

Senate

Minutes of the meeting held on 02 April 2025 at 13:30

Treetops, Wates House

MINUTES

Members

Ex-officio:

President & Vice-Chancellor	Prof Max Lu*
Provost and Senior Vice-President [Chair]	Prof Tim Dunne
Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education [Secretary]	Prof Eunice Ma
Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Research & Innovation	Prof Lisa Collins
Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean, FABSS	Prof Annika Bautz
Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean, FEPS	Prof Bob Nichol
Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean, FHMS	Prof Roberto La Ragione
Vice-President, Global	Patrick Degg
Associate VP, External Engagement (International)	Prof Amelia Hadfield*
Associate Dean, Education, FABSS	Prof Mark Ashton[interim]*
Associate Dean, Education, FEPS	Prof Esat Alpay
Associate Dean, Education, FHMS	Dr Dynatra Subasinghe
Associate Dean, Research & Innovation, FABSS	Prof Glenn Parry*
Associate Dean, Research & Innovation, FEPS	Prof Jin Xuan
Associate Dean, Research & Innovation, FHMS	Prof Deborah Dunn-Walters
Acting Chief Student Officer	Emma Rowsell
Director of Academic Performance, Quality & Governance	Nick Moore
Director of Research, Innovation & Impact	Gill Fairbairn
Director, Institute for People-Centred AI	Prof Adrian Hilton
Director, Institute for Sustainability	Prof Ravi Silva[interim]
President of the Students' Union	Liam White
VP Voice of the Students' Union	Luana Vasconcelos

Nominated (FABSS):

School of Law	Assoc Prof Dr Joshua Andresen
School of Literature and Languages	Assoc Prof Dr Constance Bantman
School of Music and Media	Dr Femi Adeyemi-Ejeye
School of Sociology	Prof Ranjana Das
School of Law	Claire Lillywhite
School of Economics	Prof Ricardo Praca Cavaco Nunes

Nominated (FEPS):

Computer Science & Electrical Engineering	Dr Mariam Cirovic
Sust, Civ and Env Eng	Dr Ana Andries
Computer Science & Electrical Engineering	Dr Rizwan Ashgar
Sust, Civ and Env Eng	Dr Lirong Liu
Mechanical Engineering Sciences	Prof Mahmoud Shafiee*
Chemistry and Chemical Engineering	Dr Michael Short

Nominated (FHMS):

School of Biosciences	Dr Mohammad Asim
School of Biosciences	Dr Terri Grassby
School of Psychology	Dr Charo Hodgkins
School of Psychology	Dr Eleanor Ratcliffe
School of Veterinary Medicine	Dr Giovanna Nalesso*
School of Veterinary Medicine	Dr Charlotte Maile

Nominated (PGR Student)	FEPS PGR Student	Chunlin Chen
In attendance:	Governance Officer [minute taker] Senate Open Observer Seat Dean, Doctoral College	Kelley Padley Dr Adam Collins Dr Ruan Elliott [24/049]
	* denotes absence	
	** denotes absence, but represented by an alternate	

1 INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

24/042 Apologies for absence

- .1 Apologies were received from Max Lu, Amelia Hadfield, Mark Ashton, Glenn Parry, Mahmoud Shafiee and Giovanna Nalesso.
- .2 The Chair welcomed the following to Senate:
 - Prof. Ravi Silva – Interim Director of the Institute of Sustainability.
 - Dr Adam Collins – attending in the Senate Open Observer Seat.
- .3 A call inviting academic staff to self-nominate to sit on Senate would be issued shortly. Those nominated Senators who had reached the end of their current term would be contacted and, where eligible, invited to apply for a second term.

24/043 Minutes of the last meeting(s)

- .1 The Board **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 15 January 2025.

24/044 Vice-Chancellor's Update and Performance Report

- .1 TD presented the paper and summarised the following points relating to the policy context:
 - Comprehensive spending review still ongoing (UUK lobbying on behalf of the sector).
 - Uncertainty remains as to whether further indexation of UG tuition fees will occur (Surrey continues to prepare future budgets on the assumption it will not).
 - Sir David Behan appointed as Interim Chair to the OfS Board.
 - TEF Review published in March was not overwhelmingly positive on the value for money of the TEF process and consequently there may be changes in future cycles.
- .2 The second financial quarterly review had been completed, and the University remained on track with the required surplus target through the ongoing cost controls in place. The University was currently part-way through the planning round for 2025/26 and Senate acknowledged the work that was being undertaken in that budget round to balance the achievement of Surrey's ambitions with the need to make the required surplus return to council. TD emphasised the importance of making effective use of the analysis/ data provided by colleagues in Finance and Strategic Planning & Performance. Senate noted the TNE work underway: part of the University's suite of actions to diversify and to secure new streams of income.

- .3 The University hosted the first in-person gathering of the new Emeritus Network during February. The Chair encouraged those Schools reviewing an area to consider utilising the Emeritus Network – a valuable community to the University with a wealth of experience to draw upon.
- .4 A meeting of the Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expressions (AFFE) Senate sub-committee had been convened for May to consider the recent OfS finding that the University of Sussex' governing documents failed to uphold freedom of speech and academic freedom. The sub-committee would be asked to consider Surrey's management and governance processes alongside key procedures and to consider whether Surrey's approach would pass the 'reasonableness test'.
- .5 Council meeting update to Senate [31 March]
Council includes three members elected by Senate. It was proposed that Senate receive, as a standing agenda item, a short summary delivered by one of those elected representatives of the most recent Council meeting. Prof Jin Xuan provided a verbal update of the Council meeting on 31 March noting Council had:
- Given consideration to the University's Finances (a key focus of Council meetings over the duration of his tenure).
 - Discussed cash release options.
 - Received a presentation from Prof Annika Bautz on the FABSS programme review (FEPS and FHMS would be presented at future meetings).
 - Given consideration to strategy development (and specifically to the 5 year plan).
 - Received a presentation from the PVC, R&I and the new Managing Director of Innovate Surrey Ltd (ISL) on plans for commercialisation and innovation.

24/045 SU Update

- .1 Liam White, the USSU President, provided a verbal update to Senate. The following was noted:
- LW had written a piece entitled 'Sussex University's fine from the OfS and what it means for us – a student perspective'. This was published on the USSU website.
 - Surrey Decides – election of current VP Community to the position of President of the SU (Matt Aikin), a second term for the current VP Voice (Luana Vasconcelos) and the current VP Support (Sam Buss), plus 2 new appointments to VP Activity (Kate De Gannes) and VP Community (Amber Dobrzanski).
 - LW had attended, and been one of the Speakers at, the WonkHE Secret Life of Students 2025 event in March.
 - A review of the SU website was underway and, notably, consideration was being given to changing the election process (not only for Surrey Decides but for course rep elections, and for clubs and societies with a view to making the process more accessible and engaging).
 - Early stage discussions were being held with colleagues in OSCAR regarding some recommendations for the academic integrity process.
 - The second Speak Week of the 24/25 academic session had been held with circa 700 students engaging.
 - The Course Rep Award Ceremony would be held during week commencing 7 April.
 - The Student Equality Networks had successfully been relaunched and Student Leaders onboarded for each (one of the APP actions).

24/046 Chair's Action/Business

- .1 The Chair confirmed that no Chair's Action had been taken since the last meeting.

2 ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

24/047 Honorary Degree Nominations

- .1 TD presented the paper.
- .2 Senate noted that the nominations process runs twice per annum: a call for staff to nominate is issued and any member of the University community is able to make a recommendation. Each nomination, accompanied by full details of the nominee and a supporting case, is given due consideration by the Committee for Honorary Degrees before endorsement of appropriate nominations to Senate.
- .3 Senate **approved** the nominations for recommendation to Council.

24/048 Exam Invigilation Report

- .1 Emma Rowsell, Interim Chief Student Officer, presented.
- .2 Senate noted the significant increase in the number of in-person exams, and in the number of students requiring a 1:1 room, over the past 7 years: since 2021/22 semester 1, invigilated exam events have increased by 400%.
- .3 Senate were asked to approve the following 3 recommendations for implementation from 2025/26:
 1. Require engagement of module leaders in invigilation of their own module(s) (but not as the chief invigilator).
 2. Require the wider community to invigilate one exam event at each examination period.
 3. Re-evaluation of the use of in-person examinations and consideration of other relevant models for assessment (review assessment patterns and make any relevant changes for implementation in 2025/26).
- .4 ER advised Senate that, in addition to the proposed recommendations above, the CSO team would review requests received for 1:1 rooms and explore the use of shared quiet rooms for a small group of identified students. It was noted that this approach was adopted by schools in supporting GCSE and A level examinations.
- .5 It was acknowledged that AI had contributed to the academic choice to assess via in-person invigilated exams. Software solutions existed which would enable the University to lock access to the internet for the period of the examination and which would therefore enable reduction in in-person examinations. ER confirmed that Camilla Davis (Associate Director, Student and Academic Administration) was currently reviewing this area.
- .6 The Chair advised that Annika Bautz, PVC-ED FABSS, was leading a working group in a review of workload allocation. As the recommendation before Senate related to service allocation it was **agreed** that the working group should be asked to give consideration to the distribution to ensure some equity in allocation (for instance, module leaders teaching on a number of smaller modules and module leaders working part-time hours may be disproportionately impacted) and to draw up guidance to Heads of School on workload allocation.

- .7 Senate **agreed** that recommendation 2b (implementation of engaging the wider community in invigilation activity) would be revisited to ensure it reflects, throughout, the wider community and not just the academic community.
- .8 Senate acknowledged there were often pedagogic reasons for the use of in-person exams (for instance, preparation for in-person professional exams used in some subjects for accreditation) and it was noted that where examinations are the best form of assessment they should, of course, be retained.
- .9 There were some concerns voiced as to the challenge of co-ordinating the exam timetable. It was noted that early publication of the exam timetable would enable staff to plan time and commitments accordingly. Members also requested clarity as to whether the recommendations were for implementation in Semester 1 and Semester 2 only (i.e. for in-year examinations and not for the Late Summer Assessment period - LSA).
- .10 The VP Voice advised Senate that students were supportive of the proposal noting that students appreciated module leaders being present in the examination. The VP Voice also noted that feedback from disabled and neurodiverse students articulated that in-person examinations as a form of assessment were more difficult for them.
- .11 Senate discussed the potential that students undertaking an exam could exploit the known disability of a module leader invigilating the exam (although it was acknowledged the module leader would not be the lead invigilator) and agreed the Procedure, when written, should allow for some discretion.
- .12 Senate were broadly supportive of the proposal noting that it was best practice for module leaders to be in the room. Senate approved the recommendations in principle subject to the following and **agreed** ER would circulate the updated documentation/policy to Senate:
 - the involvement of the Working Group on Workload Allocation to agree principles of allocation and guidance.
 - Review of the proposed Policy in accordance with the feedback received at Senate**Action: ER to action**

3 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

24/049 PGR Central Action Plan

- .1 Ruan Elliott, Dean of Doctoral College, attended to present.
- .2 Senate acknowledged the vital, and complex, role that PGRs play in the University's ecosystem: contributing to Surrey's research and to the research community; impacting, through their teaching support, on the experience of Surrey's taught students; students with the right to an excellent student experience themselves. RE explained the following steps that were underway to build upon and improve all aspects of the PGR student role:
 - Complement the existing School Action Plans (built in response to School PRES data) with a Central University Action Plan.
 - Complement the PRES data with other feedback information (SU Speak Week, feedback from Faculty PGR engagement forums, PGR output survey).
- .3 Senate noted the key issues identified in the paper where action could be undertaken centrally to support the PGR community. Senate discussed 'Community and Culture' and ways to enable PGRs to

feel included in the research community (i.e. ensuring all research symposiums were open to PGRs to attend). Senators discussed the importance of empowering PGRs to build their own community also. Senate noted there were some issues, such as 'PGR Personal Finances' and 'Teaching Opportunities, Responsibilities, Pay and Recognition' that were nuanced by School / discipline and where a central action plan would need to reflect this (for instance, clinical PGRs have opportunities to be locums and there is a disparity in funding packages offered to PGRs dependent on discipline).

- .4 RE explained the upcoming steps in the process to agree the PGR Central Action Plan. Senate looked forward to receiving the action plan in due course.

24/050 Student Satisfaction 2024/25

- .1 Eunice Ma and Nick Moore presented Senate with a summary update on the national external student surveys and the latest findings from Surrey's internal student surveys.
- .2 The NSS Campaign started on 3 February and would close on 30 April. An internal marketing campaign had been in operation and all Schools have planned completion activities. EM thanked academic colleagues, the SU and colleagues in Marketing & Communications for their support. As of 1 April, Surrey had achieved a 65% completion rate (compared to 68% at the same point last year). The aim is to achieve an 80% completion rate. The PTES campaign commenced on 10 March and would also close on 30 April. As of 1 April, Surrey had achieved 22% completion rate (ahead of the previous year) and the aim is to achieve 40%.
- .3 The window for MEQ had been adjusted slightly to ensure level 6 students do not suffer from survey fatigue. It was noted that the response rate for the MEQ continued to be of concern and Senate were advised that a long-term solution to the current MEQ platform to enable shorter, more bespoke approaches was being explored. In the interim, mid-module questionnaires had been trialled using 3 short open questions.
- .4 The Student Pulse Survey (a longitudinal survey run throughout the academic year) showed student satisfaction as broadly consistent with the equivalent Pulse period last year. Although satisfaction with MySurrey Hive and with assessment and feedback had decreased.

4 ITEMS TO NOTE

24/051 Employability and Careers Annual Report

- .1 The report was noted.

24/052 Research and Innovation Report

- .1 The report was noted.

24/053 Senate Sub-Committee Minutes

University Research & Innovation Committee, 12th March
Access & Participation Governance Panel, 3rd March

- .1 The unconfirmed minutes were noted.

24/054 Items for future meetings

- .1 The paper was noted.

5 CLOSING ITEMS

24/055 AOB

.1 None.

24/056 Dates of next Senate meetings 2024/25

.1 Friday 6 June 2025 – additional meeting of Senate to consider:

- Proposed changes to the academic promotions process.
- The process for an academic changing from one job family to another.

.2 Monday 23 June – ordinary Senate meeting.