The University Of Sheffield.

Office Of The President & Vice-Chancellor.

The Senate, 14 December 2022

President & Vice-Chancellor's Report

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This Report provides summary information on current and forthcoming developments, both internal and external, for the information of Senate members. The President & Vice-Chancellor will introduce the Report at the meeting and members will have the opportunity to raise questions. This report is structured around the University Vision's four Pillars and their respective Priorities, after a section about the external environment. Where information relates to more than one Pillar or Priority it is included under the most relevant theme.

1.   EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

1.1   Implications of the Sunak government for the University and the higher education sector

- Rishi Sunak MP became leader of the Conservative Party and assumed office as the UK Prime Minister on 25 October. The extremely low public polling for the Conservative Party following the Truss Premiership, combined with bringing MPs from across the Conservative Parliamentary Party into government, could mean, at least in the short term, Sunak faces less challenge from his MPs, who have seen the impact of disunity on their prospects of re-election. This may mean he can move forward with his agenda in a manner that Truss could not.

  The government still faces significant challenges, however. The extent to which Conservative MPs will unite behind the announcements contained within the Autumn Statement on 17 November, many of which run counter to their small state, low tax instincts, remains to be seen. Protection for the Research and Development (R&D) budget within that statement was welcomed by the University and wider sector, alongside commitments to put research and innovation at the heart of the government's growth agenda and make the UK a science superpower. However, with living standards set to fall, pressure from Conservative MPs to improve the offer to the electorate as the next General Election approaches may grow, putting at risk the announced R&D investment. The University will continue to make the case for this investment and the benefits it brings.

- A Department for Education focused on skills and rooting out poor quality higher education:

  Sunak's appointment of Gillian Keegan as Education Secretary, herself a former apprentice, and Robert Halfon as Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education Minister indicate a continued focus on skills and alternative education routes into the labour market. Former New Labour adviser and former OfS Chair Sir Michael Barber has been appointed to advise on the implementation of the government's Skills Reform Programme, which includes delivering T levels, approving Higher Technical Qualifications and introducing the Lifelong Loan Entitlement. It is anticipated the latter will not become the wholesale reform of the post-18 education funding system, given the limited time for implementation

before the next General Election, which must be held by January 2025 at the latest.

Crucially, Barber will report to both HM Treasury and the Department for Education, which could mean a rebalancing of funding from higher to technical education, given the government's focus on alternatives to higher education. The government has already consulted on one way of achieving a reduction in higher education spending via Student Number Controls and/or Minimum Eligibility Requirements for higher education institutions. The continued focus on the quality of degrees, measured by graduate outcomes, means it is possible Student Number Controls will be linked with quality measures. The University continues to monitor our performance against the Office for Students' quality measures as well as making the broader case for investment in higher education.

- <u>Pressure to change the relationship between China and UK universities</u>:

  Sunak has been a long-time advocate of encouraging inward investment to the UK but modulated his position in his summer leadership campaign and resolved to "face down China". While it is uncertain how Sunak will reconcile these divergent views in office, retaining Tom Tugendhat as Security Minister and the scrutiny of China hawk Alicia Kearns as Chair of the Foreign Affairs Select Committee means he will face pressure to take action that at least recognises risks around UK-China business relationships.

  During the leadership contest, Sunak committed to closing China's Confucius Institutes (CI) in the UK, which would include the University of Sheffield CI. He also advocated a £50 000 threshold for the disclosure of university 'foreign funding partnerships'. The latter is addressed in the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill, which may also be used as a route for CI closures. The Bill returned for scrutiny by the House of Lords on 7 December and will likely be pursued with renewed vigour because it is a unifying issue for Conservative MPs. The University continues to work with the Russell Group to ensure any resulting legislation is as workable as possible.

- <u>A more conciliatory approach to UK-EU relations; questions remain around the approach to international students</u>:

  Sunak is likely to be less antagonistic towards the EU, despite being pro-Brexit, given his economic pragmatism as a former Chancellor and the poor Conservative Party polling that may quieten the Party's Eurosceptic critics, at least initially. The re-appointment of George Freeman as Minister for Research and Innovation, who has been vocal about ambitions for UK association to Horizon Europe, the EU's €95bn research and innovation programme, provides further reason for cautious optimism.

  Suella Braverman's reappointment as Home Secretary means restrictions on international students and their dependants remain a possibility, though this will likely be opposed by Ministers within the economic ministries of government.

1.2 Office for Students updates

- The Office for Students (OfS) has proposed a new Equality of Opportunity Risk Register and suggested the regulator will move away from the OfS "cascading" a set of national targets on equality, pressing providers to adopt their own based on their context and mission. The Risk Register aims to outline challenges to equality of opportunity in the UK HE sector, to which universities should have regard when assessing how their subsequent Access and Participation Plans (APPs), due for submission to the OfS in 2023, might need to be adapted to mitigate these risks. The University has responded to the consultation with

broad support for the introduction of an Equality Opportunity Risk Register and the ongoing focus on institutional self-assessment and the use of these data to prioritise actions and interventions. However, concerns were raised about the suggested use of 'volume' of evaluation as an indicator, the potential risk of uncoordinated interventions around pre-16 attainment, and the extent to which the OfS should be able to publish its views of performance outside of agreed targets.

- The OfS has responded to a review it commissioned of blended learning and how the approach relates to conditions B1 and B2 of the regulatory framework (ensuring a high-quality academic experience and student support and engagement). The OfS outlines where it may have compliance concerns, acknowledges the necessity of blended learning in response to Covid restrictions, and encourages institutions to reflect on what has worked well for students and what could change. The report's findings include an assessment that the balance between face-to-face and online delivery is not the key determinant of teaching quality. The University's approach towards blended learning is informed by pedagogical principles. Through Elevate, APSE can provide information and guidance for University staff on embedding digital learning tools in teaching and assessment. Through the 301 Academic Skills Centre, students are supported to use these tools in their learning.

- The OfS has set out its arrangements for assessing academic quality and standards from April 2023. This follows the announcement in July that the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) would cease its role as the OfS' designated quality body (DQB) in England on 31 March 2023, as the requirements of this status were inconsistent with those that would permit the QAA to work in other European countries. The OfS will undertake several of the assessment activities that the QAA delivered, including assessments for degree-awarding powers, in tandem with continuing discussions with sector representative groups over longer-term arrangements. The impact of this move on international perceptions of England's HE sector, which now has a different quality body from the other nations of the UK where QAA continues to operate, remains to be seen.

- Robert Halfon, Minister of State for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education, announced regulations under Section 71 of the Higher Education and Research Act 2017 that will enable the OfS to charge a fee for the investigation of providers' compliance with quality and other requirements where the investigation results in certain regulatory action or specified outcomes. The rationale for imposing such fees is that "the costs of investigations will fall on those responsible for their necessity, and that those in good standing face a more proportionate regulatory burden than would be the case if we did not lay these regulations." These regulations came into effect on 8 December 2022.

2. EDUCATION

2.1 DELIVERY OF THE PORTFOLIO

2.1.1 Student Registration

- As of 1 November the University had registered 12,910 new students against a target of 13,442. Our total student population size (counting new and continuing registrations) is 29,869, compared to 29,792 in 2021/22. The total population normally shows little variation between this snapshot and the 1 December census point, though a small number of further registrations are expected.

  The table below shows that the University exceeded its student population objectives for two of the four major cohorts: UG home and UG overseas

students; and we are performing well against our ABB+ high achieving applicant target.

▪ The postgraduate home position reflects a downturn across the sector, missing our target by 755 (including distance and part time students). The University has worked to offset this decline this year through the recruitment of additional high-quality UG students and continues to support faculties and departments in areas where created pressure on capacity.

▪ We will be undertaking a detailed trend analysis during 2022/23 to understand the long-term implications and may need to rebalance our student population objectives if this trend looks set to continue.

▪ **New Student Registrations Against Targets**

Category	2022 Intake target (1 December 2022)	Intake registered at 1 November 2022	Variance between registrations and target
Undergraduate Home (UGH):	4,363	4,861	+498
Undergraduate Overseas (UGO):	1,296	1,327	+31
Postgraduate Taught Home (PGTH):	2,209	1,454	-755
Postgraduate Taught Overseas (PGTO):	4,768	4,727	-41

2.1.2 Undergraduate Admissions

▪ From September we began receiving new undergraduate applications via UCAS for the 2023. UG home applications are up and UG Overseas applications below the same point last year. UG international applications have been slower but are now increasing, with the trajectory expected to continue upwards. We are ahead of our closest competitors and the sector as a whole when comparing the available UCAS data. Following recent behavioural changes with later application submission, early December will represent a more accurate early marker of the overall UG admissions position.

▪ For UG applicants a series of new eligibility criteria have been added to the Access+ contextual offer in order to support a larger number of students from groups underrepresented in Higher education who can benefit from our contextual offers and from access to our academic preparation and transitions support.

2.1.3 Postgraduate Taught Admissions

▪ We began accepting applications for 2023 entry on 15 September and have seen similar numbers of home applications coming through with a higher number of international applications than at this stage last year. We expect to have a

clearer picture of home applications after Christmas but at this stage we are likely to see a similar pattern to last year.

2.1.4   Postgraduate Research Admissions

- It is too early to draw conclusions from Postgraduate Research applicant data but early trends suggest a slight recovery in international applications and a continued reduction in home interest.

2.1.5   Student recruitment and marketing

- City campaign: The joint University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam and Sheffield City Council campaign to raise awareness and engage new audiences by showcasing Sheffield as a great city for students ran from 27 June - 7 August. The campaign reached 34% more people than the target we set ourselves and has resulted in an exceptional 74% uplift in people stating that they know 'a huge amount' about Sheffield, and a 46% uplift in people stating that they are 'very likely' to consider going to the University of Sheffield. The next phase of the campaign has started and UEB has agreed to continue this work for another two cycles.

- Pre-application open days numbers and marketing: Across four open days in June, July, September and October, we welcomed over 20,000 prospective student visitors and guests. Combined student bookings for all five events already exceed the student bookings taken over the course of the 2019 open day season (the last full cycle pre-covid) and we expect to exceed our target of increasing the number of open day bookings by 10%.

  We are two months into the three month Autumn digital advertising campaign and have already reached more people than last year, with clicks to the website from adverts also significantly higher than last year. Our mystery shopping undertaken in the summer has shown that developments have significantly improved the visitor experience.

- Sheffield Live: This new online initiative has just launched, bringing together previously disparate UK and International recruitment events to increase opportunities for all students to engage with the University. The first 'meet your department' day is scheduled for 30 November with most departments taking part - this is replacing all UG and PGT online open days.

2.1.6   National Student Survey

- Detailed analysis of the NSS results took place over the summer. The results were shared with UEB and used to inform a presentation to Heads of Departments. The work highlights the need to focus on the NSS at an individual question level, and to reflect on how performance can be raised by responding to the feedback shared by students and consistently delivering on the expectations that are set.

- The OfS has announced key changes to the NSS, most of which will come into effect for the 2023 survey. The summative question on overall satisfaction has been removed for respondents in England, who will also now be asked a new question on Freedom of Expression. For all respondents, a question on mental health services has been added. Students will no longer be asked to give their level of agreement with a statement, but will be asked direct questions each answered on an appropriate four point scale. This, as well as some wording changes to existing questions, will disrupt trend data and will require new reporting to be developed to accommodate the different scales employed.

2.1.7 Teaching Excellence Framework

- The new TEF exercise launched at the start of October. Academic Programmes and Student Engagement are supporting the institution in understanding the dashboard data and forming the submission which is due on 24th January 2023.

2.1.8 Global Engagement

- Professor Felix Asante, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Innovation at the University of Ghana (an institutional-level strategic partner) visited Sheffield for an Erasmus+ funded training week in October). The visit consolidated our relationships at senior-levels, identified areas for research collaborations (including the Sustainable Food and Healthy Lifespan Flagships); and enabled two-way learning in research leadership and management at senior levels.

- Kyiv Polytechnic Institute (KPI) have confirmed that they have started work on 2 air-raid shelters with the donation we provided. We are also in discussions about a distance learning programme for KPI students. We are also donating a set of old high performance computing to KPI.

- Yamaguchi University (Japan) visited on 25 October as part of re-signing a student exchange. Yamaguchi University is a long standing exchange partner.

2.2 EMPLOYABILITY

2.2.1 Careers

- On campus Careers fairs resumed last month; the Placement and Graduate Jobs Fair (25th October) and the STEM Placement and Graduate Jobs Fair (26th October) attracted 119 local, national and international employers. Around 3000 students attended across both days.
  Alongside the fairs, there was a comprehensive programme of networking events, presentations, pop-up employers and webinars enabling students to connect with around 50 employers as well promoting over 40 externally-hosted events.
  The Part-time Jobs and Volunteering Fair also took place at the start of October with approximately 1500 students visiting

- The Careers Service will lead the pilot of a new 'mySkills Engagement Certificate' in Semester 1 which acknowledges a student's' commitment to their personal development. In Semester 2 these students will also have the option to put themselves forward for the more prestigious 'University of Sheffield mySkills Impact Award' pilot. The Impact Award will recognise a student's impact on others alongside their own personal development in one of the following areas - Inclusivity, Sustainability, Community or Entrepreneurship. The pilots will run with some small cohorts of students from a variety of areas to give the opportunity to test the process, seek feedback and refine any elements of the process before scaling up for 2023/24.

2.3 DIGITAL EXPERIENCE

2.3.1 Delivering Excellent Service

- Teams across IT Services worked to support the start the academic year. A new Semester Readiness team provided a focus and assurance that a complex set of support activities was undertaken effectively and met customer expectations – particularly around the stability of the timetabling system and preparedness for teaching spaces.

- Our internal strategy and communications work continues and will be aligned with the University code of conduct and a new set of values and behaviours co-created with staff in ITS. Our recruitment risks remain as the IT market is still

very competitive but mitigating action will help reduce the risks over time, including a new 'Talent' role jointly between HR and ITS.

2.3.2 Technology Enabled Strategic Framework

- The new 22/23 delivery of the Technology Enabled Strategic Framework is well underway and the new processes for working with the ITS Portfolio Management Office are agreed. Workplace and Infrastructure roadmaps continue to perform strongly. Further work in other roadmaps has continued to provide greater levels of assurance, particularly over the Student and Education roadmaps.

2.3.3 Reducing Technical Debt

- Our core work this month remains in the CIS re-platforming work where we are moving the core student record ecosystem to its new home in the 'cloud'. Progress and delivery here is excellent. The test team and the development operations team are working to improve our position with reducing our technical debt.

3. RESEARCH

3.1 RESEARCH EXCELLENCE

3.1.1 Research Awards

- See section 6, Finance, below.

3.1.2 Research Development

- The Vice-President for Research and colleagues from Science, Engineering and Medicine, Dentistry and Health met with the Chief Executive of the Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council to discuss EPSRC and our own strategies. There are strong synergies, which provide good opportunities for research grant applications.

- There are still relatively few publicly available details about the new funding body ARIA (Advanced Research and Invention Agency). The Government hopes ARIA will fund transformational science that will give the UK competitive advantage. Legislation is in place, as well as agreement with the devolved administrations to enable this. There has been a call for roundtable discussions of ideas to generate areas of potential investment areas, to which we have contributed.

- UKRI is planning a 'Simpler and Better Funding system'. This is partly in response both to their existing funding system using a platform which is no longer supported and the 'Tickell review' into research bureaucracy, commissioned by BEIS, that made recommendations for funders and institutions. We are engaging with UKRI over the risk that funding application numbers will be constrained for a period during 2023 as they launch the new system.

3.1.3 Cultural Update

- Sheffield City Council's planning application for Event Central, a mixed-use cultural community hub on Fargate, has been approved. Event Central forms part of the Council's Future High Street Fund regeneration project, supported by the University. A number of cultural and community events have already taken place, including Festival of the Mind exhibitions, Off the Shelf talks, Sensoria, Heritage Open Days, Fargate plan consultations and events supporting Black History Month.

- The Off the Shelf Festival of Words ran for 17 days in October in a variety of venues on campus, in the city, across South Yorkshire and online. There were 85 in-person events with more than 6000 attendees (final figures to be confirmed)

as well as 15 online events. The Festival also kick-started grassroots development activities in South Yorkshire focused on creative writing/talent development and further developed partnerships with regional venues.

- The University will be supporting the Sheffield Business Awards in December 2022, with a new award recognising an individual, business, organisation, community group, or initiative that has made a significant impact on the city through arts, culture or events. The award recognises those who have played a part in promoting Sheffield as a fantastic place to live, work and invest.

- During November, the University will host a number of online and in-person public engagement events with academics from across the Faculties of Social Sciences and Arts & Humanities. The ESRC Festival of Social Science will include exhibitions, in-person and online events on the University Player from social science researchers.

- As part of the Being Human festival - the UK's national festival of the humanities - the University will be hosting a free public event entitled 'A Taste of the Past' to showcase our current research through an evening of theatre, conversation and food to explore individual and collective memories around key historical events.

4. INNOVATION

4.1 INNOVATION IMPACT

4.1.1 Success and Achievement

- The results of a Phase 3 clinical trial of the investigational drug tofersen in patients with MND, led by Professor Dame Pamela Shaw and Professor Chris McDermott from the Sheffield Institute of Translational Neuroscience (SITraN), was the focus of a press briefing hosted in London in collaboration with the Science Media Centre and was covered by over 250 media outlets.

- Throughout Black History promotion of numerous events for students and staff with content shared on social media.

- An honorary graduation ceremony took place for 100-year-old Woman of Steel Kathleen Roberts, who sparked a seven-year national campaign to recognise the role of female steelworkers during the war. The ceremony was covered in local television news and also received national media attention.

4.2 SOUTH YORKSHIRE

4.2.1 Regional innovation

- The University has partnered with Sheffield College to provide students with technical and professional healthcare skills. Our Healthcare Academy will support students to undertake an employer-led programme of workshops, masterclasses and employability skills training sessions as well as providing an understanding of the various roles available within the healthcare sector. The Academy will also allow students to gain insight into university life, working closely with representatives from the University.

- The University is leading a new £6.75 million national network, funded by EPSRC, to accelerate UK innovation by bringing together universities, the Catapult Network and regional innovation ecosystems. The Innovation Launchpad Network+ is a national collaboration with the Universities of Leeds, Strathclyde, Warwick, Bristol and Exeter, and the Catapult Network. It aims to deliver an inclusive and integrated Catapult-led innovation community as well as deliver 100 Researcher in Residence opportunities on the themes of net zero, healthcare and wellbeing, and resilience.

- Yorkshire Universities has been awarded £3.9m in funding from Research England, to establish the Yorkshire and Humber Policy Engagement and Research Network (Y-PERN). This Network aims to strengthen evidence-based policymaking in the region by connecting world-leading research expertise to policymakers in regional councils, Mayoral Combined Authorities and Local Enterprise Partnerships. The University is one of the 12 member institutions of Yorkshire Universities.

4.2.2 Partnerships and Knowledge Exchange

- The latest Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF), published by Research England, highlights Sheffield as one of the country's leading universities for working with small local firms to big businesses - with a wide range of partners from across the South Yorkshire region, the UK and around the world. The University is also highlighted in the top 20 per cent for developing IP and commercialising research.

- KEF also recognises Sheffield as one of best universities in England for public and community engagement - working with partners to co-create projects and activities which add to its region's vibrancy, from festivals and exhibitions to green spaces and regeneration initiatives.

5. ONE UNIVERSITY

5.1 PHILANTHOPHY

5.1.1 Alumni Engagement and Volunteering

Planning Phase	Actuals by Financial Year			Volunteer hours	Forecast
Financial year	**2018/19**	**2019/20**	**2020/21**		
Volunteering hours (alumni and friends)**	12,500	9,000	12,000	33,500	29,500
Volunteering hours (students)***	8,700	27,700	20,500	56,900	46,500
	21,200	**36,700**	**32,500**	**90,400**	**76,000**

Private Phase	Actuals/Target by Year			Volunteer hours	Forecast
Financial year	**2021/22**	**2022/23**	**2023/24**		
Volunteering hours (alumni and friends)**	18,400 (12,000)	210 (13,000)	(15,000)	18,610	40,000
Volunteering hours (students)***	33,500 (20,000)	0 (20,000)	(20,000)	33,500	60,000
	51,900 **(32,000)**	**210** **(33,000)**	**(35,000)**	**52,110**	**100,000**

Overall Campaign totals	Total volunteer hours to date	Campaign target
Volunteering hours (alumni and friends)**	52,141	80,000

Volunteering hours (students)***	90,400	120,000
	142,541	**200,000**

*** *'Friends' are defined as non-alumni who are not TUoS staff.*

*** *Data on student volunteer hours covers the period 01.08.18 – 30.06.22. Further data on student volunteer hours will be included in subsequent reports as it becomes available.*

- The 2022 Boardroom series delivered eight leadership workshops led by 12 globally leading alumni. 25 alumni have already signed up to a November networking event with Arts and Humanities students from WP backgrounds.

- Support for departmental activities includes the recruitment of over 50 mechanical engineering alumni to work with current students and contribute to new cross-faculty recruitment videos.

- Our first Bright Minds online event of the new academic year attracted over 150 alumni from around the world.

6.   FINANCE

6.1   RESEARCH

Research Awards

- The total value of new awards for the last 12 months to the end of September 2022 now stand at £151.9m. This is a decrease of £54.2m (26.3%) on the £206.1m in September 2021.

- There has been a fall in the total number of awards opened. For the last 12 months the number of new awards opened stood at 913 compared to 1123 as at September 2021. The biggest decrease in numbers of awards is UK Government, down by 97 to 273, and RCUK, down by 92 to 202. The number of Overseas (Non EU Framework) awards has increased by 20.

- The value of new awards for the last 12 months has fallen across all funder categories apart from Charities, which have increased by £0.8m, and UK Heath Authorities, which have increased by £0.6m. The biggest falls are in UK Government, RCUK and EU Framework awards of £27.0m, £14.2m and £10.4m respectively.

- Whilst there has been a fall in the numbers and values of awards, there are several factors which can explain this:

  o there were 2 RCUK and 2 UK Government awards in excess of £5m each in the September 2021 figures compared to only 1 RCUK award for over £5m in the last 12 months;

  o In the 12 months to September 2021 there were 90 awards relating to COVID 19 including extra funding and extensions to projects, whereas in the 12 months to September 22 there were only seven;

  o 54 fewer AMRC Catapult awards, with a lower total combined value of £5m in September 2022 compared to September 2021;

  o The number of EU Framework awards opened in the last 12 months is 9 compared to 26 in the 12 months to September 2021. There continues to be a delay in the receipt of new Horizon Europe funding caused by UK and EU contract negotiations. The UK Government is offering a Horizon Europe guarantee scheme through UKRI whilst these discussions continue. There have now been 15 new awards opened, which have used this scheme with UKRI as the funder and there is a good pipeline of new

awards. There are an additional 18 applications and an additional value of £20.6m of notifications of successful applications in September 2022 compared with September 21. This includes €2.4m of successful Horizon Europe applications in September 2022 compared to €0.9m last September.

- Since the last report, there has been one new award for over £1m: for £1.01m from D.H.S.C. to the Faculty of Medicine, Dentistry and Health.

- The value of the Research Net Contribution is £39.0m for the 12 months to September 2022 compared to £51.8m for September 2021, a decrease of £12.8m (24.7%).

- As of September 2022, research grants work in progress (research order book) which excludes capital projects, stands at £334.6m which is a decrease of £25.8m on the work in progress figure of £360.4m recorded in September 2021.

7.   LEGAL AND REGULATORY MATTERS

7.1   REPORTABLE EVENTS

- <u>Data breach reported to the ICO</u>: A member of staff uploaded a document to the virtual learning environment, within this document were hyperlinks of student names. Students had been given access to the document, which contained forenames and surnames of students grouped for a specific teaching activity. These were copied directly from the student information system and so the links to the student information system profile were also copied. The department did not intend to include the embedded links. By clicking on the links students were able to access other students' data without authentication. They shared that they were able to do that with a WhatsApp group containing 23 students. Most of these students just viewed their own record but 2 viewed records of 4 and 5 people respectively.

  A change to the student information system authentication on 12 October at 10.30am is the most likely cause of the links being accessible without authentication. This change was reverted on 13 October at 4.35 pm, and testing confirmed the issue was contained with no further detrimental effects. The links from the document were no longer accessible following this change.

  The ICO have confirmed that they will take no further action because of how promptly the University responded to mitigate the breach. They provided some recommendations that will feed into the University review of the incident.