



Minutes

Meeting of the Senate

Date:

18 March 2026

Present:

The President & Vice-Chancellor in the Chair

Professor T Baldwin, Professor A Beckerman, Professor B Birdi, Professor R Blakeley, Professor L Brooks, Professor S Brown, Dr J Burr, Dr J Chamberlain, A Clements, Dr C Codina, Professor J Cordiner, Professor L Cross, Professor J Derrick, Professor K Dommett, Professor A Fleming, Professor J Flint, Professor G Gee, Professor S Goodwin, Dr V Halliday, Professor R Hand, Professor S Hartley, Professor T Hodgson, Professor J Hodson, Professor R Howell, A Jeffries, Professor V Kadiramanathan, Professor S A Khurram, Professor R Kirkham, Professor D Lambert, Professor R Lawthom, Professor S Livingstone, J Marriott, Dr C Martin, Professor M Mayfield, Professor F McLeay, Professor T Moore, Professor C Nic Dháibhéid, Dr S North, S Omondi, Dr R Orfitelli, Professor G Panoutsos, Dr A Parrish, Professor C Shrank, Professor M Strong, Dr N Stubbs, R Sykes, Professor A Tiwari, Professor M Vincent, E Wake, Dr K Zbinden

Secretary:

D Swinn

In attendance:

E Allan, L Harris, L Kiely, A Priestley, Dr E Smith, K Sullivan, S Taylor

Apologies:

The Senate received apologies from 25 members.

Welcome

The President & Vice-Chancellor (P&VC) welcomed members to the meeting. Three new members had joined Senate since the last meeting.

1. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

1.1 No conflicts were declared.

1.3 Pre-Submitted Questions

1.3.1 6 questions were submitted in advance of the meeting and were covered under the relevant items.

2. President & Vice-Chancellor's Report to Senate

2.1 The President & Vice-Chancellor (P&VC) presented the report, which provided information on key current and forthcoming developments in the policy environment and against each of the themes in the University's Strategic Plan. The report was taken as read and attention was drawn to the following updates and developments since the written report was prepared:

- 2.1.1 Meningitis Outbreak - Following the recent Meningitis outbreak at the University of Kent, in which two people had sadly died, the University had undertaken precautionary communications with students to share health advice and signpost them to the dedicated Meningitis web page and to remind students of the symptoms to look out for. Colleagues would continue to monitor the situation in Kent and the planned roll out of the UK Health and Security Agency's (UKHSA's) targeted vaccination programme for students; it was highlighted that a vaccination programme was rolled out at the University in 2025 and it was hoped that many students would already have had the vaccine. Should the need arise, the University would take the advice of the UK government and the local Public Health Team to coordinate a response. Council and Senate would be kept updated of any developments alongside the other members of the University's community.
- 2.1.2 Government confirms international student fee levy and salary sacrifice changes that will cost the University, but automatic undergraduate home fee inflationary increase not yet secured - The Government had announced details of its plans to introduce a levy on international student tuition fees to fund the partial reintroduction of maintenance grants, as well as confirming that maintenance loans would increase in line with forecast inflation; it was clarified that the levy would be paid by the University, not by students themselves. University finances would face further pressures as a result of changes to the salary sacrifice scheme, also confirmed in the Budget, introducing a £2,000 cap on employee pension contributions made via salary sacrifice from April 2029. The government's commitment to legislate for an automatic annual inflationary increase to the undergraduate home tuition fee cap would result in additional income for the University but that uplift would not be given legislative time (not become law); it was a priority for the University to work to secure this legislative change, particularly given that putting the levy 'tax' on the statute books but not the fee increase, arguably broke Labour's manifesto pledge to act to create a secure future for higher education and provided the tool for more HE-hostile governments to damage the sector further. If the Government continued with plans to introduce the levy, the University would press for protections in the legislation that would bring in the levy to minimise its abuse by future HE-hostile governments, including a 'time out' or 'sunset' clause.
- 2.1.3 UK to rejoin EU exchange scheme Erasmus+ as part of wider UK-EU 'reset' - The UK and EU had agreed that the UK would join the Erasmus+ exchange scheme in 2027, as part of a wider UK-EU 'reset'. For the University, this would ease the creation of places for its students to go to other Erasmus+ countries (because Erasmus+ was reciprocal, unlike the UK replacement scheme Turing) and it would facilitate broader opportunities (like staff mobility and research collaboration).
- 2.2 Office for Students (OfS) Reportable Events - It was noted that one new reportable event had been notified to the OfS since the last meeting, in December 2025. This related to action taken to mitigate the impact of industrial action taken in 2025 and early 2026 on students' education and learning, and the report reflected the risk that not all of the lost learning could be replaced. The OfS responded with several queries and requests for clarification about the University's approach.
- 2.2.1 In response to a question about the queries raised by OfS and whether the OfS was satisfied by the assurances provided by the University, it was noted that the University had remained

in dialogue with the OfS and met with them on 16 February 2026 to fully understand any residual concerns and ensure it could provide assurance that it had or would be undertaking the necessary steps in a timeframe that satisfied the regulator. Following that meeting, it was agreed to make a range of amendments to the University's terms and conditions of its student contracts. Some of these took immediate effect, with the remaining amendments to be picked up as part of the usual annual review (to come into force in 2026-27).

- 2.3 In response to a point raised about PGT admissions and recruitment to date being shown as percentage increases/decreases, it was agreed to circulate this as numerical data after the meeting. **[Action by: KS/DS]**
- 2.4 In response to a pre-submitted question about what role Senate would play in decisions about the future of Chemistry, East Asian Studies and Materials and whether the relevant reports to Council could be shared with Senators, it was highlighted that the matter considered by Council related to the potential for academic staff redundancies arising from significant organisational restructure (resulting from the three reviews) under the Statutes. In effect, Council received these reports in the context of Council's role in approving any redundancy dismissals of academic staff (as defined) in accordance with the Statutes.
 - 2.4.1 It was clarified that the University Statutes and Regulations set out the decision making responsibilities of Council in relation to organisational change in certain defined circumstances.
 - 2.4.2 Ultimately, Council had agreed that it was appropriate to take a prudent approach to interpreting the constitutional requirements for Council approvals. Council also decided to refer the research-related recommendations from the review of Chemistry to the Senate Research and Innovation Committee (SRIC) to confirm and provide further assurance that these were consistent with current strategy, objectives and policies and that any further formal decisions being required would also proceed under established procedures, including those under Senate. SRIC saw the relevant extracts from the Chemistry report to inform its discussions. That meeting had taken place and was verbally reported later in the meeting (see minute 8.2).
 - 2.4.3 With regard to sharing the report with Senate, it was noted that the review findings and recommendations had been shared with the staff in scope of each of the reviews and would also be shared with the campus trade unions. It was clarified that the reports were written for and shared with Council as part of its formal business and decision making process. As the reports were only being shared with affected parties, it would not be appropriate for Senate to see these reports (essentially "for information") given that it had no formal role at this stage.

3. Matters Requiring Approval

- 3.1 Senate received and noted a summary of the matters for which Senate's formal approval was sought.

4. Establishing a Centre for Apprenticeships and CPD in the Faculty of Engineering

- 4.1 Senate received and noted a proposal to develop a dedicated centre in the Faculty of Engineering which would specialise in the provision of engineering apprenticeships and high quality Continuing Professional Development (CPD) provision, incorporating governance and management of the Advanced Manufacturing Research Centre (AMRC) Training Centre and the current Multidisciplinary Engineering Education (MEE) team. Senate was invited to consider and comment on the academic elements of the proposals in advance of formal consideration by Council. If approved, the intention would be to launch the new Centre as a planning unit from August 2026 and then manage the full implementation on a phased basis to ensure a smooth transition and minimise any risk to core business.
- 4.2 During discussion, Senate was updated on the rationale for establishing a dedicated centre, alongside key aims and opportunities. It was highlighted that the Centre would have a clear academic leadership structure, with a Centre Director (equivalent to a Head of School) and Director of Education (DoE). The Centre would incorporate academic leadership and operational management of the AMRC Training Centre, but with a continued close working relationship with the AMRC and with arrangements in place to ensure that the AMRC could fulfil all obligations and KPIs in the High Value Manufacturing Catapult (HVMC) grant funding agreement. The Centre would also take advantage of opportunities in the market to grow up to degree level apprenticeship provision and high quality CPD, especially in partnership with large employers.
- 4.3 A pre-submitted question highlighted references in the report to the potential need for formal consultation as part of staffing changes, and a risk was identified regarding the effects of this on education in the faculty more generally. The member urged colleagues refining the proposals to ensure every avenue was explored to avoid a formal restructure, in which jobs may be put at risk, noting that the effects on morale and performance when restructures were in train could be severe. It was noted that Human Resources (HR) would be able to advise on circumstances where formal consultation was/was not required.
- 4.3.1 It was highlighted that the risk of disruption for MEE was low and the University was mindful of the need to minimise disruption. For colleagues in the affected areas, there would be no immediate changes to roles, responsibilities and structures. After creating the new centre, options would be considered for bringing the staff teams together and sharing resources and facilities, recognising that the AMRC Training Centre, being based at Catcliffe, was not well located to share resources with the faculty. The University was very mindful of the need to minimise disruption and Senate was assured that HR were actively involved in the working group and were providing colleagues with advice on how best to manage any future staff changes, in line with agreed University policies.
- 4.4 It was noted that Senate was supportive of the proposals and would advise Council to formally approve them when they were considered by Council on 30 April 2026.

REPORTS FROM STATUTORY BODIES

5. Report on the Proceedings of the Council

(Meetings held on 20 November 2025)

- 5.1 Senate received and noted the Report on the Proceedings of the Council.

REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES OF THE SENATE

7. Report of the Senate Academic Assurance Committee

(Meeting held on 10 March 2026)

- 7.1 Senate noted a verbal update from the Chair of the Senate Academic Assurance Committee (SAAC) on its meeting on 10 March 2026, noting that, due to the meetings being so close together, it had not been possible to provide a written report in time for this Senate meeting. It was highlighted that SAAC had undertaken a deep dive into research funding; a full update on this would be included in the SAAC report to the June 2026 Senate meeting; that report would also cover a deep dive on the PGT student experience and academic misconduct, which SAAC planned to undertake at its next meeting.

8. Report of the Senate Education Committee

(Meeting held on 22 January 2026)

- 8.1 Senate received the Senate Education Committee (SEC) report, noting that there were specific matters requiring approval relating to: revisions to the SEC Terms of Reference (ToRs) and amendments to XV General Regulations for First Degrees (Pass Degrees), as well as to XIII General University Regulations (concurrent study). The following was highlighted:
- 8.2 Terms of Reference - SEC had considered the recently published OfS Guidance on Free Speech and, recognising that the work of the committee covered a number of areas that related to free speech, it was agreed to recommend to Senate an addition to Senate Education Committee's terms of reference which took this into account. Confirmation was provided that all of SECs Sub-Groups had also made this change.
- 8.1.2 SEC had also made some changes to its membership, to reflect changes to ex-officio role holders. It was highlighted that a member of Senate had recently been in contact with the University Secretary's Office about whether there were or should be opportunities for elected members of Senate to be represented on SEC and other committees of Senate; this linked to previous discussions (when Senate's membership had reduced) about increasing opportunities for Senators to be involved in particular areas of Senate's work. The member had highlighted that a large proportion of positions on these committees were ex-officio, with only a small number of positions more widely open to staff. Following discussion, Senate agreed with a proposal to refer the matter to the Senate Nominations Committee for consideration in the first instance in order to consider the matter holistically. Senate Nominations Committee was due to meet before the next Senate meeting and, therefore, could report to the next meeting of Senate on its discussions. **[Action by: DS]**
- 8.1.3 Senate **approved** the amended SEC ToRs.
- 8.2 Regulation XV General Regulations for First Degrees:
- 8.2.1 Senate **approved** a proposal to amend Regulation XV of the General Regulations for First Degrees (Pass Degrees), to take immediate effect. The change required at least 200 credits to have been awarded in Years 2 and 3, instead of 220. The wording of the regulations, which was updated when compensation was introduced, meant that students who did not achieve a Degree with Honours could not be eligible for a Pass Degree without resitting failed

assessments, which was not the intention of the change and raised the bar compared to students entering their programme of study prior to Sept 2022.

- 8.2.2 A pre-submitted question, which welcomed this amendment, queried whether there were any students who missed out on degrees as a result of the previous drafting error or who had otherwise suffered inconvenience and, if so, what could be done for those students. It was clarified that the drafting error was identified last session and that a special regulation was approved to allow any student who had achieved at least 200 credits in Years 2 and 3, and was otherwise eligible, to be recommended for a Pass Degree in 2024-25, in line with the proposed update.
- 8.2.3 Senate **approved** an amendment to XIII General University Regulation (concurrent study) (paragraph 57) which restricted concurrent study for other university qualifications, to make a further exception so that University of Sheffield students who may wish to take the Certificate in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages (CELTA) course alongside, but not as part of, their programme of study were permitted to do so. The amendment would take effect for the 2025-26 academic session onwards.
- 8.3 Student compensation arising from industrial action: A pre-submitted question regarding the compensation owed to students for disruption due to industrial action queried whether the University would be proactively identifying those eligible for compensation to avoid the need for students themselves to submit claims, in line with the OfS's 2025 Regulatory Statement on Industrial Action (and Council's low tolerance for risks that could jeopardise compliance with regulatory requirements).
- 8.3.1 It was important to consider this in the context of the number of schools affected and to recognise that identifying affected cohorts was a difficult process. In recognition of the University's obligations and commitment to its students it was operating a streamlined process for student complaints relating to industrial action. This removed the first stage (informal complaint) in the interests of expediency; the process also reflected the fact that information about disruption to learning and teaching activities was already available centrally and, critically, would also enable consistent approach to handling and resolving these complaints, thereby ensuring affected students were treated equitably. In addition, the normal 30 day period for submitting complaints had been extended to 1 September 2026, to allow for the range of arrangements to replace lost learning, some of which would be implemented in Semester 2, to take their course. The impact on students had varied considerably and the process gave them agency to articulate what those impacts had been and for the University to understand rather than assume the resolutions they were seeking. The impact may extend beyond pedagogic loss to include the disruption of essential services and meeting accessibility requirements. Considering individual student complaints would enable a more robust and equitable response to be made, including compensation where appropriate. To this end, the University was actively assessing where there was, or may have been, a material impact on an individual cohort. To date, one such cohort had been identified and a goodwill payment made. This was a complex case that included but was not limited to the impact of industrial action alone. Other cases were under consideration.
- 8.3.2 During further discussion, a member raised a point about what they felt were separate impacts on students in January 2026 arising from the University's approach to Action Short

of Strike. The member queried whether the University had been clear with students about their right to complain in relation to this. It was clarified that students were equally entitled to raise a complaint / make a claim in relation to the impact of strike action and action short of strike and it was noted that the University had communicated with all students about the complaints process. Following further discussion it was agreed to check the wording of the advice provided to students to ensure it was as clear as possible. **[Action by: MV]**

- 8.4 **Suspension of low recruiting programmes:** In response to a pre-submitted question regarding the suspension of low recruiting programmes, it was noted that MPSU016 BSc Mathematics and Statistics was not below the threshold identified. The member asked for clarification on why it was suspended, and why these decisions were being taken mid-cycle, where they risked harming recruitment for the subsequent academic year?
- 8.4.1 It was highlighted that the rationale submitted by the School and Faculty for recommending suspension of the MPSU016 BSc Mathematics and Statistics, which had recruited 12 students for 2025 entry, was to align this with the suspension of the related MPSU017 MMath Mathematics and Statistics. It was reported that the BSc/MMath Mathematics would be offered as an alternative entry route; this was felt to retain the optionality students required. In line with usual practices, this decision was considered very carefully and took account of the number of offer holders and acceptances for the subsequent academic year. During further discussion, a member from the Faculty noted that the decision was made to retain the subject area as a pathway: this was not the loss of the subject area but a loss of this particular entry point.
- 8.4.2 There was further discussion about the process for making these decisions during which several members raised concern that, contrary to what had been described in the report, they had not been consulted as part of the process and/or they had been informed of the changes at short notice. The Vice President for Education expressed disappointment at these decisions being communicated in this way and agreed to look into the matter. **[Action by: MV]**
- 8.4.2 One element of the rationale given for suspending certain programmes was that there was a significant cost / resourcing implications to retaining programmes that comprised modules that were being taught elsewhere. One member strongly challenged this and requested mathematical modelling of these costs to help members understand this argument. This included modelling of students who, because a programme was no longer available, had chosen to go to a different university. It was noted that this had been discussed extensively at Senate several times in the past, including how each programme offered in a school entailed more complexity and more cost that had to be absorbed within existing staff and other resources. Accurate financial modelling of the type that had been requested was extremely difficult due to such varied workload models and undertaking further detailed work on this would be highly complex, costly and time consuming. Attendance at open days was increasing, as was recruitment and, where courses had been withdrawn, other offers had been made and most students had accepted those offers. After a further discussion, it was agreed to recirculate the minutes from previous meetings where this had been discussed. **[Action by DS/MV]**

8. Report of the Senate Research and Innovation Committee (Meetings held on 5 February and 16 March 2026)

8.1 Senate received and noted the report of the Research and Innovation Committee (SRIC) held on 5 February 2026, which included updates on the Research Excellence Framework (REF); the research funding landscape at UKRI, the launch of the Knowledge Exchange (KE) and Impact Academy; and updates on reports received from the Research Governance Sub-Committee, the University Early Career Researcher Committee, the University Postgraduate Research Committee, the Research Culture Steering Board, Research Integrity Steering Board, Open Research Advisory Group and the Defense and Security Oversight Group. The following was highlighted:

8.1.1 The meeting had focussed on the research funding landscape at UKRI, which was changing rapidly. It was noted that UKRI was using the terminology of 'buckets'. The curiosity-driven funding stream (Bucket 1) had a flat cash settlement over the funding period, so would decline slightly in real terms. The innovation and applied research funding stream (Bucket 2) would have an increase of 13%, and the commercialisation funding stream (Bucket 3), an increase of 19% over the funding period. There would be emphasis on the scale-up of spinouts. Buckets 1 and 2 were felt to be the University's areas of strength and it was important to be clear about this. There would be more focus on enabling universities to make the most of the areas in which they were strong and to stop supporting areas where UK research was not internationally competitive.

8.2 Senate also received an update from the SRIC Chair on a special meeting of the SRIC which had convened on 16 March 2026, at the request of Council, to consider recommendations relating to research which formed part of the review of Chemistry within the School of Mathematical and Physical Sciences. The following was noted:

- SRIC found the recommendations contained in the review to be sensible and noted that they were aligned to the current funding landscape and recognised the value of cross-faculty links and identified an opportunity to capitalise on facilities, technology and expertise.
- SRIC also noted that Chemistry research underpinned and/or aligned with many of the University's other disciplines, including those in Science, Engineering and Health.
- Realigning research clusters in themes in Chemistry to take advantage of collaborative and interdisciplinary opportunities would enable it to secure the funding required to provide a vibrant research environment.
- The review had already identified some potential collaborations and SRIC identified potential for others that would complement or build on those proposals.
- The review looked at external benchmarks, including REF performance and Russell Group income norms and SRIC welcomed this.
- SRIC also welcomed the recommendation for senior staff to engage in generous leadership and hoped this would be widened to include engagement with the research culture action plan.
- SRIC had concluded and offered assurance that the proposals could be implemented through the usual governance processes within the Faculty of Science and aligned with existing policies.
- Where necessary SRIC would receive reports and updates through its usual sub-committees and would in turn report onward to Senate via the usual reporting mechanisms.
- A written update could be included in the next SRIC report to Senate in June.

9. Report of the Senate University Research Ethics Committee

(Meeting held on 4 February 2026)

- 9.1 Senate received and noted the Report of the Senate University Research Ethics Committee (SUREC) meeting, which had taken place on 4 February 2026.
- 9.2 Senate **approved** the revised 2025-26 Senate University Research Ethics Committee Terms of Reference and Membership, which had been updated to reflect the recently published OfS Guidance on Free Speech and recognise that the work of the committee covered a number of areas that related to free speech.

OTHER MATTERS

10. Report on Action Taken

- 10.1 It was noted that The President & Vice-Chancellor, acting on behalf of the Senate, had approved an action to correct the minutes of the Senate meeting held on 11 December 2024. The Interim University Secretary had investigated the matter to understand how this had come about but most importantly to ensure that the formal Senate record was accurate and complete. Senate was updated on the circumstances, which were detailed in the report. This was a matter of correcting an error in the record and it was important to be transparent with Senate about it. The updated minutes had been republished.
- 10.2 A pre-submitted question, which welcomed the correction to the record, raised concern about how this had come about and why it had not been identified earlier, which the member felt could be partially attributed to the fact that the minutes had been moved to the end of agenda (from the start), and that Senators waited three months to see the minutes, which stretched recollections. The member suggested revisiting both these points.
- 10.3 The Interim University Secretary apologised for the error and highlighted that, as the report explained, the error came about as a result of specific circumstances that gave rise to simple human error, compounded by holidays, absences, and various changes in personnel. There had previously been extensive discussions at Senate about the place of the minutes on the agenda and there was now a fairly established practice at Senate as well as at Council and other groups. It was therefore not proposed to revisit this or amend the Standing Orders for what was expected to be a one-off issue in a very particular set of unfortunate circumstances.

11. Major Research Grants and Contracts

- 11.1 A report listing major research grants and contracts awarded since the last meeting of the Senate was received and noted.

12. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

(Meeting held on 10 December 2025)

- 12.1 It was highlighted that, with the approval of the Chair, a change had been made to the minutes of the previous meeting since they were originally circulated. The change was at minute 2.4.6iii. The change was made following a challenge from Dr N Stubbs to the accuracy of minutes. Following correspondence with the Interim University Secretary a new final paragraph was added to the minutes to show that, at the December 2025 meeting, Dr N Stubbs had sought to challenge the accuracy of statements that the University's approach reflected its longstanding position regarding partial performance and the legality of this approach under employment law. These challenges were ruled out of order on the basis that

they would have the effect of putting the same questions to Senate as had previously been ruled out of order. A Post Meeting Note, which had been agreed with Dr Stubbs, was also added to clarify the University's position to stipulate the University's position reflects legal advice it has received, including in respect of employment law. In May 2025 the University entered into a one-off agreement with UCU regarding pay deductions, as part of a wider settlement.

- 12.2 During discussion, Dr N Stubbs raised further challenge to this revision stating that it was statements they recalled being made by the Chair, that the legal position was clear and that the approach to deductions reflected the longstanding position, which they believed to be factually inaccurate. It was agreed to record this in the minutes and a further edit to the minute in question was agreed.
- 12.3 Subject to the above, the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2025 were approved.

13. Matters Arising on the Minutes

- 13.1 It was noted that all matters arising in the minutes had been covered under relevant items on the agenda.