

MINUTES OF THE UNIVERSITY OF LIVERPOOL SENATE
MEETING HELD: WEDNESDAY 29 JANUARY 2025, (2.00 PM) THE BRETT BUILDING,
OXFORD STREET

Present:

Professor T Jones (Vice-Chancellor, Chair), Dr H Arnolds, Dr C Belfrage, Professor K Bennett, Dr M Berenbrink, Professor F Beveridge, Professor R Black, Professor J Bridgeman, Professor G Brown, P Brown, Professor P Buse, Dr V Chauvet, Professor R Chiverrell, Professor K Coleman, Professor D Colquitt, Professor L Colton, Dr L Corner, Professor A Cowan, Professor L Crolley, Professor S Das, Professor M D'Onofrio, Professor P Drake, L Everest, Professor C Eyers, Dr K Furman, Professor M Gairing, Professor M García-Fiñana, Professor B Gibson, Professor L Harkness-Brennan, Dr N Helassa, Professor A Hollander, Professor P Hunter-Jones, Professor D Jeater, Professor L Kenny, Professor B Konev, Professor D Lane, Professor W Liu, Professor G Lynall, Professor P Lunn, Dr J Major, Professor C Mallanaphy, Professor T Marson, Professor P McCormick, Professor J McInerney, Professor V Mitsilegas, Dr S Parameswaran, Professor E Patterson, Professor I Prior, Dr M Rose, Professor C Semple, Professor H Scott, Professor M Senior, Professor S Sheard, Professor J Slupsky, Professor R Stokes, Professor J Surroca, Professor J Sweeney, Professor T Teubner, Professor M Towsey, Professor W van der Hoek, Dr V Vass, Professor F Vis, Professor S Voelkel, Professor T Walley, 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 T Ali, Professor J Balogun, Professor I Buchan, Professor P Clegg, Professor J Curran, Professor G Endfield, Professor A Fell, Professor M O'Flaherty, Professor M White.

In Attendance

K Ryan (University Secretary and General Counsel), M Edge (Committee Secretary), Dr P Harrison (Director of Student Life), S King (Strategic Change Project Manager) E Leonard (Head of Governance and Deputy Secretary).

1. Committee and Membership Matters

1.1 Welcome

Professor Alex Cowan, Head of the Department of Chemistry; Professor Tony Marson, Executive Dean for the Institute of Systems, Molecular and Integrative Biology; and Professor Mark Senior, Interim Dean of Institute of Infection, Veterinary and Ecological Sciences, were welcomed to their first meeting of Senate.

1.2 Disclosures of Interest

NOTED:

Members of the Committee were invited to disclose any interests in relation to the items on the agenda. None were disclosed.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

2.1 Minutes of the Meeting Held 20 November 2024

RECEIVED and AGREED:

- a. The minutes of the previous meeting should be approved.

2.2 Matters Arising

2.2.1 *Convene (minute 1.2 c refers)*

REPORTED:

- a. A number of members queried the inability to download and print Senate papers in Convene, aligned to accessibility matters. It was explained that the Governance team, with support from the University's D&E Team and Information Security, was developing additional guidance to support committee members in their role and it was hoped that this would be available shortly.
- b. Whilst it was not anticipated that this would permit discretion to download and print papers as standard, this document would include an in-depth guide on accessibility support. In the meantime, colleagues were reminded that, should they have a specific accessibility request please do approach the Committee Secretary for support.

NOTED:

- c. The spirit of SEN6 of the Senate Standing Orders, "*Senate operates on the principle of transparency, unless there is good reason to impose confidentiality*", should be followed, and that it would be of value from time to time for Senate members to share non-confidential papers with specific colleagues for feedback, which was not possible with current Convene settings.

2.2.2 *Item redacted due to commercial sensitivity*

- a. *Minute redacted due to commercial sensitivity.*

2.2.3 *Establishment of the Senate Task and Finish Group (minute 5 n refers)*

REPORTED:

- a. Following agreement at the last meeting of Senate, a Task and Finish Group had been established to further develop a number of the more strategic recommendations that arose out of the Advance HE Senate effectiveness review. Membership of the Group included representatives from Governance, an Academic Dean, a Senate Council representative, elected member representatives, plus representation from the Guild of Students. It was hoped that the Group would present a proposal on the composition of Senate to the March meeting.

2.2.4 Internal Reading Scores (minute 2.2. c refers)

NOTED:

- a. 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 was reiterated that any instances should be brought to the attention of Professor Richard Black, Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor. The DVC had recently met with representatives of UCU and confirmed that no such instances of internal reading scores being used in performance management had been received.
- b. The DVC was in ongoing discussions with UCU representatives regarding the institutional approach to evaluation of research performance.

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

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a. A paper summarising the activity taken by the Chair on behalf of Senate. Since the last meeting, Chair's action had been taken on the following matters:
 - i. To recommend to Council minor changes to Appendix A of the Student Complaints Policy which is the Procedure for Student Complaints in the Event of Major Disruption.
 - ii. To approve the appointment of Professor Luke Dawson, from 2 January 2025, to the Fitness to Practise Panel Chairs. Professor Dawson, Dean of School of Dentistry, had replaced Professor Vince Bissell.

AGREED:

- b. The action taken by the Chair on behalf of Senate should be endorsed.

4. Vice-Chancellor's Report

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a. A report from the Vice-Chancellor on University, sector wide and political news, covering:
 - i. University Updates: Rankings, new College of Veterinary Medicine at University of Al Dhaid, December Graduations, University Sustainability Strategy.
 - ii. Sector & Political Updates: Cabinet Minister Visit, Heseltine Institute Annual Lecture, Collaborative venture between the Universities of Liverpool and Manchester, visit from the House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Select Committee.

STRATEGIC MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

5. Academic Freedom/Freedom of Speech Annual Update

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a. A presentation from the Director of Student Life providing an update on the University's ongoing commitment to upholding Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, as well as an overview of recent Government announcements with regard to the implementation of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech Act) 2023.
- b. On 15th January 2025, the Secretary of State for Education had confirmed that the Act would

go ahead with several changes. The key changes/removals would now be:

- i. The duty would no longer apply to Students' Unions
 - ii. Student complaints about free speech would continue to go to the OIA not the Office for Students
 - iii. Removal of the Tort
 - iv. The duty to report on overseas funding to be kept under review (this was initially due for implementation in September 25).
- c. The University had already undertaken a lot of work in preparing for the implementation of the Act prior to it being paused. This had included formalising a joint Policy and Code of Practice with the Guild of Students.

6. Green paper: Additional Considerations, Transforming Student Support Project

RECEIVED:

- a. A green paper and an accompanying presentation which proposed the introduction of a new, unified 'Additional Considerations' policy.

REPORTED:

- b. This paper acted as an early-stage discussion document and proposed the introduction of a new policy to streamline and replace the current policies and processes on extenuating circumstances, exemption from late penalties, and extensions for disabled students. This initiative was a key component of the Transforming Student Support (TSS) project, aligned with the Education and Student Experience pillar of Liverpool 2031, and addressed the pressing need to simplify processes, improve equity, and enhance the experience for both students and staff.
- c. The proposed new policy would aim to:
- i. Simplify processes associated with extenuating circumstances, exemptions from late penalties and extensions for disabled students.
 - ii. Reduce staff workload.
 - iii. Enhance fairness, equity, and transparency for staff and students.
 - iv. Align with the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA) Good Practice Framework, Liverpool 2031 values and sector standards.

NOTED:

- d. The paper proposed a range of examples of potential changes for further consideration, some of which were based on best practice identified within the sector. The purpose of the Green Paper was to gather input to shape the next phase of policy development. Feedback from Senate would help guide a broader consultation process, after which the final policy would return to Senate in June 2025.
- e. Overall, Senate welcomed the opportunity to input into the discussion paper, and provided the following broad feedback:
- i. The introduction of a level of automation to simplify and improve basic processes could

be helpful. This could in turn enable students to receive more prompt communications and also free up staff time to focus on more complex issues. This latter point should be more clearly articulated in the policy.

- ii. The ability to meet marking deadlines was highlighted as a current challenge for staff.
- iii. Evidence-free additional considerations for extensions only may be helpful for some students, particularly where obtaining the evidence in a timely manner could be challenging (e.g. sudden care responsibilities or waiting for a diagnosis). It would be important to get the right balance on evidence-free extensions. There may also be scenarios where supervisors could provide appropriate evidence on behalf of the student.
- iv. If students submit their assessment late, it may be helpful to state that assessments would likely also be provided late.
- v. A consideration of student data should form part of the next stage of policy development. For example, a clearer understanding of how many students these proposals would affect and how. A consideration of how any policy change may affect timetabling was also highlighted as important.
- vi. The proposal to remove the opportunity to resit for improvement received mixed feedback from Senate, noting that it could potentially disadvantage some students. It was noted that there was variability in approach across exam boards.
- vii. A query was raised as to why the University still required a 'reason' to be given for evidence free ELPs. If the University intended to retain this, then it may be helpful if the list of potential reasons were aligned to the policy.
- viii. Concerns were raised that carrying 30 failed credits into the final year could potentially disadvantage students, noting that 30 credits may be the wrong threshold.
- ix. The Green Paper had been developed based on three-year undergraduate degrees. It would be important to also consider how such a policy could be translated onto other degree programmes (e.g. 4-year programmes).
- x. The Liverpool Guild of Students supported the broad principles but raised a number of concerns around removing the opportunity to resit for improvement, the potential disproportionate burden on some students carrying 30 failed credits into the final year (depending on the type of degree), whether the automatic 7-day extension for disabled students would be appropriate as a general approach for all declared disabilities, and whether additional choices could be given to students as part of their support plan.
- xi. A request was made for the University's Clinical Schools to be consulted to ensure that their unique requirements were fully considered as part of policy development.
- xii. Ensuring clarity and transparency, and a fair and consistent approach to such issues were highlighted as critical points for Senate.

AGREED:

- f. Overall, Senate broadly supported the direction of travel to consolidate various documents into a unified policy and agreed that the detail that came next would be important. The next stage of development should include a clear focus on ensuring that the final proposals would be deliverable.
- g. A progress update should be presented to the next meeting scheduled for 19 March, with a final version of the new Policy expected to be presented to Senate for approval on 25 June 2025.

7. Annual Compliance Report for the Academic Session 2023/24

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a. A paper providing an annual anonymised summary of the Annual Compliance Report for the Academic Session 2023/24.
- b. There had been a 64% increase in the number of Section One Appeals compared to the previous year. The number of upheld appeals had also increased by 12% on the previous year. Conversely, there had been a 16% decrease in the number of Section Two Appeals, and the number submitted that had a valid case for consideration had also decreased significantly (52% decrease) compared to 2022/23. The new Assessment Appeals Procedure (Code of Practice on Assessment Appendix F) would be implemented in March 2025.
- c. The number of Research Degree Appeals had reduced by 58% compared to the previous year. All such appeals received in 2023/24 were not upheld. The number of requests for review of a Faculty Progress Committee decision had remained static. The number of Fitness to Practise cases was the same as the previous year. The revised Fitness to Practise Policy and Procedure was launched in January 2024.
- d. There were sixteen non-academic misconduct cases referred to the University Disciplinary Panel in 2023/24 which was consistent with the previous year. Abusive behaviour was the most common breach in Student Conduct Investigations and referrals to the University Disciplinary Panel, which represented a change from the previous year where sexual misconduct was the most common breach.
- e. A total of one hundred and thirty-eight exam misconduct reports were made during the August 2023, January 2024 and May 2024 assessment periods. Of these twenty-three were low level breaches that could be dealt with via a reminder of the regulations, and forty-six accepted Chair's Action. Fifty-six cases in total were referred for investigation and of these twenty-two were presented to the Board of Discipline, with fifteen (68%) being found proven.

BUSINESS FROM FACULTIES

No business was received from the Faculties.

REPORTS FROM SUB-COMMITTEES

8. Collaborative Provision Committee (CPC)

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a. A report on the meeting of CPC held on 12 December 2024. CPC had approved:
 - i. Two new student exchange partners: Hong Kong University of Science and Technology and Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile
 - ii. A new process for approving amendments to XJTLU student exchange module mappings
 - iii. The updated XJTLU Annual Monitoring Activity Action Plan 2022/23
 - iv. Two new XJTLU student exchange partners: EM Strasbourg Business School, France, and BI Norway Business School
 - v. The Liverpool Online (Kaplan Online Learning) Annual Monitoring Visit (AMV) Progress Report.
- b. Assurance was sought at Senate (and obtained) that Kaplan Online Learning was on track to progress the required actions from the AMV ahead of the reaccreditation in July 2025.

9. Education Committee

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a. A report on the meeting of the Education Committee held on 16 January 2025, covering:
 - i. Appendix A to the Student Complaints Policy and Procedures: Procedure for Student Complaints in the Event of Major Disruption
 - ii. Strategy 2031: Curriculum Review Project Updates (Liverpool Learning Framework and Programme Optimisation Project)
 - iii. Timetabling Annual Report
 - iv. Degree Outcomes Statement
 - v. Liverpool Launchpad Internships
 - vi. Update from Academy
 - vii. Student Success Board Annual Report
 - viii. University of Liverpool Maths School Annual Report.

10. Postgraduate Research (PGR) Committee

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a. A report on the meeting of the PGR Committee held on 10 January 2025, covering:
 - i. Update to Appendix 9 Remote viva Policy, PGR Code of Practice
 - ii. Removal of Fixed Fee Guarantee
 - iii. Renewal of Dual PhD between NIMHANS and the University of Liverpool
 - iv. Proposed changes to DCLin Psychology programme
 - v. Supervisor and Postgraduate Researcher Statement of Expectation
 - vi. PGR Enhancement Project: Re-Imagining the PhD
 - vii. PGR Population Trends
 - viii. KPIs for PGR completion rates
 - ix. XJTLU
 - x. PGR Exit Survey
 - xi. UKRI Updates
 - xii. Update on Task & Finish Groups (Graduate Teaching Assistants / Ethics and Integrity Processes for XJTLU PGRs)
 - xiii. Internal Periodic Reviews (IPRs)
 - xiv. Update from Academy.

11. Research and Impact Committee

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a. A report on the meeting of the Research and Impact Committee held on 15 January 2025, covering:
 - i. Working in Partnership

- ii. Researcher Development Concordat
- iii. Interdisciplinary Centre for Sustainability Research Update
- iv. Reimagining the PhD Update
- v. American Chemical Society Negotiations Update.

NOTED:

- b. *Minute redacted due to commercial sensitivity.*

OTHER ITEMS

12. Accounts of the University for the Year Ended 31 July 2024

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a. A hyperlink to access the latest published financial accounts of the University, for the year ended 31 July 2024.

13. Minor Revisions to Student Complaints Policy and Procedure

RECEIVED and NOTED:

- a. A copy of the revised Student Complaints Policy and Procedure (SCPP), with all updates highlighted with track changes.
- b. The revisions related to:
 - i. Updated URL links to other procedures – Paragraph 1d and 4e.
 - ii. Clarification that the Guild of Student's Advice Centre is staffed by professional advisors. Paragraph 1g.
 - iii. Clarification of procedures for students studying under collaborative agreements at partner institutions. Paragraph 4b.
 - iv. Updated URL links to Annual Annexe to the Student Charter and formal complaint proforma Paragraph 7b.
 - v. Additional point added to advise that advice should be sought from relevant HR Business Partner where a student raises issues of complaint relating to staff. This includes a link for contacts. Paragraph 7l.
 - vi. Updated URL link to review proforma. Paragraph 8e.
 - vii. Updated URL link to Appendix A Complaints about Major Disruption. Paragraph 1l.
 - viii. Consideration of compliance with OfS Condition of registration in relation to Harassment and Sexual Misconduct, Advice to students and staff that such complaints may be considered under other procedures. Paragraph 1d and 4 exi.

AGREED TO RECOMMEND:

- c. The minor revisions to the SCPP, as detailed above, should be approved.

14. Draft Senate Forward Plan

RECEIVED and **NOTED:**

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

15. Meetings Schedule 2024/25

NOTED:

- a. The Senate meetings schedule for 2024/25:
 - Wednesday 19 March 2025
 - Wednesday 25 June 2025.