

University of York

Senate

Executive Summary of the meeting held 30 Jan. 2024

Vice-Chancellor and President's report

1. Senate **considered** an overview report from the Vice-Chancellor. This highlighted the range and number of significant achievements by members of the University since his last report to Senate. It also set out the significant financial challenges faced by UK universities due to the under-funding of home undergraduate teaching and research; significantly rising costs as a result of inflation; an increasingly challenging market for international student recruitment, made significantly work by policy decisions, and other interventions, by the UK government. The Vice-Chancellor noted that the University was taking a range of actions to address the impact of these challenges on York, doing so in ways that would meet the critical priority of protecting the University's capacity, to allow it to meet its purpose and continue to deliver high quality education, research and societal capacity for the public good.
2. The Vice-Chancellor also **noted** the continuing Israel/Gaza conflict, and its ongoing impact on members of the University. He stressed the commitment to supporting the University community in this respect, based on three key principles: supporting those directly affected by the conflict; reiterating the University's intolerance of any form of prejudice or harassment; and maintaining its commitment to freedom of speech, to support discussion of challenging issues in good faith and on the basis of mutual respect.

Student Expert Panel

3. Senate **received** a presentation from three members of the Student Expert Panel, setting out the Panel's activities over the last year and its current and future priorities. Key activities and achievements included: active participation in the Inclusive Impact Awards as members of the judging panel; work to support the delivery and evaluation of the Access and Participation Plan; and participation in a range of other institutional projects (e.g. VLE Transformation Project; Liberal Art degree; Assessment and Feedback Project; the creation of a single students' union). Future priorities would include participating in the creation of the University's new Access and Participation Plan; a Belonging Working Group; and a Middle Ground event in March 2024 on gender.
4. Senate welcomed the report. It **noted** the way in which the work of the Panel complemented that of the students' unions in order to strengthen the student voice at the University, and in particular the identification by the Middle Ground event held in 2023 on the international student experience of the multiple and varied benefits that international students brought to the University community and the educational experience.

Responding to the Ongoing Israel/Gaza Situation

5. The Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Health and PVC Enterprise, Partnerships and Engagement updated Senate on the steps taken since its last meeting to support the University community on this issue. These had included bringing to the fore University expertise on issues relating to the conflict; to protect and support freedom of speech and academic freedom within the law, within an ethos of mutual respect; and to develop safe spaces for staff and students to discuss the conflict. Senate **noted** the sensitivity and thoughtfulness with which this was being approached, and identified a small number of suggestions for additional actions to further support this.

The Sparks Programme - yorvoice

6. Senate **received** a presentation on yorvoice, which had been the successful Sparks proposal from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, **noting** the extensive partnership working already taking place and the opportunities to build on and enhance this.

Response to the Review of the York Graduate Research School

7. Senate **received** a Response to this Review, which had been approved by UEB. This would put in place a revised structure that would support the next stage of YGRS's development by better aligning it with faculties while retaining the capacity for central co-ordination and sector-leading innovation, and also allow greater consistency of policy and practice. Senate **noted** the continuing importance of the student voice in this new structure, and the potential for this to be enhanced, along with the aim of better facilitating inter- and multi-disciplinary research degree provision.

Knowledge Exchange Framework - Outcome and Reflections

8. A report on the outcome of the latest KEF was **considered**, noting the University's good performance in the last KEF and the action being taken to enhance the collection and use of data to support the University's submission to the next KEF exercise. The link between KEF and the allocation of HEIF income was **noted**, as was the high likelihood that the link between performance in KEF and the level of HEIF monies to universities would be significantly strengthened.

Department of Architecture and Built Environment

9. Senate **received** a report on progress in establishing the new Department, **noting** the significant progress that was being made; that the project was on schedule; and the value in establishing the Department on the basis of the clear underpinning vision of responsible design for the public good. The effective partnership working with other academic departments, and with and across relevant professional services, was also **noted**.

Review of Academic Promotion Criteria, Policy and Process

10. Senate **approved** the final recommendations of the Working Group on Academic Promotion Criteria, Policy and Process, **noting** that significant consultation had fed into and influenced these final proposals. Senate also **noted** that the revised criteria, policy and process were a significant improvement on the current arrangements; that the establishment of departmental promotions groups built on existing examples of effective practice and would provide additional routes for support for promotion applicants; and that there would be extensive communication of the revised arrangements, and ongoing monitoring of their effectiveness.

Annual Report of Academic Ethics and Compliance Committee

11. Senate **considered** the annual report of AECC, covering the academic year 2022-23. It **noted** the Committee's combination of oversight of ethics and compliance processes operating through Local Research Ethics Committees (LRECs), with its consideration of wider issues of principle (e.g. use of student data in research; Patient and Public Involvement) and promoting the sharing of experience and practice between LRECs.

Sub-committee Minutes, Summaries and Other Reports

12. Senate **noted** reports from the following sub-committee meetings: University Teaching Committee (9 Nov. and 7 Dec. 2023); Student Life Committee (2 Nov. 2023); University Research Committee (23 Nov. 2023); Partnership, Enterprise and Engagement Committee (6 Nov. 2023); International Committee (5 Oct. 2023 and 17 Jan. 2024); and HYMS Joint Senate (8 Nov. 2023).