



# THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## **Senatus Academicus**

### **Special Meeting**

Wednesday 26 March 2025, 11am-12pm

Reid Concert Hall, Reid School of Music, Central Area / Microsoft Teams

Voting will be undertaken using Wooclap.

### **AGENDA**

- 1 Convener's Welcome**
- 2 Academic impacts of the University's financial resilience strategy** **S 24/25 4A**  
  
To discuss the paper and the motions proposed.
- 3 Portfolio Review and Diversity of Educational Provision** **S 24/25 4B**  
  
To discuss the paper and the motions proposed.
- 4 Date of next meeting: 20 May 2025**

**Senate****26 March 2025****Academic impacts of the University's financial resilience strategy****Description of Paper**

This paper articulates concerns about the scale, timeline, nature and communication of the University's current and proposed financial resilience strategy. The key aims of the actions requested are:

- to enable proper academic scrutiny of the impacts of proposed measures;
- to enable Senate to fulfil its statutory duty to be "*responsible for the overall planning, co-ordination, development and supervision of the academic work*" of the University;
- to prevent unnecessary harm to the University's academic mission, including research, teaching and student experience;
- to protect the University's academic reputation and capacity for future income generation via research and teaching;
- to address and seek to strengthen the University academic community's confidence in the Executive.

**Action requested/recommendation*****A. Senate is asked to approve the following as statements of Senate's collective view:***

A.1 Measures currently being taken, and proposed, to implement rapid, large-scale cuts to the University's expenditure are harmfully impacting research, teaching and the student experience, as well as staff morale and wellbeing. There is a significant risk that these measures will further harm research, teaching and the student experience in years to come. In addition, these measures risk damaging the University's future potential for income generation, including via student recruitment, staff capacity for research income generation and innovation, and external partnerships.

A.2 Plans for change which impact the delivery of the University's core academic mission of teaching and research should include meaningful consultation with academic and professional services staff and should include scrutiny and approval by Senate.

A.3 The Executive should make significant and rapid improvements to its approach to communication, consultation and engagement regarding the University's financial situation to limit further harm to internal morale and external reputation (see appendix C under 'Communication').

A.4 As a matter of urgency, the Executive should provide to all staff a clear demonstration that savings of the scale and pace indicated (£140 million over 18 months) are indeed the best way to ensure the University's financial resilience whilst also preserving its academic mission, or reconsider this scale and pace.

***B. Senate is asked to approve the following statement to be communicated to the University Court:***

B.1 Senate considers the scale and timetable of the Executive's currently proposed changes to be incompatible with maintaining the University's academic mission, reputation and the quality of education it provides.

B.2 Senate requests Court to require that the Executive provides a clear and credible account of how and why the University reached the point where large-scale, urgent and damaging cuts were unexpectedly announced, following large commitments to estates, facilities, and staff payroll expenditure that were premised on the University's sound financial position.

B.3 Senate requests Court to require the Executive to present a thorough analysis of the costs and benefits of its current and proposed actions, including course and programme closures, cuts to operating budgets where these impact student experience and staff capacity to undertake research and teaching, and potential staff redundancies.

B.4 Senate requests Court to require the Executive to develop a plan that will enable proper academic scrutiny, via Senate, College and School bodies, of any changes which are necessary to secure budget sustainability.

***C. Senate is further asked to approve the following statement to be communicated to the University Court:***

C.1 That Senate will hold a vote at its meeting in May to evaluate the confidence of the University academic community, as represented by Senate, in the Executive's leadership, and that providing the analyses in points B.2-B.4 above is likely to be necessary to secure this confidence.

**Background and Context**

1) On 25<sup>th</sup> February the Principal announced planned cuts of £140 million over the next 18 months.

2) A voluntary severance scheme was run and has closed. A significant gap is predicted between the savings attributable to this scheme and the planned cuts.

3) The plan is for the remainder of cuts to be met through a range of measures, including programme and course closures; cuts to operational expenditure on items including equipment, catering, field trips, visiting speakers and seminars; centralisation of professional services staff and staffing cuts including non-renewal of those on temporary contracts, cuts to guaranteed hours and other insecure contracts, and potential redundancies. Cuts to hourly paid staff have already been announced locally in parts of the university, and fixed-term contracts not renewed.

4) There is widespread disquiet at the timetable and severity of these cuts among the University staff and student community, as well as scepticism of their financial necessity. With the already announced cuts to hourly paid contracts, some areas are looking at increased and unworkable workloads for the staff remaining, which will damage the student experience and threaten staff health and wellbeing.

5) The Executive has, until very recently, recommended large commitments of funds to Court. See for example discussion of pay regrading in minutes of Court meeting 04/12/23 ('Recognising the budgetary impact of the proposals, the Senior Leadership Team reaffirmed their collective commitment to plan and deliver performance against Budgets'), and discussion of the University's proposed expenditure on Estates, including the purchase of new buildings, in minutes of Court meeting of 17/06/24 ('it was observed that the requests for approval of significant capital funding in these proposals ostensibly contrasted with the agreement elsewhere in the agenda that budgetary prudence was essential at this stage. It was noted that funds were available for all of the immediate proposed expenditure and that opportunity costs and future prioritisation were therefore the key considerations.')

6) Representing the wider University community, 92 members of Senate wrote an open letter to Court on 6<sup>th</sup> March, expressing their concerns and calling on Court to request (a) a more thorough analysis of the impacts, including academic and reputational risks, of proposed actions, and (b) a revised programme from the University Executive to address any necessary budgetary efficiencies over a longer timetable consistent with Court and Senate scrutiny, in order to avoid some of the harms associated with current proposals.

7) Over 950 members of the wider University community have since supported the letter, many of them leaving comments expressing particular concerns and noting negative impacts already arising from the programme of cuts.

8) In the External Review of the People and Money project, strategic lessons were identified for future large change projects in the university including:

- the need to develop and embed "a fit-for-purpose and consistent change management approach";
- the need to address the "lack of trust between many staff across Colleges, Schools and Departments and senior University management which has been exacerbated by People and Money"; and
- the need to "address the culture and requirements of the whole University" when leading changes, to "demonstrate the case for change for new ways of working (the 'why')" and to "deliver the change management required through engagement, communications and training."

These lessons have not been in evidence with the proposed changes.

## **Discussion**

Senate has a statutory role to be "responsible for the overall planning, co-ordination, development and supervision of the academic work" of the University, to "superintend teaching" at the University and to "promote research."

**The timescale currently proposed for budgetary savings would, if followed, preclude meaningful scrutiny of the academic and strategic implications of the changes being made, and hence would make it impossible for Senate to fulfil this duty.**

In relation to our statutory duty, it is important to note that, while we as Senate have a direct responsibility to scrutinise institutional-level changes affecting the University's academic mission, we also need to be satisfied that there is proper opportunity for academic scrutiny of proposed changes at the right levels within the University. Thus the concern about the current plan relates not only to the lack of Senate-level scrutiny but also to the lack of opportunity for academic staff in Schools, Colleges and other relevant units to engage

critically and constructively with proposals that directly affect, and pose significant risks to, our core mission.

**Going forward, plans for change should include meaningful consultation with academic and professional services staff, with the potential to change course as a result of consultation and with a closed loop of engagement that establishes confidence in decisions.**

It is clear from responses to the Senate open letter (see appendix C) that the Executive's approach to communication around the University's financial situation has caused significant and avoidable harm. For example, there are concerns about: the representation of professional services staff and their work; the very significant negative reputational effects of the communications; and the impact on staff of the student-facing emails. This relates to Senate's core responsibility as impacts on student recruitment, on student perceptions of the University, and on staff morale across the institution, are also impacts on the University's academic mission.

**Going forward the Executive should make significant and rapid improvements in the approach to communication, consultation and engagement around the University's financial situation (see appendix C under 'Communication').**

The lack of confidence in the Executive reflected in responses to the Senate open letter is often linked to questions about how we got here, why current challenges were not predicted and planned for, and why we are suddenly in 'crisis mode', when the underlying financial considerations listed in the Executive's communications are of long standing. A compounding factor in distrust is widespread awareness that recent major change processes with staff (notably People & Money) have been extremely costly, in terms of direct financial losses and lost staff time and have put the University in a less strong financial position than it would otherwise be.

**As a matter of urgency, the Executive should provide a clear and convincing demonstration to all staff that savings of the scale indicated (£140 million over the next 18 months) are indeed the best way to ensure the University's financial resilience whilst also preserving its academic mission, or reconsider this scale and pace.**

## **Resource Implications**

The paper calls for an approach to management of human and financial resources that ensures sustainability by avoiding short-term, underinformed and irreversible high-risk changes.

## **Risk Management**

This paper calls for an approach to management of human and financial resources that is consultative, clearly evidenced, and timed to as to avoid the risk of harms detailed above.

## **Responding to the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development Goals**

Proper scrutiny of proposals should include consideration of their implications for the University's response to the climate emergency and sustainable development goals.

## **Equality and Diversity**

Proper scrutiny of proposals should include full consideration of the equalities implications of financial and structural change. This would include equalities impact assessments regarding cuts to hourly and fixed-term contracts (on which women and BAME staff are overrepresented), and regarding the increased workload for remaining staff after these and potential further cuts and restructurings.

## **Communication, implementation and evaluation of any action agreed**

The *expressed view of Senate* if agreed will be publicised with the Senate minutes.

The Executive may wish to consider whether more rapid communication of the expressed view of Senate to the wider University community, e.g., through an all-staff e-mail, may begin to address concerns outlined above about the Executive's approach to communication around the University's financial situation,

Formal *communication to Court* may be agreed.

Insofar as the communication to Court asks for action by the Executive, this action would be reflected in communications from the Executive to the University staff body, and in the planning of Senate business to ensure that Senate can fulfil its statutory role.

## **Consultation**

The paper is based on (a) wide consultation among elected members of Senate (b) information provided by respondents to the invitation to co-sign the elected members' open letter (see appendix C).

## **Authors**

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Tamara Trodd (CAHSS)

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**Seconder:** Rachel Muers

## **APPENDICES**

- A. **Open letter to Court from 92 elected members of Senate**
- B. **List of co-signatories to open letter as of 18<sup>th</sup> March 2025**
- C. **Summary of comments provided by co-signatories to open letter as of 18<sup>th</sup> March 2025**

## Appendix A - Open Letter from Elected Members of Senate

### Risks to academic mission, sustainability and international reputation from the current approach to University finances

6 March 2025

Dear members of the University of Edinburgh Court,

We write as members of the University's Academic Senate to raise concerns about the current handling of the University's financial situation. We believe that the scale and timetable of proposed cuts will cause significant **damage to student experience and opportunities**, will **damage the university's international reputation and academic mission**, and will further **damage staff morale and capacity**. Some of these consequences can already be seen as communications about the situation reach the media, our colleagues and our students.

Critically, we are worried that the reputational and operational damage to the university will **exacerbate risks to income**, particularly in terms of **student recruitment and capacity for external funding and partnerships**. The proposed drastic reductions in spending, on a timescale that does not allow for proper planning and scrutiny, are likely to have long-term negative consequences.

We recognise that the current context poses major challenges for the University and sector, and are keen to support work to ensure our sustainability. We are deeply concerned that **the present approach will do more harm than good** to our students, to our colleagues, and to the University's mission. We take seriously Senate's role as representatives of the University's academic community to contribute constructively to responsible strategic change, as we have done previously in highlighting the academic impact of systems such as People and Money. Taking on board the lessons from external reviews of our governance and change management, we urge a more measured, longer-term approach that allows for proper scrutiny by Senate and other competent bodies of the academic impacts, strategic coherence, and long-term sustainability of the University's financial and structural plans.

We ask Court to:

- ask the Executive for a revised approach and timeline that allows for risk mitigation through proper consideration of impacts on student experience, external reputation, staff capacity, and the academic mission;

## OPEN LETTER FROM MEMBERS OF SENATE TO THE UNIVERSITY COURT

- expect that all proposed strategically significant actions be supported by an analysis of impacts, including academic and reputational risks, for scrutiny by Senate and Court.

Respectfully submitted,

Peter Adkins (LLC)	Jim Kaufman (CSE/SBS)
Andrew Alexander (SoC, CSE)	Meryl Kenny (SPS)
Marialuisa Aliotta (SoPA)	George Kinnear (SoM, CSE)
Niall Anderson (CMVM)	Dave Laurenson (SoE, CSE)
Amir Anwar (SPS)	Andy Law (CMVM)
Kate Ash-Irisarri (LLC)	Tom Leinster (SoM, CSE)
Kasia Banas (CMVM)	Paul Le Tissier (CMVM)
Michael Barany (SPS)	Sophia Lycouris (ECA, CAHSS)
Matt Bell (SBS, CSE)	Cait MacPhee (SoPA, CSE)
Julian Bradfield (Informatics)	John Menzies (CMVM)
Barry Bradford (CMVM)	Tijana Mitić (CMVM)
Aidan Brown (SoPA, CSE)	Steven Morley (CMVM)
Celine Caquineau (CMVM)	Ben Morse (SoG, CSE)
Tony Carbery (SoM, CSE)	Rachel Muers (Divinity)
Sam Coombes (LLC)	Rupert Nash (EPCC)
Martin Corley (PPLS)	Pau Navarro (CMVM)
Jean-Christophe Denis (SoPA)	Steven O'Hagan (SoM, CSE)
Neil Chue Hong (EPCC, CSE)	Richard Oosterhoff (HCA)
Charlotte Desvages (SoM, CSE)	Diana Paton (HCA)
Alex Doumas (PPLS)	Josephine Pemberton (SBS/CSE)
Kirsty Day (HCA)	Nick Polydorides (SoE)
Kate Davison (HCA)	Paul du Plessis (Law)
Luigi Del Debbio (SOPA)	Jon Pridham (Maths)
Chris Dent (SoM)	Colin Pulham (SoC, CSE)
Sameer Dhumale (CMVM)	David Quinn (SoM, CSE)
Kevin Donovan (SPS)	Ricardo Ribeiro Ferreira (SPS)
Julia Dorin (CMVM)	Ken Rice (SoPA)
Claire Duncanson (SPS)	Carin Runciman (SPS)
Agata Dunsmore (CMVM)	Enrique Sanchez Molano (CMVM)
Murray Earle (Law)	Giulio Santori (SoE)
Susan Farrington (CMVM)	Eberhard Sauer (SHCA)
Valentina Ferlito (CMVM)	Pablo Schyfter (SPS)
Emily Ford-Halliday (ECA, CAHSS)	Stewart Smith (SoE, CSE)
Vashti Galpin (Informatics, CSE)	Antonella Sorace (PPLS)
Marc Geddes (SPS)	Perdita Stevens (Informatics, CSE)
Antonis Giannopoulos (SoE, CSE)	Gavin Sullivan (ELS)
Stuart Gilfillan (GeoSciences, CSE)	Tamara Trodd (ECA/CAHSS)
Laura Glendinning (CMVM)	Niki Vermeulen (SPS)
Ben Goddard (SoM, CSE)	Philip Wadler (Informatics)
Justin Goodrich (SBS)	Patrick Walsh (SBS, CSE)
Rachel Happer (HiSS)	Lena Wångren (LLC, COL, Geosciences)



OPEN LETTER FROM MEMBERS OF SENATE TO THE UNIVERSITY COURT

Jane Hislop (CMVM)  
David Ingram (SoE)  
Amanda Jarvis (SoC, CSE)  
Crispin Jordan (CMVM)  
Itamar Kastner (PPLS)

Mark R. J. Williams (SoPA)  
Iain A. Wright (SoC, CSE)  
Benjamin M. Wynne (SoPA, CSE)  
Ingrid Young (CMVM)

## Appendix B – Signatories as of 18 March

The undersigned do not have confidence in the announced approach from the University Executive to sustaining the university's financial and academic future. To the extent major changes to the university's strategy, organisation, or operation may be needed, they will only be successful if undertaken in a way that ensures confidence and buy-in from the university community. This can only be secured by a careful and rigorous approach based on a comprehensive understanding of the university's strengths, mission, operational needs, and financial circumstances, subject to thorough planning and risk management, and fully engaged with the whole of the community of scholars and professionals who make up the university.

*Signatories are members of the university community. Names have been checked against university logins and duplicates removed. The order of signatories has been randomised.*

1. Dr. Pontus Odmalm
2. Dr Catriona Murray (History of Art)
3. Rohanie Campbell-Thakoordin (School of Social and Political Sciences)
4. Prof Peter Ackema (PPLS)
5. Dr Emily Joan Ward (History, Classics and Archaeology)
6. Prof Philip Wadler (Informatics)
7. Anonymous (CAHSS)
8. Professor Konstantinos Zygalkis
9. Alejandro Escalante (SPS)
10. Sean McGeever (School of Physics and Astronomy)
11. Barbara Prezelj (ECA/ESALA)
12. Professor Elaine Kelly
13. Mark Galloway
14. Dr. Jamie Allinson (SPS)
15. Tina Lu
16. Andrew Lainson
17. Eszter Erdosi (History of Art, ECA)
18. Yang Yang (Edinburgh college of art)
19. Professor Timm Krüger
20. Keith Stenning, HS6 5AT
21. Dhanya Cheerambathur (School of Biological Sciences)
22. Dr Elliot J. Crowley (School of Engineering)
23. Dr Lucy Weir (History of Art)
24. Dr Paz Freile
25. Dr Andrew Hom (SPS)
26. Gemma Docherty (SRA)
27. Maria-Chiara Ferrari
28. Ailsa Vamplew (SRA)
29. Mr Terence Sloan (IfA, SoPA)
30. Liquan Chai
31. Gaia Duberti
32. Dr Elise Gallois (School of Geosciences)
33. Dr Nichola Dobson (ECA)
34. Dr. Hemangini Gupta (School of Social and Political Science)
35. Dr Ben Goddard (School of Mathematics)
36. Dr Alejandro De Coss Corzo (School of Geosciences)
37. Dr Bruce Worton (School of Mathematics)
38. Rona Lawson (LLC - Celtic and Scottish Studies)
39. Dr Josie Booth (MHSES)
40. Dr Jasmeen Kanwal (Edinburgh Futures Institute)
41. Consuelo Thiers
42. Prof Chia-Ling Yang (School of History of Art)
43. Nachi Valliappan (School of Informatics)
44. Ross Bond (Sociology)
45. Imogen Heard (School of Engineering)
46. Aerin Lai (School of Social and Political Science)
47. Karlo Basta
48. Jannath Fazli
49. Dr Rebecca Marsland
50. Alexander Quinlan (School of Social and Political Science)
51. Martin Disley
52. Prof. Alexis Grohmann, Spanish
53. Dr Olivia Coombes (School of Biological Sciences)
54. Chieko Watson
55. Mx. Aliya Okamoto Abdullaeva
56. Harriet Marchand
57. Dr Claudia Martin, School of Biological Sciences
58. Dr Steve Kirkwood (School of Social and Political Science)
59. Luís Soares
60. Prof Susan Rosser
61. Dr Alex Hall (School of Physics and Astronomy)
62. Dr. Emily Allaway (School of Informatics)
63. Dr Stefanos Papanicolopoulos (School of Engineering)
64. Professor Ian Main
65. Dr Mira Al Hussein (School of Literatures, Languages and Cultures)
66. Stephanie Robin (School of Informatics)
67. Dr Perna Vohra (School of Biological Sciences)
68. Dr Simon Martin (SBS)
69. Claire Jeffrey
70. Professor Marc Metzger
71. Professor Teuta Pilizota
72. Dr Charlotte Desvages (School of Mathematics)
73. Dr Lori Watson (LLC)
74. Dr David August (School of Chemistry)
75. Alice Turk
76. Student Siyu Lu (ECA design for change)
77. Dr Helen Eborall, Usher Institute
78. Heidi Hafner
79. Professor Charlotte Bosseaux (LLC)

80. Professor Annette Ferguson (SoPA)
81. Sanja Badanjak (Chancellor's Fellow in Global Challenges)
82. Chris Jowett, School of Mathematics
83. Anonymous (CSE)
84. Mr Eddie Dubourg
85. Crystal (Edinburgh College of Art)
86. Professor Darren Obbard (School of Biological Sciences)
87. Justin Elliott
88. Dr Frazer McGlinchey
89. Emile Chabal
90. Dr Rafael Almeida (Chancellor's Fellow, Centre for Discovery Brain Sciences)
91. Dr Gezim Krasniqi (SPS)
92. Victoria Farmer
93. Sesilia Niehaus
94. Dr Agata Rożek (School of Physics and Astronomy)
95. Dr Susan Johnston (School of Biological Sciences)
96. Dr Harshan Kumarasingham (School of Social and Political Science)
97. Robert Lynn
98. Prof Sharon Goldwater (Informatics)
99. Dr Ohad Kammar (School of Informatics)
100. Jamie McCubb
101. Ms Muireann Crowley (Moray House School of Education and Sport)
102. Lorraine Bruce (CMVM)
103. Ms Leigh Corstorphine (School of GeoSciences)
104. Professor Gabriele Hegerl FRS FRSE
105. Professor Sarah Childs
106. Anonymous (CAHSS)
107. Dr Debbie Roberts (Philosophy, PPLS)
108. Dr Sarah Parry (SPS)
109. Rachel Barlow, MA Politics Student
110. Dr Valentina Erastova
111. Mr Gregor McElvogue (School of Informatics)
112. Peisan E
113. Megan Warner
114. Bintang Dirya (School of Engineering)
115. Alison Waite (Centre for Open Learning)
116. Sabrina Carter
117. Marshall Dozier (Library & University Collections)
118. Dr Daniel Hammond (LLC)
119. Dr Simon Titmuss
120. Dr Guillermo Romero Moreno (School of Informatics)
121. Emily Stewart (School of Mathematics)
122. Dr Peadar Ó Muircheartaigh (LLC)
123. Ines Foidl (School of Physics and Astronomy)
124. Professor Gayle Davis (HCA)
125. Professor Andrew Dugmore (School of Geosciences)
126. Anonymous (ECA)
127. Carolyn Marino Carmichael (Study and Work Away Service)
128. Dr Kami Vaniea (School of Informatics)
129. Dr Paul Jackson (Informatics)
130. Mike Johnstone
131. Dr Carole Jones (LLC)
132. Eleanor Niven
133. Professor Thomas Ahnert (HCA)
134. Ms Maja Tym
135. Ann-Christin Zuntz (Soc Ant, SPS)
136. Petros Wallden (School of Informatics)
137. Jo Wolff
138. Professor Emma Davie
139. Professor Mitsuhiro Ota (School of Philosophy, Psychology and Language Sciences)
140. Professor Simon Mudd
141. Dr Fraser McMillan (School of Social and Political Science)
142. Malakai MacKenzie (School of Mathematics)
143. Professor Susan Sierra (School of Mathematics)
144. Paul Schuler (SPS)
145. Aidan Keane (School of GeoSciences)
146. Dr. Andrej Svetlosak
147. Dr. Mikhail Kuzovnikov (School of Physics and Astronomy)
148. Dr M Anusas
149. Dr Regina Hansda (School of Geosciences)
150. Ashley Smith (School of GeoSciences)
151. Dr. Kerstin Hasenpusch-Theil (BMS)
152. Vicky Swann (SHCA)
153. susan thomson MBA, MSCr
154. Professor Shaun Bevan (SPS)
155. Keith Brunton (SOPA)
156. Eleonora Ricci
157. Dr Hwa Kian Chai (School of Engineering)
158. Moritz Linkmann
159. Lioba Assaba Hirsch (SPS)
160. Steph Hay (Applications Directorate, Information Services)
161. Dr Lynda Clark (LLC)
162. Professor Mike Davies (School of Engineering)
163. Professor Caroline Kirk
164. Rachel Holliday
165. Siddharth N. (School of Informatics)
166. Vidushi Shukla (School of GeoSciences)
167. Louis Reynolds
168. Bailey Webb (School of Physics and Astronomy)
169. Dr Duncan Sneddon, Celtic and Scottish Studies
170. Clara O'Shea
171. Dr Paul Pieroni
172. Guy Rose
173. Sam Marks
174. Melissa Jarvis
175. Professor Adri Olde Daalhuis
176. Ms Margaret Stewart
177. Galuh Putra
178. Ralph Cook
179. Dr Kirsty Day (School of History, Classics & Archaeology)
180. AE O'Donnell, PhD candidate/Associate Tutor, Moray House
181. Laura Colucci-Gray (MHSES)
182. Dr Rosi Carr (HCA)
183. Anonymous (MVM)
184. Dr Elaine Newton-Bruzza
185. Craig Henderson, Business School IT
186. Christine Lennie (LLC)
187. Dr Daniel Kenealy (School of Social & Political Science)
188. Mr Wan Yeung (School of Engineering)
189. PhD Jeremy Pilia (School of Political and Social Sciences)
190. Jared Taylor
191. Franziska Meinck (School of Social and Political Science)
192. Dr Grégoire Clarté
193. Mr Nikolas Ringas
194. Theodora Lola-Luz
195. Miss Rhona Fraser (school of History, Classics and Archaeology)

196. Dr Elizabeth Bayne (School of Biological Sciences)
197. Frances Murphy
198. Graham Dutton (School of Informatics)
199. Han Li
200. Dr Carlo Bruno (SoPA)
201. Rory Young
202. Dr. Kora Klein
203. Miss Caroline Billard (IGC)
204. Emma Dorfman (Edinburgh College of Art)
205. Gesine Argent (LLC)
206. Joanna Richards
207. Mr Jiaxun Yang
208. Prof Sinead Collins
209. Dr Niamh Moore
210. Dr Katie Grant (School of Engineering)
211. Isaac Moloney (Undergraduate and ACE Catering Assistant)
212. Dr Elizabeth Kirkham (School of Health in Social Science)
213. Kristina Kim (SPS)
214. Dr Julie Gibbings
215. Dr. Emily Brownell
216. Dr Anna Lisa Varri (School of Physics and Astronomy and School of Mathematics)
217. Abhishek Bohare (SoPA, CSE)
218. Thomas Reynolds
219. Dr Kenneth Duncan (School of Physics and Astronomy)
220. Františka Vosátková
221. Professor Wendy Ugolini
222. Dr Louise Ker (Governance and Strategic Planning/Strategic Change)
223. Mr Benjamin Tunstead
224. Professor Lucy Grig, School of History, Classics and Archaeology
225. Sunny Sun (SPSS)
226. Dr Beatrice Alex (LLC)
227. Dr Simon Loynes (Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies)
228. Dr Emma Davidson
229. Callan Anderson
230. John Brown
231. Dr Sophia Woodman (School of Social and Political Science)
232. Dr Sharon Boyd (Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies)
233. Louis McHugh (Reid School of Music)
234. Professor Arjun Berera (Physics and Astronomy)
235. Marie Craigon
236. Professor Nick Colegrave (SBS)
237. Anna-Katerina Chabidis
238. Ileana L. Selejan (ECA)
239. Prof Craig Martin
240. Aiste Pagirenaite (SPS)
241. Jessica Turner (HCA)
242. Prof. Tudor Dimofte (School of Mathematics)
243. Zhang Xin (SSPS)
244. Ayshu Biju
245. Yuning Chen, Design Informatics
246. Dr Cetta Mainwaring
247. Katharina Grabowski
248. Reader Milena Hering
249. Chris Berry (PPLS)
250. Professor Carole Morrison
251. Anonymous (CAHSS)
252. Dr Giovanni Marmont
253. Esther Tyldesley (School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures)
254. Dr Alistair Isaac (PPLS)
255. Professor Andrew Patrizio (ECA)
256. David House (ECA)
257. Dr Calum Maciver
258. Catherine Kidner (SBS)
259. Jude Browning
260. Beth Xia
261. Dr Helen Alexander (School of Biological Sciences)
262. Laura Hyndman (School of Biological Sciences)
263. Dr Jesse Sigal (School of Informatics)
264. Dr Adam Budd (HCA)
265. Professor Nicholas Sheridan (School of Mathematics)
266. Peter Buckley (COL)
267. Dr Ana Miret Garcia (ECA)
268. Zoe Zhang
269. Dr. Leonardo Tolomeo (School of Mathematics)
270. Dr Kate Davison (School of History, Classics and Archaeology)
271. Jean-Benoît Falisse (SPS)
272. Dr Alexander Serb (school of engineering)
273. Susan Mitchell
274. Elin Crotty (Heritage Collections)
275. Professor Andrew J Newman
276. Dr Heather Pulliam
277. Dr Thomas McKenzie (Edinburgh College of Art)
278. Dr Hayley Bennett (ssps)
279. Zafar Ullah
280. Jennie Mothersdale
281. Mohan Sridharan (School of Informatics)
282. Dr Jay Wiggan (SPS)
283. Barbara Bianchi
284. Abigail William-Powlett
285. Riley Yuill (School of Mathematics)
286. Dr Frédéric Bosché (School of Engineering)
287. A J Clark
288. Carrie McNamee
289. Professor Magnus Course, Social Anthropology
290. Oisín Mac Aodha
291. Dr Brian McGrail (Centre for Open Learning)
292. Professor Daniel Friedrich (School of Engineering)
293. Dr Per Smiseth (School of Biological Sciences)
294. Dr Faith Dillon-Lee
295. Jill Douglas (SoM, CSE)
296. Lukas Lehner
297. Dr Kirsty Hughes
298. Martin Boddie (School of Chemistry)
299. Dr Daniel Fosas (SoE)
300. Professor Alan Gillis
301. Dr. Nisha Philip
302. Dr Cathy Benson
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929. Qianqian Niu (Edinburgh of Art)  
930. Nuria Lopez  
931. Dr Linda Fibiger (HCA)  
932. Nicola McCartney  
933. Sarah Stewart (School of Chemistry)  
934. Dr Andy Aydın-Aitchison (Law)  
935. Theodore Koterwas (Institute for Design Informatics)  
936. Crispin Jordan  
937. Amelia Harker (Centre of Open Learning)  
938. Lucy Steeds (ECA)  
939. Dr Gianluigi Rossi  
940. Gordon MacPherson  
941. Matt McNab  
942. Markella Moraitou  
943. Candice Qin (Edinburgh Collage of Art)  
944. Dr Francesca Iezzi  
945. Dr Javier Escudero Rodriguez (SoE, CSE)  
946. Aileen Jordan  
947. Declan Andrew  
948. Miriam Moreno Sánchez (School of Geosciences)  
949. Dr. Karen Gregory (School of Social and Political Science)  
950. Dr Andre Phillips (Biomedical Teaching Organisation)  
951. Joe Murphy (School of Social and Political Science)  
952. Professor Eric Laurier (School of GeoSciences)  
953. Dr Annika Bergman Rosamond (School of Social and Political Research)  
954. Dr Andrea Ford (Usher Institute)  
955. Alexandra Ba-Tin (School of Social and Political Sciences)  
956. Dr Patricia Castro Sanchez  
957. Dr Hope Doherty-Harrison (Leverhulme ECF in History of Art, April 2025-28)  
958. Prof Ben Rosamond (SPS)  
959. Professor Hugo Gorringe (School of Social and Political Sciences)  
960. Dr Nicholas Matheou (HCA)  
961. Morgan De la Cruz  
962. Dr Guy Puzey (LLC)

## What is the University community saying about the financial situation and how it is being handled?

11<sup>th</sup> March 2025

### 1. Introduction

This paper gives an overview of the responses received in support of the open letter from elected Senate members, with indicative quotations. At the time of writing there have been >600 responses from professional services staff, academic staff, and some students.

The original signatories of the open letter (ie the elected Senate members) acknowledge with gratitude the time that colleagues have taken to respond to the questions and express their views.

### 2. Key Messages

The key messages emerging are as follows:

- a. The initial announcements from the Executive have already **negatively impacted the University's work** in terms of student recruitment, research and teaching.
- b. The announcements had a significant, immediate and ongoing negative impact on **morale**, which could plausibly be described as a crisis and which should give rise to serious concerns about staff wellbeing. The crisis of morale and confidence has had identifiable impacts on the day-to-day functioning of the University and on our collective capacity to plan for the future. It is not clear that any action has been taken to mitigate this impact.
- c. **Trust** in the Executive is extremely low.
- d. A number of poor **communications** decisions around the financial situation have exacerbated these problems.
- e. The experience of staff on the ground in various parts of the organisation leads to serious concerns about the announcements related to '**centralisation**' of professional services; centralisation poses risks to effectiveness and efficiency as well as quality of work.
- f. '**People and Money**' continues to cause serious problems for the organisation, both by making it very difficult for staff to trust any centrally-led change project and by the administrative burden it continues to impose on staff in many different roles.
- g. Where decisions have been announced from UEG, for example around **programme closures**, there are objections on strategic and financial grounds that have not been taken into consideration.

Each of these is illustrated with indicative comments in 'Further Discussion', below.

One further lesson emerging from the whole exercise is that there is – and was, from the moment the financial announcements were made – an urgent need for **fora in which the voices of colleagues can be heard, concerns expressed and questions raised**. Elected Senate members were happy to conduct this exercise on behalf of the University community, but it should not have been left to us.

### **3. Further Discussion and Indicative Comments**

#### **a. NEGATIVE IMPACTS ON THE UNIVERSITY'S WORK**

*Specific negative impacts on research and teaching activity are referred to in the comments. For example, on research, and in particular ability to attract research funding and form external partnerships:*

'The current approach is already seriously undermining our ability to support research excellence, including in constraining opportunities for early career researchers, impacting on ability and willingness of staff to pursue research funding, and undermining our capacity to support development of strong submissions to the upcoming REF'.

'The current approach has placed an immediate and very heavy burden on the daily running of the institution and on the important research work of many individual researchers whose international reputations and standing are the lifeblood of the university. We are now dealing with new levels of pity, mistrust and reluctance to engage from outside partners. We are not committing to long-term projects for fear we won't be able to see them through'.

'...external collaborators, prospective students, and even members of the general public are unsure whether UoE will be a reliable partner in the future. I've had queries from friends elsewhere as to the state of the University, the future of our programme, and my own prospects. Whatever else may be the case, that's bad PR... Given the longterm nature of academic commitments (both research collaborations and student recruitment) this uncertainty is toxic in a highly competitive environment. Edinburgh is at risk of losing out in research funding and student recruitment, worsening the situation'.

*Student recruitment, every year, is crucial to the University's financial and academic sustainability, and staff are seeing the damage done by the recent announcements in this area:*

'As PGR Director I am already fielding queries from PhD applicants convinced that they will not be able to complete their studies with their chosen supervisors if they come to Edinburgh - even if they do get funding from us, they are likely to look elsewhere. We have seen steady growth in our PGR numbers in recent years, against a backdrop of declining numbers sector-wide, but this may well change now. Given that this is an area that actually makes money for the University, the recent communications are remarkably short-sighted' (Academic staff member).

*Responses refer to the cumulative effect of cuts already imposed alongside the recent announcements:*

'Administrative workload burden increasingly diverted to academic staff, rather than being provided through professional services, is substantially reducing time for active research activities, including publication outputs and grant applications. Inability to recruit to new posts, where matched funding required, results in loss of research income and broadening of portfolio. Policy of not replacing vacated technical support posts undermines continuity of skills and expertise. Media coverage and senior

management's recent emails demoralising existing staff and dissuading quality student PGR applicants to studentship posts'.

*Several responses reflect risks to the University's ability to recruit and retain the best staff:*

'The real danger to the future of the University is not its finances — it is its reputation within the academic community as a place to work'.

*Furthermore, the extremely rushed timescale of the proposed cuts undercuts the longer-term, careful, strategic activity of staff aimed at improving efficiency and productivity:*

'Every action I take is about fixing the current structure in the long term. 6 months, 1 year 2 year 5 years. If there will be structural change / centralisation our work is worthless - the workflows we create, the relationships we develop. It is very frustrating to see that years of effort will be wasted. How can we invest in long term goals in the current environment and how to keep motivated to improve our services?'. (Professional services staff member)

'As academics, we have a means to think through problems; combine efforts to create and re-create our portfolio of offerings, assess where we can work better or smarter, but we have not been given the chance to do so'.

## **b. THE CRISIS IN MORALE AND WELLBEING**

*Staff morale and wellbeing are directly related to the day-to-day performance of the institution. In the words of an academic staff respondent: 'Time and wellbeing are critical resources for performing the university's functions, and the current approach to saving pennies and pounds is coming at a much higher cost in time and wellbeing that creates a huge net negative for the university. This negative will show up on the financial balance sheet sooner or later as all who remain deal with poorer conditions for scholarship'.*

*Some responses give rise to concern about individuals' and teams' wellbeing:*

'I have now completely lost confidence in this institution and I am regretting all the energy, resources, and goodwill I poured into it, personally and professionally. Any rational individual under similar circumstances would be looking for other employment, but I do not have any energy left to do so, hence I am still here - awaiting passively for what's coming next'

'The approach taken by the Senior Leadership Team has significantly impacted my self-esteem. As an Early Career Researcher, I am looking to apply for grants and enhance my teaching skills through the PgCAP. However, I find myself questioning the value of investing in my research and teaching development for an institution that does not seem to care about me and where I could be made redundant at any time. Now, I am considering whether I should invest in improving the course I am currently teaching for next semester or just wait to see if I will get fired and improve the course next year instead.'

'The emotional impact on colleagues around me has been evident to me. Living in the unknown creates anxiety, and the lack of clarity of transparency fosters it. Increase anxiety lowers the capacity to focus and therefore impairs the ability to work at the best of our ability'

'The atmosphere has changed significantly among my colleagues. There is a latent stress... combined with bitterness and fear - bitterness that the numbers don't add up, and fear that the university management will continue on its current course'.

'As these plans progress, I have spoken to many colleagues about how they are feeling and coping. Emotions range from worry and anxiety to stress and panic. Above all, colleagues feel demoralised and express a complete lack of trust and confidence in senior management'.

'This approach has deeply affected my ability to consider a long-term future at the University and has caused substantial stress (something I am supposed to minimise as far as possible due to a long term chronic health condition). I have only recently been appointed to a permanent post and I feel this has significantly undermined my trust in the University senior management, especially their lack of transparency regarding the reasons for their decisions and their appointment to a senior position someone with a track record of endorsing widescale cuts... I am now unable to positively recommend Edinburgh to potential master's or PhD students, since I am uncertain whether I will be here to support them in future, or whether their experience will be drastically compromised by financial mismanagement, staffing cuts and other budgetary decisions. I am also actively dissuaded from applying for research funding grants (something I have a track record of securing) when I cannot guarantee the facilities available, continuity of professional services support, or continued employment at the University'.

### **c. THE LACK OF TRUST**

*Trust in the Executive is extremely low. Responses refer both to the track record of the leadership team and to the recent sequence of events as reasons for the lack of trust.*

'The lack of clarity about how the financial situation has come about, and how it seems to have not been foreseen, means trust in senior management is very low. This is leading to colleagues already looking for an exit plan, being selective about what tasks to take on, and being very anxious about their job security. Students are aware and are asking questions we cannot answer, adding to the stress'

'In my role, I collaborate a lot with other universities across the UK. The troubles at Edinburgh (from People & Money's abysmal, farcical execution to the current press on financing) have been noted a few times so there is a lot of reputational damage. It also makes me lose confidence in the University's leadership and my job security, leading to me looking at other opportunities. There have been a lot of 'missteps' by the leadership... £140 'shortfall' doesn't just come from nowhere. I.e. how did the university's (incredibly expensive) SLs not see this coming?'

'...let me just say that it appears to me that effectively the same people who got us into this mess are the same ones who are being tasked or tasking themselves with getting us out of it'.

'The approach of the Executive to leading of the University of Edinburgh has contributed to my decision to join a different university.'

#### **d. COMMUNICATIONS**

*Comments on the effects of the recent announcements often refer to the combined negative effects of, on the one hand, language that raises the stakes and, on the other hand, lack of clarity about the strategy:*

'I am concerned about the human costs of the 'everything on the table' but vexingly vague and noncommittal approach being taken, which creates fear and uncertainty far out of proportion to the scale of any changes that may indeed be needed. The uni executive has not put in the work to establish trust and confidence from staff and students, so whenever they threaten cuts or changes we all lose significant actual time from our workdays worrying alone and among each other about what might happen'.

'Members of senior management have repeatedly stated their desire to work collaboratively with the broader university community; this would require strenuous efforts on their behalf to actually be honest, transparent and communicate the critical information with the wider staff body. Evidence to date show they are singularly failing to do this'.

'The overall approach has clearly undermined the motivation and morale of me and my staff team. Communications that suggest that any programme, subject area of school can be closed, with apparently no consultation, support or staged mitigation plan, has created widespread anxiety and feelings of insecurity that surely could have been avoided by engaging in more constructive dialogue with colleagues... Removing the increment and reward scheme mid-process was a clear example where those who have been making exceptionally positive contributions to the running of the university have had their motivations undercut (I had to liaise with colleagues I had nominated to apologise for the negative impact this had on them)'.

*The language used to describe the work of professional services staff has been particularly damaging to morale and working relationships:*

'As a member of Professional Services staff, I was particularly offended by my significant contribution to the institution, over many years, being reduced to '...duplicative services, often with inconsistent practices which create inefficiencies, increase staff workload and impact our student experience.'

'As a PS manager at the University, I am concerned about the future of my staff and services we work hard to provide. I believe the required changes could be delivered sympathetically and in a way which would ensure service quality is maintained. The way changes were announced however, as well as the character of consultations already happening suggest the most aggressive form of a restructure and cuts, without due consideration to maintaining service quality and staff wellbeing'.

'The current situation, especially the uncertainty and threatening emails, is causing huge amounts of distress for both professional services and academic colleagues... the SLT currently seem dead set on driving a wedge between academic and professional services staff. The tone of recent communications has been outrageous. To anyone who works in a School it is unbelievably obvious that Schools only function because they have both sets of expertise. As an academic who is involved in the management of both teaching and IT in a School, I can confidently say that these areas only function because of the expertise and dedication of local PS staff'.

*The message to taught students affected staff on the front line of supporting students:*

'The fact that [name] and [name] directed students to speak with their Student Advisers about any financial concerns was outrageous given that there was no prior consultation with Schools about this; Student Advisers had no additional information to share; and, having already received the deeply insensitive staff email, were anxious about the situation themselves and were in not fit state to talk with students about the matter'.

#### **e. CONCERNS ABOUT CENTRALISATION**

*Respondents' experiences of how professional services and academic staff work together to deliver the University's core mission led them to question whether the centralisation of services will lead to greater efficiency.*

'The obvious implication of the principal's message is that the University intends to combine professional services teams into larger groupings. While this will cut staffing numbers... it will not address the root cause of our inefficient working practices. Instead, it will sever the relationships between professional services staff and academics, worsening the University's practices and staff community, with an attendant negative impact on the student experience and the University's mission'.

'It is unthinkable that we might lose our local professional services staff to centralisation. Teaching organisation, including exam management, tutor allocation, running Board of Examiners, etc; as well as student advisors, research and IT support staff; are absolutely essential and already overworked, and losing them will absolutely grind our School to a halt, NOT increase efficiency! Local expertise and knowledge of School processes is paramount for effective operation of our core business'.

'As a long standing member of School IT staff, talk of 'de-duplication' and implied 'centralisation' of Professional Services (in particular, IT services) gives me some concern regarding the specialist support of teaching and research... We are able to provide what I hope is high quality support to our Academic and other Professional Services staff because we are familiar with what they do and how they work - this is far less likely to be the case in a monolithic University-wide service. Visitors and those who have joined Edinburgh from other institutions often remark how much better IT support is at Edinburgh than in other institutions where there is a much more centralised approach. I hope we can continue to



provide such superior support well into the future, despite the moves currently being proposed by the University's Senior Management'.

'Our PS staff are particularly depressed, given they expect to be first to be made redundant or re-deployed. From our perspective as academic staff we value their school-specific knowledge, skills and experience and are certain this cannot be replaced by centralised services. Across academics, research and PS staff, we have minimal confidence in centralised projects after the series of mismanaged initiatives that culminated in People & Money and dread having more central projects forced on us'.

'I'm concerned about the approach being taken towards increased centralisation of various things. Not a great deal seems to be known about this, which is not less concerning. I feel that the devolved nature of the University is one of the great sources of its strength as an institution, its resilience and its ability to be relatively innovative, agile and adaptive for an organisation of its size'.

#### **f. 'PEOPLE AND MONEY'**

*As already evident above, numerous responses refer to 'People and Money' both as a reason for current lack of trust in the executive and as a continued barrier to productivity across the institution.*

'I'm concerned that the current approach will be executed with the same level of blind management and poor planning as the roll out of the People & Money system was performed. That debacle has had long lasting negative impacts throughout the University, has contributed to the current financial difficulties, and it isn't clear that the management and strategic teams responsible have admitted their failure or learned from it. It seems likely that the current response for fixing the University's finances will follow a similar trajectory, causing undue damage and long term difficulties for the University in the process.'

'Been waiting over a month to get costings and grant balances from P&M for a staff member being made redundant in April. So much time wasted chasing this through badly structured centralized services which wasn't used by either of us delivering the University core missions'.

#### **g. PROGRAMME CLOSURES**

*Some decisions have already been announced about the closure of programmes, and staff in the respective areas (comments here from different Schools in CAHSS and CSE) have significant concerns about the decision-making processes:*

'The decision has already been made to close one of our [SUBJECT] programmes (a European masters programme across five European partner schools) which has had reputational impact and will likely have recruitment/retention impact on our other programmes ([PROGRAMME] was co-taught with our other programmes). I would note that this decision was made without appropriate engagement with staff... our [SUBJECT] programmes are professionally accredited programmes with set requirements to achieve accreditation, including staff/student ratio and the delivery of professional skills. The current financial

decisions are making it very challenging to meet these requirements which is putting our programmes at further risk’.

‘Decisions to suspend or close programmes are being made without proper consultation with staff directly involved. Decisions are made on financial grounds, via management teams removed from the actual areas of teaching, where any discussions around pedagogical or subject specific values are mute. This leads to a significant sense of disenfranchisement and staff becoming very demoralised... Being a programme director I detect the above issues across many if not all colleagues’.

‘One MSc I teach on has been merged with a different one, with no consideration of the academic impact and no consultation with the staff involved. The impetus seems to have been to demonstrate something was being done, regardless of what the something was. There was no assessment of whether this would involve any efficiencies, or cost savings, and it is not clear it will have any benefits in reduced costs or a better student experience. It is an example of what happens when a top down edict needs to be acted upon in a hurry to demonstrate compliance, with no regard for any of the actual purposes of our University’.

‘I’m writing here to summarise my experience, concerns and recommendations as School Director of Education... During AY24/25 decisions on the closure of programmes have been led by enrolment data. This has tended to identify small programmes with no unique courses (particularly Part-time and Joint programmes) that do not generate any course-level staffing costs, and create limited administrative costs. The recently approved paper on the 25/26 Portfolio Review framework suggests increased closure of Part-Time courses; indeed I would anticipate this leading to the closure of all our school’s Part-Time courses. I am concerned that these measures will not lead to meaningful reductions in staff workload, or identify areas for potential staff cuts. At the same time, I am concerned that they will have a number of negative associated effects. Applicants (especially Part-Time applicants) will not all be accommodated in alternative courses, leading to a loss of income. A reduction in Part-Time programmes will have recognised impacts on WP students and EDI. There will be associated reputational and morale damage’.

**Senate****26 March 2025****Portfolio Review and Diversity of Educational Provision****Description of Paper**

This paper describes the current situation relating to Portfolio Review in the wider university context of financial restraint, its potentially detrimental impact on the diversity of educational provision, and its threat to income. It asks Senate to intervene to introduce steps to properly consider the academic and societal impacts of the closure of smaller, often more specialist, programmes, alongside a fuller evaluation of their costs and income generation, ahead of any decision being made on their future. It notes that seeking savings by closing programmes using enrolment as a proxy indicator of cost will often not lead to savings in contexts where material is shared with other programmes.

**Background and context**

Since autumn 2024 a process of 'Portfolio Review' has been taking place across the University, involving scrutiny of data on enrolments on individual UG and PGT courses and also on PGT Programmes. This process uses a 'traffic-light system' in which programmes and courses with enrolments below a certain level are flagged 'red' indicating they should be considered for closure, "amber", indicating that attempts should be made to increase enrolments, or "green" indicating that they can continue in their present form. A further phase of Portfolio Review, examining UG programmes, is soon to begin. The process has led to the closure or suggested closure of many UG and PGT courses and some PGT programmes and may well lead to the proposed closure of UG programmes in the next phase. This process, with substantive and long-lasting implications for academic strategy, has not so far been presented to Senate,

A major stated rationale for closing programmes is that the university needs to make rapid cuts to expenditure, with the implication that doing so will save money. No accompanying work has been shared with Schools to scrutinise the costs associated with running specific programmes, nor the likely consequence for overall recruitment of their closure.

Many programmes in the university recruit small numbers of students but share all or most of their courses with other programmes. This is particularly true of part-time and joint programmes.

Across the University, it seems possible or even likely that Portfolio Review will lead to the closure of all or almost all on-campus part-time Masters degrees. Many part-time degrees serve distinctive and important market niches, including as upskilling routes for those working in a sector or reskilling routes for those trying to move into an emerging sector.

At the course level, smaller courses are often in less familiar subjects, for example in non-European art, history, or literature, that reflect the breadth and academic excellence of our institution and represent distinctive opportunities for our students. Closing such courses based purely on recruitment risks damaging our efforts to decolonise the curriculum and depriving students of the opportunity to learn about less-familiar and specialist areas of scholarship. Staff who teach and students who study specialist offerings teach and study other courses as well, bringing the advantages of their specialist scholarship to the wider curriculum and student body in ways that are not reflected in individual course enrolment

numbers. Smaller courses can thus be important in maintaining the academic breadth, rigour, and attractiveness of larger programmes.

### **Action requested**

Senate is asked to note the contents of this paper and to approve recommendations 1-5.

### **Discussion**

Part-time degrees generally require students to take the same courses as the equivalent full-time degree, over a longer period. They have no additional teaching costs and minimal additional administration costs (primarily the cost of maintaining a distinct DPT) so closing them is unlikely to lead to net financial savings.

The University has stated its commitment to civic responsibility, curriculum diversity, making the education it provides accessible to students from a wide range of backgrounds, and widening participation.

The Curriculum Transformation project has emphasized the value of a wide range of provision at PGT level, specifically 'multiple and flexible modes of study (on-campus, online, hybrid; full time, part time, stackable)' (Paper 3N to Senate May 2024). Reducing the range of provision now would be contrary to the direction of travel for PGT programmes already agreed by Senate and by the Curriculum Transformation Board.

Part-time study at Master's level provides an important route for students who work full or part time to study at advanced level. It serves an important civic purpose and enables the participation of students who cannot or do not wish to study full time, for financial, professional, health-related or other reasons. Part-time students also bring distinct viewpoints based on their specific experiences, and often provide additional insight into the sector they work in. Their presence in classrooms contributes to the experience of all students.

Closing part-time routes is likely to reduce the number of students recruited overall, because these students are unlikely to be able to or want to study full-time instead. More likely, they will choose to pursue their studies elsewhere, or be excluded entirely from advanced study. This means that closing part-time degrees is likely to reduce income and have negative consequences for widening participation and equalities.

Similarly, many joint degree programmes have no unique courses. Students on them take courses that would be provided anyway to accommodate single honours students. In some disciplines, total recruitment is at a sustainable level, while being made up of students on multiple smaller joint degree programmes each of which, taken individually, might appear unviable by metrics taken out of context. If all such programmes were to be closed, this could seriously undermine our ability to continue teaching in a number of important disciplines. It may also reduce overall recruitment as many joint degree programmes offer combinations of courses that are not available on single-honours degrees. Joint and specialist programmes demonstrate our strength and dynamism as a centre of learning, and contribute to our international reputation and appeal to students across disciplines.

## **Recommendations**

### **Senate is asked to approve the following:**

1. The process of Portfolio Review must be developed to include both an assessment of the real financial costs of delivering courses and programmes and a holistic view of their wider costs and benefits (including in relation to student experience, specialist academic provision, student choice, widening participation and equalities).
2. When assessing enrolments of programmes that have both part-time and full-time routes, the combined FTE for both routes must be assessed, rather than the part-time route considered as a unique degree.
3. The status of any part-time degree that has been paused or closed due to the Portfolio Review must be reconsidered in view of the comprehensive and holistic criteria to be developed.
4. Schools must be encouraged to maintain and enhance access to their Programmes for students who wish to study part time.
5. The costs and benefits of joint and specialist degree programmes must be considered holistically, in light of other programmes with which they share provision.

## **Resource Implications**

A more considered approach to our portfolio of programmes that considers the real net costs of running them is likely to lead to better decisions, including the maintenance of income streams for the university which could otherwise be lost.

## **Risk Management**

This paper seeks to mitigate the risks of harms including academic harm, harm to the University's EDI and WP objectives, and financial harm, in terms of potential loss of reputation and income arising from the present approach to Portfolio Review.

## **Responding to the Climate Emergency and Sustainable Development Goals**

This paper contributes to Sustainable Development Goals 4 and 10 which describes the University's commitment to ensuring a quality education, widening participation and reducing inequalities.

## **Equality and Diversity**

Maintaining part-time programmes preserves a route to study that is often accessed by students with fewer resources or who face other barriers to entering or returning to higher education.

## **Consultation**

This paper is based on discussion among Senate members, including academics from all Colleges and Professional Services staff, and with colleagues outside Senate.

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