

University of York

Senate

Executive summary of the meeting held 15 Oct. 2024

Vice-Chancellor and President's report

1. Senate **considered** an overview report from the Vice-Chancellor. This updated Senate on the current national policy context for UK higher education, noting that while the recent general election had led to a significant change in government tone towards higher education as yet there had been no substantive policy changes. The new government had acknowledged the financial challenges faced by the higher education sector, but no steps had been taken to address these challenges. While there had been reports that the government was considering enhancing maintenance support for students, and potentially linking home undergraduate fees to inflation in the future, this remained speculation. Additionally, a number of potential budget measures had been reported that if taken forward would worsen the financial position of universities.

Financial Update

2. [Material redacted]

Changing the Work

3. The PVC Teaching, Learning and Students/Interim Chief Academic Services Officer, PVC Research and Chief Financial and Operating Officer **reported** on progress with the Changing the Work programme. Significant progress had been made in a number of areas, and effective operation of key services was being maintained in the context of the reduction in staffing levels resulting from voluntary severance. They also highlighted the range of ongoing work underway to continue to deliver the key aims of the Changing the Work Programme.
4. Senate **noted** the progress that had been made, and the need for the Changing the Work programme to achieve its aims while also ensuring that the key purpose of affected activities was sustained, e.g. achieving efficiencies in assessment while also making it more effective and inclusive; making best use of available teaching space in order to deliver teaching more efficiently; ensuring changes to research ethics committees did not lead to unforeseen consequences. Senate also **noted** the importance of ensuring that effective training and support was put in place for members of professional services moved into new roles and/or teams; and of establishing measures to judge effectiveness of the actions taken to reduce the volume of work.

Draft Global Plan

5. Senate **considered** the draft University Global Plan, and **noted** its alignment with the University's institutional values and priorities and the identification of six pillars and four cross-cutting themes in order to integrate the University's capabilities and expertise in order to deliver on those priorities. Senate also **noted** the intention that the plan would facilitate and support initiatives from institutional, faculty and departmental levels in pursuit of the objectives set out in the Plan.
6. To support delivery of the Global Plan, Senate **agreed** to disestablish the current University Internationalisation Committee and establish a Global Strategy Committee. The Global Strategy Committee would be a sub-committee of Senate, but would also report to University Executive Board (UEB) on issues relating to UEB's remit.

National Student Survey

7. Senate **considered** a report on the outcomes of NSS 2024, and the next steps being taken in response to these results. It **noted** that while the University's absolute scores had increased compared to 2023, its position relative to other universities had deteriorated so that there was an urgent need to take action to address the issues being highlighted by the University's students through NSS. A two-stage Recovery Plan had been developed and was currently being rolled out, with an initial focus on actions intended to address key issues prior to the launch of NSS 2025.

Graduate Outcomes Survey

8. Senate **considered** a report on the most recent Graduate Outcomes Survey, relating to the destinations of the 2021-22 graduating cohort 15 months after they had completed their programmes. Senate **noted** that this was a strong set of results, so that the University was now ranked 24th nationally for Graduate Prospects in the *Times Good University Guide, 2025* - its highest ranking since the Graduate Outcomes Survey had replaced the previous Destination of Leavers from Higher Education Survey.

Assurance Report on Alignment to Office for Students B Conditions - Taught Programmes

9. Senate **considered** an annual assurance report setting out how the University met the academic quality and standards Conditions of Registration set by the Office for Students. Based on the range of quantitative and qualitative evidence presented, Senate **noted** that the report demonstrated, and provided assurance, that these conditions had been met.

Proposed Changes to the University's Regulation 12: Intellectual Property

10. Senate **endorsed** proposed changes to Regulation 7, proposed to take account of a recent government report on university spinout companies and to make the regulation more effective in supporting the development and bringing to market of intellectual property.

Sub-committee Minutes, Summaries and Other Reports

11. Senate **noted** reports from the following sub-committee meetings: University Teaching Committee (4 July 2024); and HYMS Joint Senate (26 June 2024).

University of York

Senate

Executive summary of the meeting held 28 Jan. 2025

Vice-Chancellor and President's report

1. Senate **considered** an overview report from the Vice-Chancellor, including significant achievements by members of the University and alumni since Senate's last meeting.
2. The report also updated Senate on the continuing financial challenges faced by UK higher education, exacerbated by a significant decline in the international student recruitment market for 2025-26 entry; and confirmation from government that the sector should not expect significant increases in public funding, and would need to achieve savings through operational efficiencies and increased collaboration. Senate **noted** that action was currently being taken to maximise income from existing activities and that work was underway to develop additional new income streams, but that it would also be necessary to achieve further cost savings and that this was being taken forward through the current planning and budgeting round.

Research Support

3. Senate **considered** a presentation from the PVC Research, Associate Deans Research and Director of RIKE on the work that was underway to maintain and build on the University's recent strong upward trajectory in research performance. This would be taken forward building on existing areas of strength within the University and its faculties, seeking to achieve greater clarity in articulating these areas of strength in ways that resonated with key stakeholders including funders. To support this work, research support structures and activities were being revised to help put research on a sustainable growth path, providing greater clarity for departments about the support available to them and greater consistency across the University in this support.

Changing Models of Scholarly Journal Publishing

4. Senate **considered** a paper from the Director of Library, Archive and Learning Services on recent and ongoing developments in this area, and particularly how to move towards more equitable and sustainable approaches in scholarly publishing as articulated in the statement on this subject from the N8 (of which the University is a member). Senate **noted** the support for such a move, while noting that it raised important issues relating to external issues (e.g. REF strategy; the approaches of research funders) as well as key aspects of internal academic culture. Senate also **noted** the issues raised by members of the University regarding some of the consequences of decisions taken in 2024 to achieve Library savings as part of the University's work to reduce its other operating costs; and that a process had been put in place for such issues to be brought forward and considered.

Knowledge Exchange Framework Results

5. Senate **considered** a report on the outcome of the recent KEF. It **noted** the results, but that these had limited usefulness in considering the University's performance in the areas KEF covered. Consequently that the University focused its attention on more detailed analysis of its performance in these areas in relation to its own strategic objectives and targets, and a range of actions were already underway to improve performance in this context.

Annual Statement on Research Integrity

6. Senate **considered** the Annual Statement, prepared in accordance with the requirements of the UUK *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*. Senate concluded that this demonstrated that the

University's approach in this area was operating effectively and **agreed** to recommend the statement to Council.

7. Council is asked to approve the Annual Statement on Research Integrity (attached as Annex 1).

Annual Report from Academic Ethics and Compliance Committee

8. Senate **considered** and **approved** the annual report from AECC, covering 2023-24.

Review of Academic Promotions Criteria

9. Senate **considered** proposed new criteria for promotion to Bands 2 and 3 of the professorial scale, developed as Phase 2 of the review of academic promotions criteria and building on the principles and approach of Phase 1 of that work. Senate **approved** the proposals.

Request to Approve Semester Dates to 2032-33

10. Senate **approved** in principle proposed semester dates to 2032-33 following the same structure as for the academic year as was currently in place, subject to confirmation by circulation that the Equality Impact Assessment remained current and valid; and authorising final approval to take place by Chair's Action if Senate was content that this was the case.

Sub-committee Minutes, Summaries and Other Reports

11. Senate **noted** reports from the following sub-committee meetings:

- a. University Teaching Committee, 26 Sept. and 7 Nov. 2024.
- b. University Research Committee, 26 Sept. and 21 Nov. 2024.
- c. University Partnerships, Enterprise and Engagement Committee, 6 Dec. 2024.
- d. Student Life Committee, 31 Oct. 2024.
- e. HYMS Joint Senate Committee, 6 Nov. 2024.

University of York

Senate

Executive summary of the meeting held 29 Apr. 2025

Vice-Chancellor and President's report

1. Senate **considered** an overview report from the Vice-Chancellor, including significant achievements by members of the University and alumni since Senate's last meeting.
2. Senate **noted** the recent Supreme Court ruling on the Equality Act 2010, and the recent OfS judgment against the University of Sussex that touched on some of the same issues; that the University had established a task and finish group to consider the implications of these developments for the University; and recognising the concerns of members of the University (including those expressed at Senate) on the potential implications of the Supreme Court ruling, opportunities would be provided to allow such views to inform the work of the Task and Finish Group.
3. The report also updated Senate on the financial challenges that were facing all UK universities; and the University's continuing work to address the impact of these on York, including the significant progress already made towards achieving the identified cost savings for 2025-26 and the launch the previous day of targeted voluntary schemes for academic departments and professional services. The report also referred to the University's work to diversify and increase its income, and the Chair **reported** to Senate on the development of a significant such initiative for a new overseas campus developed by the University with a partner organisation; and that this development had reached the point where a public announcement of the project and intentions was likely in the coming days. Senate **noted** and welcomed that unlike many such initiatives being announced by other UK universities, this new campus would be research-led and intensive as well as providing an opportunity to expand access to the University's education provision.

Student Expert Panel

4. Senate **considered** a presentation from the Student Expert Panel's (SEP) representative to Senate on SEP's work over the last year, and its current priorities and activities. Senate **noted** the work of SEP, including in collaboration with the University of York Students' Union, to support partnership working between students and the University; that in support of this SEP worked across the University with a wide range of departments, professional services and projects; significant activities over the last year included SEP's contributions to the University's Access and Participation Plan, and the development of the Unheard Words Immersive Storytelling App; SEP's activity to present its work at workshops and conferences, including hosting representatives from the Leiden-Delft-Erasmus universities to explore first-generation student experience and EDI; and that a central future focus of the SEP would be to support the implementation of the new Access and Participation Plan.

Boards of Studies

5. Senate **considered** a report from the Task and Finish Group considering the proposed replacement of Boards of Studies with one Departmental Education Committee (DEC) per department. It **noted** the work to date of the Group, including the feedback from across the University about the operation of Boards of Studies, and looking at practice at other universities; the Group's recognition of the importance of taking account of differing structures and practices between departments in areas related to the work of Boards of Studies; and that the Group had therefore drawn up terms of reference and membership for DECs, and was recommending a pilot where volunteer departments would operate a DEC model in 2025-26 with this experience being evaluated during the academic year and a further report (taking account of the pilot and its evaluation) brought back to Senate with proposals for 2026-27 onwards.

6. Senate **approved** the proposed pilot of DEC's in 2025-26 on the basis set out by the Group, with an evaluation of the pilot to be undertaken and proposals for 2026-27 taking account of this evaluation to be submitted to Senate during 2025-26.

Special Cases and Complaints Annual Report

7. Senate **considered** the Annual Report on Special Cases and Complaints, and **noted**: the significant progress made in reducing the backlog of academic appeals over the last year (down from 459 to 130) as a result of process improvements and the appointment additional fixed-term staff posts; there had been reductions in appeals between 2022-23 and 2023-24, with the majority of appeals relating to students failing their programme; there had also been a reduction over the same period in student complaints, though within the relatively low number of complaints there had been an increase in more complex complaints relating to student disability; and the plans to undertake a more comprehensive analysis of appeals and complaints data in future years as part of a wider piece of work looking at the use data relating to learning and teaching.
8. Additionally, Senate **approved** the proposal to submit separate reports on appeals and complaints in future years, supported by the development in the analysis of data referred to in the report.

Sub-committee Minutes, Summaries and Other Reports

9. Senate **noted** reports from the following sub-committee meetings:
 - a. University Teaching Committee, 16 Jan. and 23 Feb. 2025, including the change of name to University Education Committee with effect from 2025-26.
 - b. University Research Committee, 21 Jan. and 12 Mar. 2025.
 - c. Student Life Committee, 6 Feb. 2025.
 - d. HYMS Joint Senate Committee, 23 Jan. 2025.

University of York

Senate

Executive summary of the meeting held 8 July 2025

Vice-Chancellor and President's report

1. Senate **considered** an overview report from the Vice-Chancellor, and **noted** the University's success in the most recent round of European Research Council funding awards; and the anticipated award by the Greek government in the near future of university status to City College, which would open up additional areas for collaboration and development
2. The Vice-Chancellor also updated Senate that although the recent Spending Review and Industrial Strategy announcements by the government created important opportunities for universities, overall the external environment for universities remained very challenging due to the negative financial impact of a succession of government decisions and the current lack of a clear overarching government strategy for higher education (which suggested that the sector was not viewed by the government as a priority). The University's current cost saving measures had been developed in response to these and other challenges. The University was now very close to meeting the target savings for the current round, which it hoped to do through voluntary means although there remained the possibility of a small number of redundancies.
3. Senate **noted** the concern identified by some members about implications for students of the recently announced decision to close the Centre for Lifelong Learning, in response to which it was **reported** that a range of steps were being put in place to allow these students to complete their studies. A question was also raised about the University's involvement as a partner in a bid for an AI Growth Zone, as another partner in this bid was Drax. Concern was expressed given environmental impact of Drax's activities and some of the steps it had taken in response to protests about its activities; and in response it was **noted** that the University's role in this partnership would relate to research and innovation, and that the issues identified by Senate would be kept under review and consideration by University Research Committee should the bid progress.

University of York Mumbai

4. Senate **considered** papers on the development of this initiative, and University of York Mumbai's Academic Mission, along with a presentation by Professor Atul Khosla (representing the University's partners in this development). Senate **noted**: the significant opportunity presented by this development, including to raise the University's profile in India in a way that was likely to support efforts to reverse recent declines in the recruitment of students from India to study at the York campus; the University's responsibilities in this partnership (including ensuring that Office for Students (OfS) requirements were met), and the provisions that were being made to allow and ensure that these responsibilities were met and which would be set out in the contract for the joint venture that would be established for the University of York Mumbai; and that University of York Mumbai would both deliver education and undertake research, making it distinctive compared to campuses in India currently being established by other UK universities.

Quality Framework for University of York Collaborative Provision Educational Partnerships

5. Senate **considered** a proposed Framework that would govern all such partnership activity, and **noted**: the proposed Framework built on existing University approaches to assuring academic quality and standards, while also drawing on practice at comparator universities and ensuring that the regulatory requirements of OfS would be met; if the Framework was approved a detailed Quality Manual would be developed, to ensure effective implementation of the Framework; and that by putting in place the proposed framework the University would be able to assure consistency across

multiple partnerships, as it sought to increase its partnership provision. Senate **approved** the Framework.

Financial Sustainable Strategy

6. Senate **considered** the paper. The Chair **reported** that this paper set out the approach the University intended to take to ensure institutional sustainability in response to the external challenges outlined in his earlier report, drawing on perspectives and inputs from across the University. Senate **agreed** that to support this, its next meeting should be extended so that following a shorter formal meeting a workshop-style informal session considering the issues set out in the paper could be held.

Research Excellence Framework

7. Senate **considered** a report on recent and forthcoming developments in relation to the next REF (due in 2029). Senate **noted** the work that was being, and would be, taken forward to prepare for REF2029; the significant change since the last REF to decouple staff and outputs, the implications of which would need to be carefully considered; the University's overall strategic aim for REF2029 to maximise its grade point average; and the importance of ensuring that sufficient and appropriate resource was in place, at the right organisational levels, to support REF preparations.

Personal Relationships Policy

8. Senate **considered** a proposed revised Personal Relationships Policy, prohibiting (with clearly defined exceptions) intimate personal relationships between students and staff where a member of staff has or is likely to have direct academic or professional responsibilities for the student; and requirements for staff-staff relationships where there is a potential conflict of interest or abuse of power. The revised policy would address the requirements of the new OfS condition of registration on harassment and sexual misconduct, and the requirements of the 2024 Worker Protection Act. Senate **agreed** to approve the revised Personal Relationships Policy.

Proposed Revisions to the Code of Practice on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Speech

9. Senate **noted** the work to address the academic freedom, freedom of speech and governance issues arising from the OfS judgment against the University of Sussex, and the recent OfS Regulatory Advice on academic freedom and freedom of speech; the constructive and useful listening exercise that had recently concluded to hear views from across the University on the implications of the Supreme Court judgment on aspects of the 2010 Equality Act; and that work was continuing to consider and take forward those implications. Senate **agreed** to recommend to Constitutions and Nominations Committee and Council approval of the revisions to the Code of Practice.

Planning Committee

10. Senate **agreed** to approve the abolition of Planning Committee as a joint committee of Senate and UEB, noting that its responsibilities were now being carried out in other ways.

Sub-committee Minutes, Summaries and Other Reports

11. Senate **noted** reports from the following sub-committee meetings:
 - a. University Teaching Committee, 27 Mar., 15 May and June 2025.
 - b. University Research Committee, 30 Apr. and 18 June 2025.
 - c. Student Life Committee, 19 June 2025.
 - d. HYMS Joint Senate Committee, 1 May 2025.
12. Senate approved revisions to Regulations 2, 5, 6 and 7; the abolition of Regulation 1; and the creation of the new award title Master of Public Policy.