spring.
- d) An impact stock take would take place in December 2024 and would be reported back to Research and Impact Committee.

13. Research Integrity and Governance Committee (RIGC) Annual Report

RECEIVED

- a) The annual report of the RIGC covering the academic year 2023/24 which described the work of the Committee to uphold and develop the robustness of the University's research integrity framework.

NOTED:

- b) Work was ongoing to evaluate the University's current policy on misconduct in research in order to identify process enhancements that may help with the time cases take to progress and to allow consideration of tension points within the process. Discussions were taking place with the Student Life Team on the interaction with this and the Code of Practice.

14. Committee on Research Ethics Annual Report

RECEIVED:

- a) The annual report of the Committee on Research Ethics addressed to University Council and University Senate. The report described the work of the Committee in the academic year 2023/24 to implement and develop the robustness of the University's framework for research ethics review.

NOTED:

- b) There was an Ethics Reviewer training module available on the LearnwellPlatform.

15. Honorary Degrees Nominations Report 2024 – Chair

RECEIVED and ENDORSED:

- a) The Joint Committee on Honorary Degrees recommendations for people who should be invited to accept honorary degrees to be conferred at degree ceremonies in 2025. The report should be submitted to Council.

16. Annual Summary Report from the University Approval Panel

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a) A paper providing a summary of the decisions of the University Approval Panels regarding proposals for new programmes and programme revalidations.

OTHER ITEMS

17. OfS Annual Compliance Report

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a) The self-assessment annual report, providing assurance on how the University was complying with the ongoing conditions of the OfS Regulatory Framework and highlighting areas of potential risk or where further work was progressing.
- b) The report summarised key highlights and issues with regard to complying with each of the ongoing conditions of registration. Overall, the majority (20/25) of conditions had been assessed as green, with those conditions highlighted as amber (4/25) having plans in place to address requirements as necessary (with 1/25 n/a).
- c) Condition E3 of the OfS Regulatory Framework placed accountability for ensuring the University's compliance with all conditions of registration, and with the OfS accounts direction, directly on its governing body, which for the University was Council.

18. Admissions, Appeals and Complaints for Entry 2024

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a) A report on the decisions reached on admissions appeals and complaints during the admissions cycle for entry 2024.

NOTED:

- b) There had been a total of 13 formal appeals and 2 formal complaints from 14 individuals for 2024 entry. This was a decrease compared to 2023 entry, where there were 16 appeals and 3 complaints.
- c) Two complaints had been upheld. One of these had been around reasonable adjustments at interview, and this was now under review to ensure consistency.

19. Annual Complaints Monitoring Report for the Academic Session 2023/2024

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a) The annual Complaints Monitoring Report for 2023/24 provided assurance and evidence that the University's procedures were correctly followed in considering student cases and that those procedures and the decisions taken were considered to be fair and reasonable.
- b) A total of 65 Stage One/Formal Complaints were received, of which 38 (58%) were upheld in full or in part. This was an increase compared to the previous year, where 30 Stage One complaints were received, the percentage upheld in full or in part had risen by 15%. Academic matters continued to be the most frequently raised issue at Stage One/Formal Complaint.
- c) The revised Student Complaints Policy and Procedure, launched on 1 March 2024, had introduced eligibility checks for Review requests, which had allowed checking that complaint escalations had been done in time and in line with the policy, as well as filtering complaints without any basis as set out in the policy's framework.
- d) The way in which the report was presented would be reviewed following the recent request to include the breakdown of complaints between undergraduate and postgraduate students.

20. Policy Regarding Reasonable Adjustments and Support for Disabled Students

RECEIVED:

- a) The revised Policy Regarding Reasonable Adjustments and Support for Disabled Students.

NOTED:

- b) The Policy was updated to reference interim guidance in relation to approval of reasonable adjustments in urgent cases in line with the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC) guidance which was published in June 2024 as a result of the Abrahart Case at the University of Bristol.
- c) A list of anticipatory reasonable adjustments that could be made in urgent situations had been drawn up. Not all situations were urgent and most students could engage with services through existing routes.

NOTED:

- d) Senate members raised some concerns which would be considered further by the Director of Student Life, including:
 - clarity on responsibility for the implementation of reasonable adjustments;
 - the opportunity for students to engage with academics on reasonable adjustments;

- the decision to reduce the time for an automatic extension for students with a disability from two weeks to one week had not be well communicated;
- there were inconsistencies in the implementation of support plans;
- the responsibilities placed on departments and appropriate level of workload;
- lack of staff training;
- nervousness on how to respond around asking direct questions on placements.

AGREED:

- e) The Policy Regarding Reasonable Adjustments and Support for Disabled Students.

21. Draft Senate Forward Plan

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a) The Senate forward plan of business for the 2024/25 academic year.

22. Any Other Business

None received.

23. Meetings Schedule 2024/25

NOTED:

- a) The Senate meeting schedule for 2024/25:

Wednesday 29 January 2025

Wednesday 19 March 2025

Wednesday 25 June 2025

University Committee Structure

RECEIVED:

- a) A hyperlink to the University Committee structure for the benefit of members.