

Senate

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 October 2024 at 13:30

Oak Suite 1 and 2

MINUTES

Members

Ex-officio:

President & Vice-Chancellor	Prof Max Lu (to 24/011)
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 (to 24/012)
Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Executive Dean, FHMS	Prof Paul Townsend**
Vice-President, Global	Patrick Degg
Associate VP, External Engagement (International)	Prof Amelia Hadfield*
Associate Dean, Education, FABSS	Prof Emma Mayhew
Associate Dean, Education, FEPS	Prof Esat Alpay
Associate Dean, Education, FHMS	Dr Dynatra Subasinghe
Associate Dean, Research & Innovation, FABSS	Prof Glen Parry*
Associate Dean, Research & Innovation, FEPS	Prof Jin Xuan
Associate Dean, Research & Innovation, FHMS	Prof Deborah Dunn-Walters
Chief Student Officer	Kerry Matthews
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 of Sustainability	Prof Lorenzo Fioramonti**
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
Alternates:	Head of School, Biosciences	Prof Roberto La Ragione [alternate for Paul Townsend]
	Co-Director, Institute of Sustainability	Monique Raats [alternate for Lorenzo Fioramonti]
In attendance:	Head of Governance [minute taker]	Ros Allen
	External Member of Council	Rachel Hubbard (to 24/012)
	University Secretary and General Counsel	Sarah Litchfield [24/013]
	HR Business Partner (Academic)	James Smith [24/012]
	* denotes absence	
	** denotes absence, but represented by an alternate	

1 INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

24/001 Apologies for absence

- .1 Apologies were received from Lisa Collins, Annika Bautz, Paul Townsend [alternate Roberto la Ragione], Glenn Parry, Lorenzo Fioramonti [alternate Monique Raats], Mariam Cirovic, Charlotte Maile and Giovanna Nalesso.
- .2 The Chair welcomed returning, and new, Senators to the first Senate of academic session 2024/25. The Chair welcomed the following observers:
Chris Whitehead – Open Senate Observer
Rachel Hubbard – External Council member
- Senate noted this was the first meeting with the piloted Open Senate Observer Seat. Senate noted a slide showing the change in membership since 2022/23, recognising the increase in academic representation.

24/002 Minutes of the last meeting(s)

- .1 The Board **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 25 June 2025.

24/003 Vice-Chancellor's Update and Performance Report

- .1 ML presented his paper.
- .2 The VC took the opportunity to formally thank Professor Paul Townsend for his contribution to Senate, the Faculty and the wider University.
- .3 The VC recognised the challenges during 2023/24 and thanked all colleagues for their patience and support. The new semester started with some teething problems, and the resilience and hard work of the academics and professional services colleagues to resolve the issues were recognised. The issues have been gathered into a single document which has been shared back with Faculty leadership teams. Immediate actions have been taken and others are in train; with a view to significant improvements ahead of Welcome Week 2025/2026.

- .4 The new Strategy Vision 2041 was launched the previous week and an action plan is now being worked up to ensure that good progress towards the goals in the plan is made in the next 5 years.
- .5 All Senators and by inference all staff were thanked for their contribution to the Professional Development Review process in 2024 – 94% of Professional Services staff and 93% of academic staff completed, a significant increase to previous years. A particular commendation was made to the academic side of the house for a 20% uplift in PDR completions.
- .6 It was noted that Surrey’s success in national league tables was not translating to success in international league tables such as QS. The measures being taken to enhance our international reputation were noted. This subject would be discussed more fully later in the agenda.
- .7 An update on Surrey Online Learning was noted.
- Student recruitment at the first entry point was disappointing, with only 18 students on the online Master’s programmes – ten on Artificial Intelligence and four each on Psychology and Sustainable Practice.
 - However, there are three entry points in the year so there are two further opportunities to recruit more strongly.
 - There are also five new programmes being developed.
 - The popular School of Law MOOC (Massive Open Online Course) is being moved, along with three others, to the EdX platform.
 - It was suggested that the fees for these programmes may be too high. The response noted that fees were the same for Home and Overseas students and had been set based on advice by EdX, who are highly experienced in this area. However, there would be further consideration of modifying the fees as we get a better understanding of online ‘price points’.
- .8 With respect to student numbers, the conversion rate for overseas PGT has improved by 8% to 27%. However, overall, there is a shortfall of c. 330 students to plan with a corresponding impact on income. So, the financial pressures remain. Despite this, the University has committed to pay all of the recommended cost of living pay rise and believes at this point in time that it should be able to avoid further redundancies. Overall, the actions taken in the last 6 months, and the patience shown by our staff and students, means that Surrey has achieved a significant improvement in its underlying financial resilience.

24/004 SU Update

- .1 Liam White, the USSU President, presented the paper on the USSU priorities, which it was noted were based on the officer manifestos. His presentation focused on the areas of particular relevance to Senate.
- .2 Employability was one of the key priorities, particularly with respect to increasing paid work opportunities for students on campus. Whilst Surrey does offer paid part-time work opportunities, there should be consideration of expanding the offering to include work within Faculties and professional services. Much of the existing opportunities tend to be zero hours contracts, which are good in terms of flexibility, but students are starting to value more commitment and certainty. It was noted that the new Access and Participation plan includes peer tutoring, a paid work opportunity.

- .3 The Professional Training Year (PTY) also supports employability. The Students' Union would like to work with the University to improve the quality and impact of the professional training year offering through minimising unpaid placements, increasing the support provision, and exploring how they can be credit-bearing for all degree classifications. It was recognised that there would need to be further consideration of what is meant by 'credit bearing'. The USSU President is working with University colleagues to develop an employability action plan, with the PTY as a key part. Senate will have the opportunity to feed into the plan.
- .4 With respect to the digital education priority, the USSU is working in partnership with the University to protect students from committing academic misconduct related to the use of AI.
- .5 With respect to the Financial Resilience programme, the report highlighted the challenges which have arisen from the reductions in University staffing. Some students struggled to access University services through welcome week and the start of term. The USSU is a conduit to pass concerns onto the University and the sabbatical team meet with the University senior executive team every month. Senators were invited to have a dialogue with the USSU on concerns.

24/005 Chair's Action/Business

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

2 ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

24/006 Honorary Degree Nominations

- .1 The VC presented the paper.
- .2 It was recognised that there had been a pleasing number and quality of nominations in the current round. It was noted that those who already have University links are more likely to accept.
- .3 There were eight nominations recommended to Senate, many of whom are Surrey alumni. There were only two females recommended; this reflected the gender balance of the wider nominations in this round. It was recognised that, over the years, it does tend to balance out. All were encouraged to nominate people, particularly those with diverse backgrounds. The new Thai president, a distinguished Surrey alumnus, was suggested. Unfortunately, serving politicians cannot be nominated.
- .4 Senate **approved** the nominations for recommendation to Council.

24/007 Research Integrity Annual Statement 2023/24

- .1 The Director of Research, Innovation and Impact presented the paper.
- .2 It was noted that the purpose of the Statement is to meet the requirements of 'The Concordat to Support Research Integrity'.
- .3 There was discussion of the section of the Statement which deals with research misconduct and includes PGR student misconduct. It was noted that cases have increased from one in the previous Statement to eight in the current Statement. It was recognised that this could be seen positively as showing that issues are more likely to be reported. Of the eight, seven did not warrant formal investigation after review by a screening panel. It was suggested that it would be useful to add

additional information on what happened with each case. There was also a query regarding whether any of the cases related to the use of AI. There were 18 in the 'other' category, none of which warranted formal investigation. Cases are passed to HR if appropriate.

Action: GF to consider adding information on what happened with each case.

GF to provide Senate with information on whether any of the misconduct cases related to the use of AI.

.4 Chunlin Chen raised a particular query which will be discussed outside the meeting.

.5 Senate **approved** the statement for recommendation to Council.

24/008 Academic Quality Framework – A1 Regulations for taught programmes 25/26 (credit transfer for apps with PGDip)

.1 The Director of Academic Performance, Quality and Governance presented the paper.

.2 The key changes to the A1 Regulations for Taught Programmes were summarised:

.2.1 To include a footnote against the "Master's programme" entry in Table 5, *The minimum number of credits that must be taken by transferring students to achieve a University award* to align with the UG regulations by reducing the number of credits that must be studied at Surrey from 90 to 60.

.2.2 To add text to Regulation 55 as outlined in the paper regarding the classification to be based upon the additional credits studied, if entering with a Surrey PGDip.

.3 Senate **approved** the amendments to the regulations.

24/009 Academic Quality Assurance Annual Report 2023/24

.1 The Director of Academic Performance, Quality and Governance presented the paper.

.2 There was discussion of grade deflation, noting the significant drop in the award of good honours in 2024. There is no guidance from the OfS on this area, although Surrey benchmarks itself against the sector. It was noted that Surrey used to award one of the highest proportions of good honours and took measures to deal with this when it was thought to be too high, but the proportion has now over-corrected. The University needs to consider whether our reputation is negatively impacted if we are seen to be one of the less generous universities in terms of 'good honours' degrees. It was suggested that there should be consideration of whether one of the factors could be entry requirements, although degree performance does not necessarily correlate to school performance. Further analysis to evaluate the link between entry grades and university performance was taking place.

.3 Senate **approved** the report for recommendation to Council.

24/010 Senate Governance – Access and Participation Governance Panel ToR

.1 The Chief Student Officer presented the paper.

.2 The Access and Participation Plan Governance Panel Terms of Reference were **approved**, noting that the Panel was included in the Access and Participation Plan.

23/011 Senate Governance – Senate Progression and Conferment Executive (SPACE) ToR

- .1 The Chief Student Officer presented the paper.
- .2 Currently the Chair and Vice Chair of SPACE can take Chair's action to approve decisions outside of meetings. The proposed amendments appoint the Director of Academic Performance, Quality and Governance as a second Vice Chair and empowers them to approve matters by Chair's action. The PVC Education pointed out that occasionally she has a conflict of interest, given her role to consider student appeals, meaning that she is unable to take the required decisions. Whilst it was understood that SPACE would be the only committee that allows others than the Chair to take Chair's action, it was felt that the circumstances warranted it to be considered a special case.
- .3 The amendments to the terms of reference were approved.

23/012 FEPS – New School of Engineering and Integration of CES into IFS

- .1 James Smith, the HR Business Partner for FEPS, attended to present the proposals with the PVC Executive Dean and Associate Dean Education (ADE) of FEPS.
- .2 The ADE outlined the proposals and the rationale behind them. EB and Council in September and October approved the commencement of the formal HR process. Consultation took place subsequently and some adjustments were made in response.
- .3 The five proposed changes were discussed:
 - The creation of a new School of Engineering from 1 December 2024 through the merger of the School of Mechanical Engineering Sciences and the School of Sustainability, Civil and Environmental Engineering. Engineering programmes within the School of Chemistry and Chemical Engineering and the School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering would remain. There was some concern that there would be confusion arising from a School of Engineering which did not include all engineering in the Faculty. It was not anticipated that this would be a significant issue; it would be dealt with through clear marketing and website information. Other universities have both a School of 'Chem Eng' and a School of Engineering.
 - An external competitive recruitment process for a new Head of School of Engineering is underway, with internal applicants encouraged to apply.
 - By default, staff from the Centre for Environment and Sustainability (CES) would join the School of Engineering as their home school, unless agreed as an exception in such cases where it would be more appropriate for an individual to join another School. As the transition continues, the findings of an OAA review of the pan-University Institutes is being undertaken: recommendations from this review will need to take notice of, and apply to, the decision to incorporate CES into IfS.
 - All CES colleagues will be line managed by an appointed Co-Director of CIFAL who would report to the Director of IfS. They will have dotted line management from the School of Engineering (or to whatever School 'home' they are ultimately attached to). There is precedent for this arrangement in the University and it seems to work well.
 - The School of Engineering will own CES teaching programmes during a one year transition phase.
- .4 The proposals should not impact the student experience except potentially positively arising from better sharing of labs and other facilities. However, the need to ensure that there were no

administrative issues for students was recognised. It was noted that, after consideration of options, one small UG programme in CES would continue in the transition year pending review of its viability (which is occurring across the institution). CES MSc programmes would also continue to operate within the School of Engineering, but managed and delivered by CES staff. Students were unlikely to notice any changes as they will have the same course leader and the same teaching staff.

- .5 After significant feedback, it had been agreed to continue the Heads of Discipline role in the Faculty if a Head of School makes a case for having one.
- .6 It was noted that the staff concerned were supportive of proposals and positive about the process.
- .7 Senate moved to a vote. The outcome of the vote, announced by the Senate electoral officer, was verified as:
 - 29 in favour
 - 0 against
 - 3 abstentionsThe Chair announced that the FEPS change proposals were **approved** with 29 out of 32 votes in favour.

3 ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

24/013 Charter and Ordinances

- .1 Sarah Litchfield, University Secretary and General Counsel, attended to present the paper.
- .2 Senate was reminded of the key changes proposed. It was noted that the item had last come to Senate in January 2024, and two changes were requested by Senate at that time.
- .3 There was discussion of the definition of academic staff, noting that under the current definition, Deans and Heads of School would not be considered as academic staff as the principal function of their work is not teaching or research. Given that the wording in the Charter allows other staff to be included within the definition of academic staff, subject to approval by Council, it was proposed that the Charter did not need to be amended, but an amendment could be made to the Ordinances in due course. For example, to specify that those staff providing leadership of teaching or research would also be considered as academic staff. It was also suggested that staff whose principal function was knowledge exchange, should also be considered as academic staff.
Action: SL to consider further and bring back proposed changes to Ordinances to Senate.
- .4 Subject to the above comments, Senate supported the proposed amendments to the governing documents.

24/014 Global Rankings Reset

- .1 The Chair gave a presentation.
- .2 Senate noted the importance of rankings and that the combination of employer and academic reputations alone counted for 50% of the QS score. If Surrey can improve those, it would have a significant impact on the University's position.

- .3 The Rankings Steering group has requested that Schools and Institutes gather lists of academic contacts to populate the list of 400 requested by QS. Members were asked to raise this issue in their School if they do not get the request for names soon as there are only 3 weeks to return them. The Chair also added the caveat that staff do not have to share contacts if do not wish to. European contacts are particularly valuable as they may understand the UK HE rankings and are double weighted along with other international contacts. Professor Mark Ashton, employability lead in the CSO portfolio, is working with various professional teams to compile a list of employer contacts. These efforts are being coordinated by the Provost and supported by the new Rankings and Reputation Manager.
- .4 There was discussion of whether Surrey could create a brochure or web page that could be sent to potential contacts or linked in the signature line. It was noted that the QS rules are very strict, with universities not permitted to try and influence respondents' comments, so this may not be allowed. However, there is more general activity taking place to build Surrey's brand presentation and penetration in all the important markets, impacting on student recruitment, research opportunities and reputation generally as well as on international league tables. It will take some time to move the dial on 'reputation' but a lot of good work is taking place (led by the Dir of Marketing and Comms).
- .5 It was noted that Health Education England had just asked staff for a similar list of institutions, people, partners and employers.
- .6 Members described experiences at other universities who did well in the international rankings.

4 ITEMS TO NOTE

24/015 HR Excellence in Research (HReiR) & Concordat to support Career Development of Researchers 2023/24

- .1 The paper was noted.

24/016 Student Surveys

- .1 The paper was noted.

24/017 Education & Student Experience Report to Senate

- .1 The paper was noted.

24/018 Research & Innovation Report to Senate

- .1 The paper was noted.

24/019 Senate Sub-Committee Minutes University Education Committee, 8th October University Research & Innovation Committee, 2nd October Senate Nominations Committee 5th June Senate Nominations Committee 20th September

- .1 The unconfirmed minutes were noted.

24/020 Items for future meetings

- .1 The paper was noted

4 CLOSING ITEMS

24/021 AOB

- .1 Formal thanks to Professor Paul Townsend who is leaving the University at the end of the week were noted.
- .2 Noting that it was Kerry Matthew's last meeting before she goes on maternity leave at Christmas, Senate extended their best wishes for a safe and happy start to family life. Emma Rowsell will be Interim CSO in her absence.

24/022 Dates of next Senate meetings 2024/25

- .1 Wednesday 15 January 2025
Wednesday 2 April 2025
Wednesday 25 June 2025