

SENATE

MINUTES

This paper presents the minutes of the last meeting of Senate held on Wednesday 19 June 2024 in The Hub Theatre, Walton Hall.

Action Required

Senate approved these minutes as a correct record of the meeting.

Present

Professor Tim Blackman	Vice-Chancellor
Professor Josie Fraser	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Professor Ian Pickup	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students)
Professor Kevin Shakesheff	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)
Professor Mark Durkin	Executive Dean, Faculty of Business and Law
Professor Adrienne Scullion	Executive Dean, Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences
Professor Nicholas Braithwaite	Executive Dean, Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics
Dr Klaus-Dieter Rossade	Executive Dean, Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies
Gary Elliott-Cirigottis	Director of Library Services
Jo Dyer	Director of Learner and Discovery Services

Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS)

Dr Emma Barker	Dr Andrew Griffiths	Professor John Wolffe
Dr Rosalind Crone	Professor Elaine Moohan	Dr Jon Pike
Tony Murphy	Dr Richard Marsden	Dr William Brown
Dr Thomas Martin	Professor Eleni Andreouli	Professor David Johnson

Faculty of Business and Law (FBL)

Ash Odedra	Carol Howells	Professor Caroline Clarke
Claire Maguire		

Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM)

Dr Kaustubh Adhikari	Dr Rachel Slater	Dr James Bruce
Donald Edwards	Dr Fiona Moorman	Dr Hayley Ryder
Dr Magnus Ramage	Frances Chetwynd	Dr Helen Fraser
Professor Sally Jordan	Professor Monica Grady	Professor Richard Holliman

Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies (WELS)

Dr Carol Azumah Dennis		Dr Mark Addis
Professor Joan Simons	Dr Elodie Vialleton	Bärbel Brash
Bärbel Brash	Dr Gillian Ferguson	Steph Doehler
Paulette Johnson	Mel Green	

Institute of Education Technology (WELS)

Professor Eileen Scanlon	Dr Tim Coughlan	Dr Maria Aristeidou
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Associate Lecturers

Rob Parker	Dr Sue McKeogh	Mike Hay
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Students appointed by Open University Students Association

Margaret Greenaway	Morgan Scofield-Marlowe	Samantha Osys
Matt Porterfield	Mark Walker	Natalie Baker (Alternate)

Academic-related staff		
Julie Gowen	Elaine Walker	Dr Hossam Kassem
Dr Rachel Leslie	Dr Franziska Florack	Rukhsana Malik
Dr Caitlin Adams	Kit Power	Paul Farrington
Jane Ball	Ellen Cocking	
Co-opted member		
Lurraïne Jones	John D'Arcy	Ben Lewis
In Attendance		
Anna Barber, Director - Academic	Dave Hall – University Secretary	Dr Camilla Briault, Interim Director – USO
Jhumar Johnson – Chief of Staff to the Vice-Chancellor	Professor Ian Fribbance, Academic Lead on Blended F2F Provision, Campus 2030	Paul Traynor – Chief Financial Officer
Stephen Talboys, Chief Operating Officer, Campus 2030		
Apologies		
Professor Denise Whitelock	Jill Shaw	Dr Jon Golding
Dr Jotham Gaudoin	Dr Judy Chandler	Professor Olga Jurasz
Dr Kambiz Saber-Sheikh	Mary Shek	Paris Graham
Susan Stewart	Dr Susanne P Schwenzer	EUR ING Tony Cox
Jennie McAleese	Dr Lystra Hagley-Dickinson	Jonathan Nimmo
Professor Jonathan Rix	Dr Claire Kotecki	Dr Severine Hubscher-Davidson
Dr James Hague		

1 MINUTES

S-2024-02-M

Senate **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 17 April 2024.

2 REPORT FROM THE CHAIR

2.1 The Vice-Chancellor welcomed Senate members to the meeting. He:

- a) Noted the considerable work being done within the University to achieve the four-year budget plan. He noted that there were constraints to additional spending, outside of regulatory or compliance need, but from 2025/26 the University should be in a position to invest in new developments for the OU's future.
- b) Highlighted the risk around student numbers, and the good news that survey data showed a rising level of consideration of the OU. There had been improvements in TMA submission and withdrawal rates, but the 2% target for improvements to module pass and return rates was unlikely to be met.
- c) Highlighted the work being done to attract Black students, that had been shortlisted for two awards in The Pros Awards, the first industry awards to be judged by Black, Asian, Mixed Race and Ethnic Minority PR and communication professionals.
- d) Referenced the ongoing current general election campaign, and noted the commitment to the Lifelong Learning Entitlement in England in the Conservative manifesto and the understanding that Labour would agree in principle with the LLE. He noted that further delay to implementation would be a concern, due to the amount of resource to make system changes to be ready for the LLE, but also because the LLE should be an opportunity for the OU.
- e) Noted the challenges with funding across the four Nations and a risk in England of the large student premium grant received by the OU being reduced.

- f) Highlighted that the University had achieved University of Sanctuary status. The Commitment included 12 Sanctuary Scholarships per year, which were currently open for applications. The University had also committed to a further fellowship through the Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA), aimed at supporting a Palestinian academic if possible. Five CARA Fellows had been supported so far (Syrian, Afghan and Ukrainians).
- g) Informed Senate of several awards and grants received across the University.

2.2 The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Senate members of Senate who were finishing their terms in July.

3 MOTION ON SENATE ARRANGEMENTS

S-2024-03-01

- 3.1 The Vice-Chancellor introduced the motions in the paper. He explained that the Senate Annual Effectiveness Review was due to be considered at the October meeting, which would be a further opportunity to consider how Senate business should be conducted. He noted that there had been differing views on the use of workshops as part of Senate business meetings, so a vote would clarify Senate's position, but there were no further such workshops planned. Senate had received and would continue to receive updates at each meeting on Campus 2030.
- 3.2 The proposer of the first Motion explained that the request had been made to include the motions on the agenda as various colleagues had raised the issue of the use of workshops. The motion proposed that:
 - a. Major change projects (such as Campus 2030) become a standing agenda item, with an update followed by minuted discussion and debate, in line with standard Senate practice.
 - b. Any future Senate workshops relating to large scale change projects will take place outside of existing scheduled Senate meetings.
 - c. Full and comprehensive notes of workshop outputs will become part of the formal record of Senate and will be shared with Council.
- 3.3 The motion was **carried**, with a majority of **45 votes** for the motion.
- 3.4 The Vice-Chancellor moved to discuss the second motion in the paper:
 - 2.1 This body holds the view that, to date, it has been unable to undertake adequate scrutiny of the Campus 2030 proposals, in accordance with Senate's responsibility as the academic decision-making authority of the OU.
 - 2.2 Therefore, Senate resolves that any major change proposal (such as Campus 2030) which may require substantial changes to the OUs pedagogical approach must present such proposed pedagogical changes in detail to Senate, and receive Senate's approval in a formal vote, as a precondition to progression of said change project.
- 3.5 The Vice-Chancellor noted that the approach outlined in the motion was exactly the approach that had been taken for Campus 2030. Senate had been involved in shaping the academic model through workshops and a final decision on the academic model would be made by Senate, assuming that Council considered the project to be viable.
- 3.6 The proposer of the second motion explained that the motion was intended to be a constructive one. Given that Senate was the body that would have to make any changes relating to academic matters, the dependence should be explicit, and the correct order followed.
- 3.7 Clarification was requested on whether members were voting for the action within the motion or the whole wording of the paper, as some members were comfortable with voting for the action within the

motion, but did not agree with the sentiment of the paper. It was clarified by the proposer that Senate members were voting for the Motion as a whole.

3.8 The second motion was **carried** with the following votes recorded:

For the motion	36
Against	17
Abstentions	12

4 FACULTY UPDATE - WELS

S-2024-03-02

- 4.1 Senate received an update from the Executive Dean for the Faculty of Wellbeing, Education and Language Studies, to accompany a fuller slide-pack on the key areas of activity undertaken by the faculty and the support to staff.
- 4.2 He described three focus points of the faculty, with examples of work in each area, including:
- a) **Global access to quality education:** The Mobile Learning for Empowerment of Marginalised Mathematics Educators (3MPower) project, which investigates how teachers in rural schools in Bangladesh use online learning for their professional development.
 - b) **Acute skills shortages in healthcare:** The partnership with Isle of Wight NHS Trust, providing local apprenticeship opportunities for residents with the opportunity to train as a Nursing Associate or Registered Nurse without leaving the island.
 - c) **Lack of voice and agency of the vulnerable, excluded and disadvantaged:** A study evaluating the effectiveness of the Worcestershire project Families First, supporting families affected by parental imprisonment.

5 ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2025/26-2028/29

S-2024-03-03

- 5.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students) and Assistant Director, APS, introduced the OU's Access and Participation Plan for 2025/6 – 2028/9 and highlighted:
- a) The development of the plan had involved extensive scrutiny, the contribution of many voices and the acknowledgement of where the work was needed. It was recognised how many colleagues had worked hard in these spaces.
 - b) The Access and Participation Plan (APP) was part of the OU's regulatory agreement with the Office for Students (OfS) and was due to be submitted by 31 July 2024. The new plan also enabled the University to reset its access and participation activities.
 - c) The plan included a focus on three cohorts where the biggest gaps existed: students living in IMDQ1; Black students; and students with mental health conditions. The three cohorts made up 31% of the current student population and the aim was to close those gaps.
 - d) The plan had been developed by many people across the University, there had been a lot of consultation and the views and feedback had been incorporated. The plan was a framework to work with the whole university and was not a static document.
- 5.2 The plan and the overall approach was welcomed. Senate:
- a) Asked for clarification on the decision to focus the key targets so heavily on pass and good pass rates and at the module level. It was suggested that concentrating the targets on pass rates might lead the focus away from the important issue of attrition, and that interactions between modules might be overlooked.

- b) Suggested that there were tensions between the initiatives outlined in the paper and some of the economies being made for the University to return to surplus. It was also suggested that measures to reduce costs and the interaction with the implementation of the new AL contract, had resulted in a loss of tuition flexibility. As the study support section referenced the flexibility to arrange additional tuition, it was asked whether it should appear as a risk.
- c) Noted that the expected changes would not happen overnight and requested reassurance that initiatives would not be abandoned if the planned outcomes did not occur quickly enough. The impacts on students should also be considered holistically.
- d) Noted that there were numerous barriers faced by students with mental health conditions, which resulted in additional pressures on staff to support those students.
- e) Commented that when students encounter problems, they go to their tutors, but there could be disparities between how different tutors treat students.
- f) Asked whether the 'pastoral model' would be preferable to having module tutors.

5.3 It was clarified that:

- a) The focus on pass rates at the module level was an alternative to the OfS dashboard targets, which related to completion rates. Pass rates were not the only way to measure progress and the aim was to help discover any barriers to students passing modules.
- b) There were pressures within the University, but the initiatives outlined in the paper should work in conjunction with other areas of work, such as SSP and the EDI plan. In terms of tuition flexibility, the importance of the interaction with other initiatives was highlighted, such as the Tuition and Assessment Reform (TAR) and Student Support.
- c) Change for some initiatives would not happen overnight, but a theory of change approach would help to measure success by outcomes, with good practice also disseminated.
- d) The barriers faced by students with mental health conditions was recognised and one of the key areas within the plan was around access to financial support for those with MH conditions and deprivation. The plan also pledged to commit to the University Mental Health Charter and join the National Programme.
- e) Managing the problems encountered by students was in part about managing expectations and helping to put things in place, but was also about staff training.
- f) It was important to practice as much pastoral support as possible and the initiatives put in place for students should be joined up and holistic.

5.4 Senate **recommended to Council for approval** the Access and Participation Plan 2025/26-2028/29, for submission to the Office for Students. Following approval by Council and submission to the OfS, the plan would be circulated to Senate.

6 CAMPUS 2030: PROGRAMME UPDATE **S-2024-03-04**
WHITE PAPER: THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN 'ACADEMIC MODEL' FOR HYBRID, S-2024-03-05
FLEXIBLE ON-CAMPUS PROVISION

6.1 The Chief Operating Officer, Campus 2030 and the Academic Lead on F2F provision, Campus 2030, introduced the two papers for joint consideration, to update Senate and create an opportunity for comment on the work towards the Campus 2030 Strategic Outline Case that was due to be considered by Council in July 2024.

- 6.2 Senate considered the refined and amended proposals for an 'academic model' for the potential hybrid, flexible (hy-flex) on-campus provision that could be offered by The Open University should a decision be taken to go ahead with such provision in Milton Keynes City Centre (MKC).
- 6.3 It was noted that the two previous Senate sessions had contributed to the data gathering/modelling, along with various other stakeholder engagement (VCE, Town Halls, Senior Team, Trade Unions, Faculty Executives and Assemblies, and staff). The approved principles would inform more detailed academic proposals that would come to Senate for approval. The business case would also be considered by Senate, with Senate's advice shared with Council.
- 6.4 Senate noted the findings so far, including:
- a) Both relocating entirely from Walton Hall and building a new teaching campus (with capacity for up to 20,000 students) would not be feasible.
 - b) Market research and analysis indicated that Walton Hall would not be viable for new taught provision, due to student demand, student preference (preference for City Centre locations, not taking multiple transport types) and student experience (i.e. lack of facilities that would contribute to the student experience).
 - c) Analysis suggested that reaching a steady state of 5-7000 full time city centre campus students was plausible however, with the potential for 9000 students with new curriculum. It would help the OU to reach more students wishing to study OU courses and support full-time study and could still be supported by some functions based at Walton Hall.
 - d) There would be an additional Senate session for presentation of the detailed data analysis.
- 6.5 Senate considered the five latest proposals of the Academic model, the first four of which were similar to the proposals in the previous paper.
- a) **Proposal 1** - The new hybrid flexible on-campus provision would offer modules and qualifications (at each delivery phase) that were also being offered through Open University distance learning at that time.
 - b) **Proposal 2** - The new campus provision would offer a subset of OU qualifications, necessary to achieve the desired student numbers at each phase of development.
 - c) **Proposal 3** - The hybrid flexible on campus delivery method would involve key elements of a 'flipped classroom'.
 - d) **Proposal 4** - The academic and professional staff and the academic governance and management of the new provision would be embedded and integrated within The Open University.
 - e) **Proposal 5** - There would need to be an 'implementation programme' to work through and resolve a number of matters of finer detail in good time before actual entry into the on-campus market.
- 6.6 The development stages of the Outline Business Case (OBC) were noted, from scoping the scheme and preparing the SOC (July 2024), to planning the scheme and preparing the OBC (Nov 2024 or Mar 2025) and finally procuring the solution and preparing the Full Business Case (Late 2025 or into 2026). Senate also noted the refurbishment option under exploration in the Strategic Outline Case, which would accommodate 6000 students or more and could be quicker and cheaper than a new build option.
- 6.7 It was explained that following Senate, there would be a Council discussion on 9th July. The Outline Business case and the Strategic Business Case would be discussed thoroughly at Council. The work

on Walton Hall would be beneficial whichever decision was taken and there would be wider engagement on that in due course.

6.8 Senate:

- a) Requested clarification regarding where the of 5-7000 full time students would come from and whether they were students who would otherwise study at another institution, would have studied with the OU online or would not have otherwise studied.
- b) Asked why the research had started with 20k students rather than 6000. It was noted that the rationale should be very clear, should be based on the marketing data and the University should proceed with the proposals with caution.
- c) Expressed concern regarding the cost of the Campus 2030 project, at a time of returning to surplus and the need to focus on the core offer of the University.
- d) Questioned whether there was a possibility that 'open entry', which was the OU's main unique selling point, might be open to challenge in the proposals.
- e) Raised questions around the desirability of Milton Keynes City Centre as a location for students and whether the facilities students required might relate to support services (such as mental health), rather than cinemas etc. It was also noted that accessibility should be at the core of decision making.
- f) Asked whether public transport through an efficient bus service to Walton Hall would be a straightforward solution for face-to-face provision.
- g) Requested a clear commitment that there would be a full, open consultation regarding the Walton Hall options.
- h) Asked about the financial position of Milton Keynes Council and whether they would be a good partner. It was also suggested that while there might be a case for an institution in Milton Keynes, the OU may not be best placed, with its speciality in open entry and distance learning. It was asked whether another option could be explored with the Council and money spent instead on retaining students, by giving them a better service.
- i) Asked what the scope was for learning from the existing pilots with FE colleges of students studying OU modules.

6.9 The Vice-Chancellor, Chief Operating Officer and Academic Lead on F2F provision, clarified the following points:

- a) Research suggested that the potential students would mostly be those who would have attended other institutions. The additional data session would cover in detail issues such as the geography of potential students.
- b) The original figure of 20k students had been a necessary parameter in the development of the model, to allow the model to be tested.
- c) The OU Council would not approve a programme that did not offer a net positive to the OU. The business case would focus on the costs, the risks and the value added to the OU.
- d) Open entry was important to the OU's mission and had been factored into the guiding principles and the modelling for the Campus 2030 work.
- e) There was still work needed to make Milton Keynes City Centre a vibrant place, but students would partly contribute to that. Support services had also been included in the costings and accessibility and inclusivity were also priority areas.

- f) Walton Hall as a campus location was not feasible, even with a high-frequency bus route, as people were unlikely to change modes of transport. The shortest route to Walton Hall from Milton Keynes train station was also 4.1 miles, significantly more than the other local universities and out-of-town high-tariff, more residential campuses.
- g) The consultation regarding Walton Hall options would extend as wide as possible. There would be plenty of time to engage with Senate and other stakeholders. The first session was planned for September 2024.
- h) Milton Keynes Council had experienced some difficult times but were improving financially and they were judged to be a good partner. If the OU did not take up the opportunity, another institution would, and it was important to explore the opportunities presented.
- i) There would be learning from the face-to-face teaching within Scottish colleges that was already taking place.

6.10 Senate noted that the comments would be taken away and would contribute to the thinking going forward.

7 CODE OF PRACTICE FOR FREEDOM OF SPEECH AND ACADEMIC FREEDOM S-2024-03-06

- 7.1 The University Secretary introduced the Code of Practice for Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, which had been developed by the Working Group. He noted that there had been helpful questions and feedback in advance of Senate, which would be incorporated into the draft, for discussion by the Working Group.
- 7.2 The Code of Practice would need to be approved by Council in July, as the requirement was part of the new statutory duties on freedom of speech for universities and students' unions, which would come into force on 1 August 2024.
- 7.3 Senate:
- a) Questioned whether academic freedom exclusively belonged to academic staff and associate lecturers, given that some research was also supported by non-academics.
 - b) Raised concerns around the actions that would be taken following an infringement of the procedures and whether the code of practice had sufficient powers in the event of an infringement. It was suggested that paragraph 7.1 should state 'Infringements of the procedures set out in this Code and in the Events Policy will render those responsible subject to disciplinary proceedings', instead of 'may'.
- 7.4 The University Secretary and Vice-Chancellor clarified:
- a) Whether academic freedom was pertinent would depend on the situation. The Code of Practice was tied to those on academic contracts. It may cover academic-related staff with expertise in an area, in certain circumstances, but there was no guarantee. There were protections under freedom of speech however.
 - b) It was difficult to state in a document what would happen in the case on an infringement, as it would depend heavily on the circumstances. As stated in the code, any enforcement would be through the disciplinary process.
- 7.5 It was noted that comments from Senate members would be incorporated into the draft and the final version would be circulated to Senate via a correspondence meeting, before Council approval in July.

8 MOTION TO SUPPORT PALESTINIAN UNIVERSITIES

S-2024-03-08

- 8.1 The Vice-Chancellor introduced paper, which included three individual motions, to be taken separately. Before passing over to the proposer, he commented on the motions as Vice-Chancellor and Chair of Senate, noting:
- a) That everyone would be concerned about the October attacks by Hamas and the ensuing war in Gaza and would be concerned about the destruction of Gaza and the plight of its residents caused by the scale of the Israeli response. He was sure that everyone at the meeting would want a ceasefire and the release of hostages, and everyone would agree that the OU needed to do what it could in humanitarian terms.
 - b) The University had issued a statement last November on the situation, expressing great concern for the hostages and for the Palestinian population. This included sharing what the OU was doing to support students and staff. The Chief of Staff to the Vice-Chancellor would continue to coordinate the OU's humanitarian response, including working with UUK and the Palestinian An-Najah National University.
 - c) Motion 1 reflected a humanitarian concern, seeking to work with the OU's partner the Arab OU. Motions 2 and 3 however, invited Senate to take an institutional position on motions phrased in a way that would be seen as biased and divisive by many people, however much members of Senate may themselves agree with the motions as worded. The motions could have the effect of compromising Senate's responsibility to create an environment in the University that was conducive to freedom of speech and academic freedom. It was not that the motions may have or may not have merit, but that they would have the force of an institutional position taken by one of the University's governing bodies that could be seen to de-legitimise or discourage voices that did not share that position.
 - d) There would be occasions where Senate would take a position on controversial topics, but for this issue, there must also be consideration of how it related to legal responsibilities, one of which was to create an environment as a governing body that upholds and promotes freedom of speech within the law, but also the responsibilities under the Equality Act and charities law.
 - e) Senate members were debating not just as academics and professionals, but as members of Senate governing the institution and were required to take decisions with proper concern for the University's reputation. The Vice-Chancellor's view was that the first motion did not run that risk, but motions two and three would. They would be best withdrawn rather than Senate showing it was either for or against them.
- 8.2 The Vice-Chancellor invited the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research & Innovation (PVC RES) to brief Senate on the facts of the OU's current arrangements as they related to motions one and three, so that Senate members were informed. The PVC Res explained that:
- a) The OU had a close relationship with the Arab OU. The PVC Res had met with the President of the Arab OU to ask how the OU could support them and Palestinian students. They were also interested in a joint scholarship scheme with the OU.
 - b) The Arab OU, with a presence in 9 regional countries and experience of training Palestinian students, had local knowledge and recognition in a fragmented higher education system.
 - c) The OU had recently been awarded the status of University of Sanctuary and the Chief of Staff was co-ordinating activities with the Arab OU and other national and international partners.
 - d) The OU was also involved in the sector-wide response, co-ordinated by UUK International, which at national level, had the advantage of scale and clarity for the estimated 90k displaced students.

- e) The OU's collaboration with the Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA) included 5 funded fellowships that had supported individuals from Syria, Afghanistan and Ukraine. A new fellowship would hopefully allow a Palestinian academic to join.
- f) Both UNHCR (the UN Refugee Agency) and UNESCO would meet with the OU to discuss their international plans and how the OU could support through access to distance learning.
- g) Regarding the third motion, there was already a process in place, overseen by the Ethical Research Review Body (ERRB), to support individual academics and Faculties to assess potential risks in research collaborations balanced with the duty to promote academic freedom. A new version of the Ethical Research Statement was being considered by Research Committee next week, and the Research Code of Practice would provide the framework for the consideration of individual cases. Any collaborations would be assessed, and mitigations considered on a case-by-case basis.
- h) Stimulated by this Senate discussion, the PVC RES would lead on communications to raise awareness of the importance of following our processes for both funded and unfunded research collaborations.

8.5 The three motions were introduced by the proposer of the motion, who noted that:

- a) The motions were the result of the collective labour, with input from Senate members and colleagues at the Arab OU.
- b) Motion one was uncontentious. Senate had heard from the PVC RES that the OU was working closely with the Arab OU and the first motion related to how that would be done.
- c) The second motion asked the University leadership to follow through on the commitments to Black Lives matter and Ukraine. He quoted tweets from the Vice-Chancellor regarding the death of George Floyd in 2020, which had then been followed by the established of the Dean of EDI and serious institutional efforts to cultivate an anti-racist culture within the OU. In 2022 the Vice-Chancellor also tweeted support for Ukrainians, followed by OU Academics for Ukraine, which offered welfare and pastoral support to both staff and students affected by the war in Ukraine, with a view to academic boycotts. He noted that the Open University had committed to supporting Ukrainian academics through the Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA) and was pleased to hear from the PVC RES that there may be an opportunity for Palestinian academics as well. There had been silence since the original statement 1 November 2023 condemning the Hamas attack of 7 October 2023 and regretting the deaths of Palestinian civilians, in contrast to the follow-up to BLM and Ukraine.
- d) The exact wording for motion two would be left to the OU's executive, but the motion requested that the statement recognise of the loss of Israeli lives too, especially Israeli students.
- e) Feedback from Senate colleagues in advance had made it clear that the third motion was the most contentious, so the proposer aimed to reassure colleagues on the following points:
 - i) It was good to know that the Ethical Research Review Committee exists, but the request within the motion was that it be more robust, more transparent and apply due diligence when monitoring links with Israeli universities and partners.
 - ii) The wording of the motion was important. It was asking for evidence and basis, not a blanket ban on individual Israeli academics. There should be scrutiny of relationships and it would relate to the universities-as-institutions that had supported the killing of Palestinian students and academics and destruction of the university infrastructure.

- iii) As the boycott was to target institutions, not individuals, the adoption of such a motion would have no impact on freedom of speech or academic freedom of individual academics.
- iv) As someone who had been on the receiving end of an academic boycott in South Africa, his experience had been that it had not inhibited academics undertaking university work and had been important indicator that people were supportive.

8.6 Members of Senate made several comments on the overall paper, including:

- a) A note of concern from the student members that the publicly available information was not kept up to date, which had been highlighted in relation to divesting investments in certain industries. It had led to incorrect claims being made and confusion on the OU policies.
- b) A question around whether silence in itself was extremely political.
- c) A comment that the second motion would help to reassure staff and students who were experiencing distress as a result of the situation in Gaza.
- d) A comment that the OU was founded on politics and that learning was not a privilege, it was a human right.

8.7 The Vice-Chancellor explained that the motions would be considered one at a time, as they had different content and consequences. The first motion was a request for Senate to ask Council to approve:

2.3 A commitment to work closely with the Arab OU in providing material and institutional support for Palestinian students and scholars:

- a) By setting up a working committee made up of OU and Arab OU academics and administrators and representatives of the OU Palestine Solidarity Group in order to establish the needs of Palestinian students, scholars and support staff affected by the destruction of Gaza; and
- b) By establishing a scholarship scheme for Palestinian students, providing opportunities to study through both the OU and the Arab OU (for an example of such a scheme, see the initiative recently announced by SOAS (<https://www.soas.ac.uk/study/student-life/finance/scholarships/centre-palestine-studies-cps-masters-scholarship>));
- c) By investing in existing research partnerships with the Arab OU and developing new partnerships which focus on the study of Palestine;
- d) By making appropriate OU online teaching resources available to Palestinian students and lecturers in Gaza as soon as possible (note that the open letter by Gazan academics and university administrators published on 29 May 2024 specifically mentions the vital importance of online teaching resources to the rebuilding of Gaza's university education system: <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2024/5/29/open-letter-by-gaza-academics-and-university-administrators-to-the-world>); and
- e) By providing the same degree of support and resource for Palestinian academics and students as has been provided for Ukrainian academics and students.

8.8 The motion was **carried**, with a majority of **48 votes** for the motion.

8.9 The Vice-Chancellor opened the discussion on the second motion, for Senate to ask Council to approve:

2.2 The Chair of the OU's Council deliver a public statement on behalf of the OU

(a) noting the loss of life and suffering endured on both sides of the Palestine-Israel conflict since October 2023, and

(b) condemning unequivocally Israel's widespread killing of Palestinian students, academics and university administrators, and its complete destruction of Gaza's university infrastructure.

8.10 Senate members:

- a) Expressed doubts that the motion would achieve its intended purpose and may risk crossing a line regarding the OU's purpose.
- b) Suggested that another option could be to renew the University's earlier statement and explain the working being undertaken by the University.
- b) Suggested that issues with the statement could be resolved by amending section (b) of the motion to reflect that the OU would endeavour to help individuals on both sides.

8.11 The proposer and seconder of the motion noted that the second part of the motion could be toned down and suggested the amendment of section (b) of the motion to 'Support the rebuilding of Palestinian Universities and support Palestinians Students and Academics'. The motion would be asking Council to deliver a public declaration with what was already agreed would be happening.

8.12 The second motion was **not carried** with the following votes recorded:

For the motion	16
Against	24
Abstentions	10

8.13 There were no further comments on the third motion. The motion was **not carried** with the following votes recorded:

For the motion	11
Against	26
Abstentions	9

9 FINANCE UPDATE

S-2024-03-07

9.1 The Chief Financial Officer (CFO) presented an update on the University's finances, noting that the full detailed account had been presented in the paper. He highlighted that:

- a) The 2023/24 Forecast, based on Q3 showed a forecast outturn position of £12.9m, representing a positive variance from original budget of £5.4m.
- b) This was the second of two years of planned operating deficit and it was an important indicator of how the more significant savings in 2024/25 would be achieved.
- c) The summary of the 2023/24 Forecast showed a big movement in the USS provision adjustment (+£182.9m) and outlined several lines of expenditure being spent from reserves (£40m).
- d) Key issues to note included:
 - i. The University remained on track to deliver a better than target deficit, but there were risks still to be managed.
 - ii. The level of savings to be delivered in 2024/25 would increase significantly from this year; the preparations therefore need to be robust, ready to deliver from 1st August 2024.
 - iii. Next year £62m of the total would be delivered.

9.2 Senate:

- a) Requested clarification on the current value of East Campus and whether it was lower due to the current market, or whether it had previously been overvalued. The CFO noted that there was more work to be done on the three valuations, which would be reported back to Senate.
- b) Suggested that curriculum withdrawals, which were currently delegated to Qualifications Committee (QAC), should come to Senate for approval or Senate should receive a full report on withdrawal. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor explained that the annual report from QAC to Senate was due to be presented to the October meeting and suggested that it should cover in detail the curriculum that had been added or withdrawn.

9.3 A member of Senate expressed thanks to the Finance Business Partners for their support and the robust and appropriate challenge to deliver the savings.

10 REVIEW OF THE STUDENT CHARTER

S-2024-03-09

Senate **approved** the recommendations to the Student Charter outlined in the paper.

11 HONORARY DEGREE NOMINATIONS

S-2024-03-10

Senate:

- i) noted the schedule for the conferment of Honorary Degrees at ceremonies during 2024.
- ii) approved 'en bloc' the list of nominations recommended by the Honorary Degrees Committee.

12 EMERITUS PROFESSORS

S-2024-03-11

Senate **approved** the title of Emeritus Professor to be awarded to:

- a) Professor Paul Anand from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS);
- b) Professor David Johnson from the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences (FASS);
- c) Professor Ian Franchi from the Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM);
- d) Professor Stefan Rueger from the Faculty of Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM).

13 ACADEMIC QUALITY AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

S-2024-03-12

Senate **noted** a report from the meeting of Academic Quality and Governance Committee held on 21 May 2024.

14 COUNCIL REPORT

S-2024-03-13

Senate **noted** a report of the last meeting of Council held on 14 May 2024.

15 SENATE FORWARD PLANNER

S-2024-03-14

Senate **noted** a report on the future business being presented to the Senate.