SENATE
MINUTES AND ACTIONS – APPROVED BY SENATE
5 November 2025 - 14:00-17:00 – LSI Seminar Rooms A/B, Streatham Campus, Exeter

NB text in BLACK is for publication; text in BLUE has been redacted for publication.

CONTENTS

ATTENDEES *(listed according to the membership as detailed in Ordinance 20)*

a) **Chair: Professor Lisa Roberts, President & Vice-Chancellor**
b) Professor Dan Charman, Senior Vice-President and Provost
c) Professor Tim Quine, Vice-President & Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Experience
   Professor Liz Jones, Vice-President & Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Experience
   Professor Martin Siegert, Vice-President & Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Cornwall
   Stuart Brocklehurst, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Business Engagement and Innovation
d) Professor Beverley Hawkins, Dean for Taught Students
   Professor Stacey Hynd, Dean for Postgraduate Research and the Doctoral College
e) Professor Alex Gerbasi (ESE)
   Professor Gareth Stansfield (HASS)
   Professor Sallie Lamb (HLS)
f) Professor Konstantinos Chalvatzis (ESE)
   Professor Duncan Russel (HASS)
   Professor Adam Watt (HASS)
   Professor Anni Vanhatalo (HLS)

g) Clare Wydell, Divisional Director of Education and Academic Services
h) Professor Loukas Balafoutas (ESE)
Professor Nicola Thomas (ESE)
Professor Francesca Palombo (ESE)
Professor Ion Sucala (ESE)
Professor Fiona Cox (HASS)
Professor Harry Pitts (HASS)
Professor Lindsay Hetherington (HASS)
Professor Naomi Sykes (HASS)
Professor Rebecca Langlands (HASS)
Professor Ivana Gudelj (HLS)
Professor Joanne Smith (HLS)
Professor Karen Knapp (HLS)
Professor Emma Pitchforth (HLS)
i) Professor Barrie Cooper (ESE)
Dr Sarah Hodge (ESE)
Professor Tim Naylor (ESE)
Dr Edvard Glucksman (ESE)
Dr Raphaelle Haywood (ESE)
Professor Alison Truelove (ESE)
Professor Ben Zissimos (ESE)
Professor Fabrizio Nevola (HASS)
Professor Sue Prince (HASS)
Professor Brian Rappert (HASS)
Professor Laura Salisbury (HASS)
Dr Birgul Yilmaz (HASS)
Professor Maisha Reza (HLS)
Dr Abby Russell (HLS)
Dr Hope Gangata (HLS)
Professor Katie Lunnon (HLS)
Dr Genevieve Williams (HLS)
Dr Dominic Wiredu-Boakye (HLS)
j) Mike Shore-Nye, Senior Vice President and Registrar & Secretary
l) Sebastian Racisz, President Students' Guild, Exeter
Francis Steptoe, Education Officer, Students' Guild, Exeter
Gemma Veal, Societies and Employability Officer, Students' Guild, Exeter
Rose Arhin, Communities and Equality Office, Students' Guild, Exeter
m) Izzy Brinkley, President, Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union
Avery Bailey, Vice-President, Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union

IN ATTENDANCE:

Dr Jeremy Diaper	Director of Governance Services
Roscoe Hastings	Director of Teaching Excellence and Enhancement *(present for items 1- 12)*
Imelda Rogers	Deputy Registrar and Executive Divisional Director of Human Resources
Sarah Hicks	Deputy Head of Governance Services (minutes)

APOLOGIES:

Professor Richard Follett, Vice-President & Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Global Engagement
Professor Rajani Naidoo, Vice-President & Deputy Vice-Chancellor, People and Culture
Professor Krasimira Tsaneva-Atanasova, Vice-President & Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Impact

Professor Jon Brown (HLS)
Caroline Chipperfield, Academic Director, INTO
Professor Mat Collins (ESE)
Dr Alex Fairfax-Cholmley (HASS)
Professor Daniel Fountain (HASS)
Professor Ruth Garside (HLS)
Professor Richard Holland (HLS)
Professor Dave Hosken (ESE)
Professor Ioanna Kapantai (HLS)
Professor Jane Milling (HASS)
Professor Christine Parkin-Hughes (ESE)
Professor Stefano Pascucci (ESE)
Professor Mark Wilson (HLS)

ACTIONS

MINUTE	ACTION	LEAD
4.2	**AGREED:** To circulate an invitation to confirm the date and time of the Senate deep dive on graduate outcomes and awarding gaps in February 2026.	Director of Governance Services
6.7	**AGREED:** To receive an update on the University wide initiative on AI-enhanced education, research and operations, including additional clarification on the specific rationale for the categorization of 'AI Prohibited' assessments.	Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary
7.5	**AGREED:** To review and analyse levels of market demand for masters by research programmes, including opportunities to enhance PGR intake through differential fee levels.	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global)
7.5	**AGREED:** To explore opportunities to enhance communications in Departments and Faculties to raise further awareness of availability of dashboard data in relation to degree outcomes and awarding data.	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience)
9.7.5	**AGREED:** To review and further develop C4C communications with consideration to the provision of communications broader than undergraduate programmes to provide greater clarity surrounding integrated Masters programmes.	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience)
10.9	**AGREED:** To explore opportunities to expand the NSS data set within the MI Hub from 3 years to 5 years to facilitate greater understanding of the trajectory and trends in data over a longer period of time.	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience)

11.5	**AGREED:** To enhance wider awareness of availability of data dashboards and understanding of Departmental, Faculty and institutional targets to ensure institution-wide focus on improvements.	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience)
13.5	**AGREED:** To provide more information on the Early Career Researchers Fellowships project.	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Impact)

DECISIONS

MINUTE	DECISION	PAPER
2.1	**APPROVED:** The minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2025 subject to a minor amendment in paragraph 10.6.6	SEN/01/25-26
9.7.5	**ENDORSED:** The Curriculum for Change (C4C) update for onward consideration by Academic Governance, Education and Student Experience Committee (14 November 2025) and Council (9 December 2025).	SEN/07/25-26
10.9	**ENDORSED:** The National Student Survey (NSS) and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2025 – Results and Analysis for onward consideration by Academic Governance, Education and Student Experience Committee (14 November 2025) and Council (9 December 2025).	SEN/08/25-26
10.9	**ENDORSED:** The Project 90 overview for onward consideration by Academic Governance, Education and Student Experience Committee (14 November 2025) and Council (9 December 2025).	SEN/08a/25-26
11.5	**ENDORSED:** The Academic Assurance 2024/25: Quality and Standards (OfS B Conditions) report for onward consideration by Academic Governance, Education and Student Experience Committee (14 November 2025) and Council (9 December 2025).	SEN/09/25-26

12.4	**ENDORSED:** The University Mental Wellbeing Strategy for onward consideration by Academic Governance, Education and Student Experience Committee (14 November 2025) and Council (9 December 2025).	SEN/10/25-26
13.5	**ENDORSED:** The Research Performance Report 2024/25 for onward consideration by Research and Innovation Committee (14 November 2025) and Council (9 December 2025).	SEN/11/25-26
14.6.4	**ENDORSED** The Draft Research and Innovation Strategy 2026-2031 for onward consideration by Research and Innovation Committee (14 November 2025) and Council (9 December 2025).	SEN/12/25-26

1. Chair's Welcome, Introduction and Declarations of Interest

1.1 The Chair welcomed Senators to the first meeting of Senate for the academic year 2025-26 and extended a warm welcome to the newly elected members and new Sabbatical officers that had joined Senate this academic year, including:

1.1.1 Professor Liz Jones (Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Experience elect);

1.1.2 Student Representatives: Sebastian Racisz (Guild President, Exeter Students' Guild); Izzy Brinkley (President Exeter, Falmouth & Exeter Students' Union); Francis Steptoe (Education Officer, Exeter Students' Guild); Gemma Veal (Societies and Employability Officer, Exeter Students' Guild); Rose Arhin (Communities and Equality Officer, Exeter Students' Guild); Avery Bailey (Vice-President Exeter, Falmouth & Exeter Students' Union).

1.1.3 Academic membership: Francesca Palombo (Head of Department for Physics and Astronomy and a Professor of Biomedical Spectroscopy in the Faculty of Environment, Science and Economy); Harry Pitts (Associate Professor of Politics at Penryn in the Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences); Ivana Gudelj (co-Head of Department for Biosciences in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences; Emma Pitchforth (Head of Department for Health and Community Sciences in the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences);

1.2 The Chair noted the apologies received in advance of the meeting.

1.3 The Chair invited any declarations of interest. There were no new declarations of interest in relation to the agenda items.

2. Minutes from the meeting of 18 June 2025 (SEN/01/25-26 Confidential)

2.1 Senate **APPROVED** the minutes of the meeting held on 18 June 2025 subject to the removal of paragraph 10.6.6.

3. Senate Action Log 2025/26 (SEN/02/25-26 Confidential)

3.1 Senate noted the action log for the 2025-26 academic year, which had been updated to include actions from the previous meeting in June 2025. It was noted that the outstanding actions from the previous meetings of Senate were either completed or in progress.

4. Senate Business Schedule 2025-26 (SEN/03/25-26)

4.1 Senate noted the business schedule for the 2025-26 academic year which was provided for information.

4.2 The Chair advised that a Senate deep dive on graduate outcomes and awarding gaps was being scheduled for February 2026. An invitation would be circulated to Senators once the date and time had been confirmed.

AGREED: To circulate an invitation to confirm the date and time of the Senate deep dive on graduate outcomes and awarding gaps in February 2026.

5. Chair's Business

a) Matters Arising

5.1 The Chair invited the Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary to provide an update on Education Board membership.

b) Education Board Membership and Expressions of Interest for 2026/27

5.2 The Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary thanked Senate members that had expressed an interest in Education Board membership and confirmed that Alison Truelove had been appointed to Education Board. It was also confirmed that the term of office for Sarah Hodge on Education Board had been extended by one year to provide continuity in the role of Chair on the External Examiner Task and Finish Group.

5.3 Senate members were invited to express their interest for future vacancies ahead of the 2026/27 academic year. Membership would be confirmed in June 2026 to enable new members to attend the first meeting of the 2026/27 academic year.

6. President and Vice-Chancellor's Report (SEN/04/25-26 Confidential)

6.1 The Chair referred Senate members to the report from the President & Vice-Chancellor, Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellors that had been circulated in advance of the meeting.

6.2 The Chair provided an overview of the Post-16 Education and Skills White Paper that had been published on 20 October 2025. The following key points were highlighted:

6.2.1 The Government's aim was to make the sector more sustainable, specialised, collaborative and efficient, and better aligned with the needs of the economy.

6.2.2 There would be an increase to the undergraduate home (UGH) tuition fee cap in line with forecast inflation for 2026/27 and 2027/28. Whilst this announcement was welcome it was recognized that this would not resolve the challenges surrounding long-term financial sustainability facing the sector.

6.2.3 It had been indicated there would be commitment to legislate for subsequent automatic annual tuition fee increases for HE providers that demonstrated quality of provision through TEF Gold rating and graduate outcomes. TEF Gold rating was highlighted as a potential area of risk for Exeter. Further opportunity to discuss TEF Gold rating and National Student Survey (NSS) scores had been scheduled as Item 10 on the agenda.

6.2.4 There was a focus on tackling poor quality provision with an intention to legislate to allow the OfS to impose recruitment limits where there was evidence of poor quality and strengthen powers to investigate and close down fraudulent provision.

6.2.5 The White Paper outlined the intent for reform of research funding through UKRI, with research funding targeted to drive greater specialism within the sector and support the eight growth sectors within the Industrial Strategy. Reforms of research funding would support more strategic distribution of funds with lower volumes but better cost recovery and stronger alignment with government priorities. Universities would need to define areas of specialism. The Government had confirmed that the REF would be reformed, with a focus on reduced burden and a review of weightings. The Government had committed to run REF in line with the 2029 timetable.

6.2.6 In relation to the skills and employability focus, the University had already made progress to meet the new Life-Long Learning Entitlement (LLE) Policy with bite-size learning available.

6.2.7 Maintenance grants, funded by the new International Student Levy, would be available for students from disadvantaged backgrounds and for students that studied ‘priority’ subjects. The list of ‘priority’ subjects had not been published, but it was anticipated the subjects would be linked with the Industrial Strategy. The International Study Levy was expected to be c. 6% on the income received from international students, however, further details were expected in the Autumn budget 2025.

6.3 A series of initiatives and measures would be required to respond to the challenges and opportunities in 2025-26. Seven priority actions for the University for 2025-26 were outlined, including: NSS and Project 90; Student Voice and Communications; Curriculum for Change; Graduate Outcomes and Access Targets; Diversification of the Educational Portfolio (including online, degree apprenticeships, executive education and CPD); and systems enhancement. The Chair also emphasized the requirement for the University to demonstrate clarity of purpose and alignment with the Industrial Strategy and UK Government priorities. A focus on research excellence, improvement of cost recovery and responsiveness to the Industrial Strategy would also be a priority during 2025/26.

6.4 The significance of Transnational Education (TNE) projects was highlighted as a matter of strategic imperative for the long-term financial resilience of the University and to drive forward the global reputation and reach of the University.

6.5 Senate was advised that new guidance for responsible use of AI in research had been published on the University Enabling AI website to support researchers in understanding how to use AI effectively in their research in a responsible and safe manner. It was highlighted that there would be further discussion on AI in future meetings in response to the launch of a University wide initiative on AI-enhanced education, research and operations.

6.6 A Senate member requested further rationale for the categorization of ‘AI Prohibited’ assessments and indicated it would be helpful to reflect on this further as it could not be verified that AI had not been used by students. It was reported that this had presented challenges for staff and additional guidance would be welcomed.

6.7 In response to a comment about increased risk for Departments where competition for UGH students across the sector had increased because universities had sought to reduce their tariff to recruit larger cohorts, Senate was advised that it would be critical for the University to remain competitive and in alignment with the requirements of peer institutions Furthermore, it was noted that Universities in the top 100 in the QS World University rankings had been more successful in postgraduate taught international (PGTI) student recruitment and an institutional priority activity would be to drive forward the University’s global reputation.

AGREED: To receive an update on the University wide initiative on AI-enhanced education, research and operations, including additional clarification on the specific rationale for the categorization of 'AI Prohibited' assessments.

7. Education and PGR Board Reports (Verbal Updates)

7.1 The Dean for Taught Students and the Dean for Postgraduate Research and the Doctoral College provided verbal updates on the latest issues from their respective areas.

7.2 The Dean for Postgraduate Research and the Doctoral College provided the following verbal update:

7.2.1 The overall satisfaction score in the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) 2025 had increased to 87% (up by 3% since 2023). The response rate was 58%, the highest in the sector. Exeter was currently ranked 11th overall out of 89 participating institutions. Improvements had been made across all categories, campuses and Faculties. Scores were above the Russell Group benchmark in 7 out of 11 categories. A qualitative analysis would be undertaken to identify further opportunities for improvement and the Doctoral College strategy action plan would be updated. PGR students would be advised on how their feedback had been addressed.

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7.2.2 The new updated Doctoral College website had been launched. The updated website focused on all aspects of the PGR offer. It had been designed to be more accessible and user friendly, all outdated links had been updated, and it included images that better reflected the community.

7.2.3 Guidance on the use of AI by PGRs had been published. The guidance mirrored the University policy that required the use of AI to be acknowledged in assessments and documented in such a way that examiners would have visibility of how AI had been used. The guidance would remain under review based on feedback received from PGRs, supervisors and departments.

7.3 The Dean for Taught Students Education provided the following verbal update:

7.3.1 Education Board had discussed the Taught Degree Classifications Report that detailed changes in the makeup and distribution of grades awarded as a requirement of OfS Condition of Registration B4. The review had focused on grade inflation and Senate was advised the evidence had demonstrated a downward trend in grades overall, similar to pre-pandemic levels. Education Board also examined unexplained gaps and the difference in performance across groups of students, for example the difference in performance between UK and international students. It was noted that a working group would continue to focus on the difference in performance between UK and international students. The Assessment, Progression and Awarding Committee (APAC) role had been strengthened to focus on patterns in assessment and award data, in line with OfS Conditions B4 and B5 of Registration.

7.4 A Senate member queried if all Departments and Faculties were aware of the range of dashboard data that could be accessed, and whether further communication to senior leaders was required to raise awareness of the availability of data. Senate members were assured this had been considered and work was underway to raise awareness.

7.5 The potential market for taught masters programmes by research was discussed. The Business School had initiated a trial of a combined taught and research integrated Masters programme that would provide useful data to assess levels of market demand. It was noted that the difference in fees and enhanced visa options could increase student recruitment and further consideration would be given in this area.

AGREED: To review and analyse levels of market demand for masters by research programmes, including opportunities to enhance PGR intake through differential fee levels.

AGREED: To explore opportunities to enhance communications in Departments and Faculties to raise further awareness of availability of dashboard data in relation to degree outcomes and awarding data.

8. Student President Reports (SEN/05/25-26 Open) and (SEN/06/25-26 Open)

8.1 The President of the Exeter Students' Guild presented their report to Senate and highlighted the following student priorities for the 2025/26 academic year which had been informed by the Guild's Data Insights and student feedback.

8.2 *In relation to the cost of belonging crisis:*

8.2.1 In Last Year's 'Your Way, Your Say' survey, 54% of students reported they had struggled to engage with activities outside their studies due to the additional money, time and social capital required. With 5,000 responses received, the importance of extra-curricular activities was recognised as fundamental to the sense of belonging and achievement of better longer-term student outcomes.

8.3 *In relation to AI Integration and AI Policy:*

8.3.1 The student community had expressed curiosity about the potential use of AI, but there remained some concerns surrounding data privacy, the impacts on graduate employability and the environment. The ethical integration of AI into the curriculum in alignment with a clearly understood AI Policy was recognized as a key priority to avoid the potential of disadvantaging any marginalized students;

8.4 *In relation to Classicism:*

8.4.1 It was recognized that Classicism continued to be a prevalent issue experienced at the University and that a key area of focus was working with student societies to tell positive stories and tackle class bias, prejudice and harmful stereotypes. Over 50% of working-class students reported they had experienced classism at social events and almost 60% had experienced classism on their course. It would be important to identify the barriers and tackle this issue.

8.5 *In relation to Employability:*

8.5.1 68% of undergraduates had reported that they needed to undertake paid work during term time alongside their studies and that this impacted their ability to engage in wider opportunities. There was a key focus on enhancing flexible opportunities for students and highlighting the importance of engaging in extra-curricular activities.

8.6 The priorities survey had received 4,200 responses. It had been viewed as an early indication of NSS scores and had proved beneficial to develop understanding of the data.

8.7 Work had been initiated to review the academic representation system to improve consistency of Academic Representative across departments and improve student voice scores in NSS.

8.8 The Love Exeter campaign had been expanded with the aim to build strong relationships across every department.

8.9 The Exeter President of the Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union drew attention to the following student priorities for the 2025/26 academic year:

8.9.1 It was noted that there had been a number of changes to the bus travel pricing and ticket bundles available in Cornwall for the 2025/26 academic year which had presented financial challenges and accessibility difficulties for both staff and students. Joint communications had been issued with Falmouth University and a working group had been established to lobby Cornwall Council, bus companies and the local MP for the reinstatement of cheaper capped fares. A limited supply of bus tickets had also been provided to students in need via the Students' Union advice service.

8.9.2 A series of events to support the trans community had taken place and twenty binders had been obtained to set up a Binder Library that would be used to signpost students to SU resources such as the Gender Expression Fund.

8.9.3 The provision for neuro diverse students had been reviewed, and work was underway to create and adapt suitable study spaces for neuro diverse students.

8.9.4 Engagement with the C4C employability and skills workstreams would remain a focus for the year. In response to a question about the ability for students to gain credit from extra-curricular activities it was affirmed the employability workstream of C4C would start in the new year and this would provide an opportunity to examine this in more detail.

8.9.5 The Students' Union had started development of the new 2025-2030 Strategic Plan. This would be launched at the end of November 2025 with the aim to reaffirm the position of the Students Union as a trusted local partner in Cornwall.

8.9.6 It was reported there were now 150 reps for Exeter in Cornwall. All reps had been trained how to fulfil their role effectively.

8.9.7 The Advice Centre had seen an increase in enquiries since the start of term. This increase corresponded with a 99% increase in website traffic on advice pages in comparison to the same period last year. There had been several enquiries about academic appeals and some students reported difficulties with fees for Masters programmes. Further analysis would be undertaken of the data.

8.9.8 In response to feedback from students, communications had been refreshed and better targeted based on a student's course, department and campus location.

8.9.9 The Getting Started survey had received 1,110 responses, a 200% increase when compared to the previous year.

8.10 The President and Vice Chancellor extended thanks to both Sebastian Racisz and Izzy Brinkley for their comprehensive reports.

9. <u>Curriculum for Change Update</u> <u>(SEN/07/25-26 Strictly Confidential)</u>

9.1 Senate received the first progress update on implementation of the Curriculum for Change (C4C) programme from the Vice-President & Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Experience.

9.2 The University's Strategy 2030 set out the aim to 'challenge and inspire a community of learners from every background to thrive, develop the skills they will need for the future and to lead the change the world needs'. The Curriculum for Change (C4C) Programme was designed to ensure that the University achieved the Strategy 2030 aim, in the context of the prevailing funding environment, and thereby deliver excellent experience and outcomes for all our students. It also complemented Project 90 that was focused on achieving significant NSS improvement through consistent adoption of university policy and best practice.

9.3 Providing undergraduate students with enhanced support for Belonging and Transition, comprehensive application of the Exeter Skills Framework, and offering access to skills-focused minors and improved placement opportunities remained critical to delivering a distinctive model of education at Exeter that improved equity and enhanced the employability of graduates.

9.4 C4C had moved into the implementation phase following endorsement by Senate and Council in Term 3 of 2024/25.

9.5 Thanks were extended to Senate members for their continued energy and commitment to ensure disciplinary shaping of the programme in Departments and Faculties and whole-institution approach to the realization of the programme benefits.

9.6 The following points were highlighted:

9.6.1 Significant progress had been made across the workstreams of C4C in Term 1 2025-26 across the five key workstreams: programme review, minors, skills, belonging and transition, and employability options.

9.6.2 The focus of C4C was on embedding consistent quality, efficiency and development of skills and readiness for future employment aligned with Government ambition for higher education. It had also been designed to address the increasing pressures faced by students.

9.6.3 Following valuable feedback gained through Senate, and in liaison with Faculties and departments, Principle 12 of the design principles had been updated to reflect that a minimum of 30 credits would be core content in Term 1 of Stage 1 (revised from the original principle of 45 credits of core content).

9.6.4 The challenge of belonging and importance of transition had been highlighted by school and Further Education leaders, and by the Guild and SU representatives throughout the development phase of the programme. Becks Boomer-Clark (Chief Executive of Lift Schools and Independent Council member) had also recently provided a presentation to Council that emphasised further the importance of belonging and transition. It was noted that Belonging and Transition pilots would be delivered in 7 departments across all 3 Faculties during Term 1 of 2025/26.

9.6.5 Senate members were advised that resources available to support implementation of C4C would be streamlined in response to feedback.

9.7 Senate members raised the following comments:

9.7.1 That in light of the significant overlap between PGT programmes and the 4th year of integrated masters, it would be beneficial to give further consideration to ensuring greater strategic alignment within the scope of the Curriculum for Change programme to help facilitate the development of microcredentials and standalone modules within PGT programmes and enable more flexible pathways for students.

9.7.2 That it would be important to further develop nuanced C4C communications that were broader than undergraduate programmes.

9.7.3 That development of bespoke communications should be considered to provide greater clarity surrounding integrated Masters programmes.

9.7.4 A Senate member highlighted how Future 17, a Sustainable Development Goals Challenge Program developed in partnership with the University and QS, had highlighted the benefits of the direction of travel of the C4C programme and the importance of enabling and empowering the next generation of students to tackle global challenges whilst developing 21st century skills to enhance their education.

9.7.5 That alongside the implementation of C4C, increased focus should be given towards the further development of executive education, online programmes and CPD to diversify the University's educational portfolio and ensure continued focus on student experience and employability.

ENDORSED: The Curriculum for Change (C4C) update for onward consideration by Academic Governance, Education and Student Experience Committee (14 November 2025) and Council (9 December 2025).

AGREED: To review and further develop C4C communications with consideration to the provision of communications broader than undergraduate programmes to provide greater clarity surrounding integrated Masters programmes.

10. National Student Survey (NSS) and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) - Results and Analysis (SEN/08/25-26 Open and SEN/08a/25-26 Confidential)

10.1 The Vice-President & Deputy Vice-Chancellor(Education and Student Experience) referred Senate to the National Student Survey (NSS) and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) outcomes detailed in paper SEN/08/25-26.

10.2 Project 90 had been designed to accelerate NSS improvement and would require a multi-faceted approach based on a series of six key principles that included for example, a shared institutional message.

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10.3 The following key points were highlighted:

10.3.1 There would be only three remaining NSS cycles to make the required changes to influence the next TEF outcome.

10.3.2 This would require an 8% increase in NSS KPI over the next 3 cycles, and at least a 2.7% improvement in KPI by 2025-26. It was recognised that the current NSS performance was not consistent with TEF Gold and that it would therefore be challenging for the University to achieve Gold in the next TEF assessment. Nevertheless, it was highlighted that it was still feasible to make significant shifts in NSS performance swiftly in light of the fact a number of universities were closely bunched together and on the basis that several peer institutions had achieved similar improvements in NSS performance.

10.3.3 13 Russell Group institutions had enhanced performance by 2.7% in the last NSS cycle, and 6 Russell Group institutions had improved by 5.4% over the last 2 NSS cycles so the level of improvement being targeted was feasible but would be challenging and require institution-wide focus to achieve the accelerated NSS improvements.

10.3.4 Consistent excellence for all students across all subjects at the University would be essential to achieve a TEF Gold rating.

10.3.5 Six departments had been identified for boost support that would provide increased opportunity to mobilise support and share expertise.

10.3.6 NSS data demonstrated that students felt their feedback had not been heard and there was a need for an enhanced focus on closing the loop in response to feedback. Senate members were encouraged to use the visuals developed for Project 90 across their departments to highlight examples of where student feedback had influenced change.

10.4 The following comments were raised by Senate members in discussion:

10.4.1 That it would be important to ensure institutional acceptance that there was a requirement for significant institutional change and acknowledgement that the University had not delivered consistent educational excellence across all Departments and Faculties. Several anecdotal examples were highlighted:

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10.4.2 Some benefits of C4C could be a challenge to realise without appropriate support for academic staff to develop engaging marketing materials for future cohorts and to generate excitement for students around the opportunities available with the minors.

10.4.3 Some Senators indicated that their Professional Support teams felt stretched due to the departure of colleagues following the recent voluntary severance scheme and that this had been particularly pronounced where there had been closure of student hubs and colleagues with specific experience and direct involvement in student engagement activities had left the University. It was affirmed that there was a requirement for all colleagues across the institution to take shared responsibility to embed consistent educational excellence across the University and in the challenging sector-wide environment it would be critical to develop innovative ways of delivering an excellent student experience with less resource.

10.4.4 One Senate member from a boost department reported they felt well supported and colleagues were enthusiastic about improving student experience and NSS scores.

10.4.5 That it would be important to instil increased understanding and awareness amongst the staff community of individual Department, Faculty and Institutional metrics and KPIs to ensure there was a shared and collective focus on continuous improvement. It was highlighted that there would also be a focus on providing a simplified view of NSS data to provide a mechanism for checking key data points and areas for improvement.

10.5 In relation to student feedback:

10.5.1 It would be important to recognise that a student's holistic University experience informed their responses in the NSS. It was highlighted that wider experiences beyond academic studies (including students' accommodation and living conditions, participation in societies, and social engagements) would all be likely to influence responses to the NSS.

10.5.2 That every interaction with students would be important and that it was often basic and fundamental elements of the student experience which impacted on levels of satisfaction (including response times to emails and the perceived visibility and availability of academic staff).

10.6 It was noted that within the MI Hub, some of the data extended over 3 years and opportunities would be explored to expand this to a 5-year data set to enable a more detailed understanding of the longer-term trajectory and trends in the data.

10.7 Senate recognised that both NSS outcomes and the position within league table rankings remained critical along with the need to accelerate improvements.

10.8 The President and Vice-Chancellor noted that they regularly meet with global alumni that reported on their positive experiences at Exeter. However, this had not translated in recent NSS scores with the University currently placed 94th in the sector. More work would therefore be required to ensure consistency of experience and highlight to students what we do well and how we respond to feedback to improve their student experience.

ENDORSED: The National Student Survey (NSS) and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 2025 – Results and Analysis for onward consideration by Academic Governance, Education and Student Experience Committee (14 November 2025) and Council (9 December 2025).

ENDORSED: The Project 90 overview for onward consideration by Academic Governance, Education and Student Experience Committee (14 November 2025) and Council (9 December 2025).

AGREED: To explore opportunities to expand the NSS data set within the MI Hub from 3 years to 5 years to facilitate greater understanding of the trajectory and trends in data over a longer period of time.

11. Academic Assurance 2024/25: Quality and Standards (OfS B Conditions) (SEN/09/25-26 Open)

11.1 Senate was provided with an overview of the Annual Quality and Standards Report by the Vice-President & Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience).

11.2 The Annual Quality and Standards report had been provided to assist Senate to give assurance to the Academic Governance, Education and Student Experience Committee and Council that the University was compliant with the B Conditions of Registration which related to the Quality and Standards of the provider.

11.3 The report provided assurance for the 2024/25 academic year and highlighted key areas of focus for the 2025/26 academic year.

11.4 In response to a question from a Senate member. Senate was advised that the majority of data presented was available for all academic staff within the MI Hub in an effort to ensure all staff had a clear understanding of targets.

11.5 Senate was referred to the Academic Assurance Plan for 2025/26 (Part II, SEN/15/25-26) that set out the plan for this academic year.

ENDORSED: The Academic Assurance 2024/25: Quality and Standards (OfS B Conditions) report for onward consideration by Academic Governance, Education and Student Experience Committee (14 November 2025) and Council (9 December 2025).

AGREED: To enhance wider awareness of availability of data dashboards and understanding of Departmental, Faculty and institutional targets to ensure institution-wide focus on improvements.

12. University Mental Wellbeing Strategy (SEN/10/25-26 Open)

12.1 The University continued to place the mental health of the student and staff community at the heart of its mission. The Mental Wellbeing Strategy was a key enabler of Strategy 2030 with its focus on enabling health, wellbeing, social justice and inclusion.

12.2 The vision, strategic aims and objectives for mental health aligned with a whole University approach informed by best-practice guidance from Universities UK, the University Mental Health Charter, the Health and Safety Executive Management Standards (Mental Health) and internal research.

12.3 The Mental Wellbeing Strategy 2030 had four pillars of delivery (Live, Support, Learn and Work) which summarized the University's commitments in relation to mental health and wellbeing for the whole community.

12.4 It was highlighted that the new University Mental Wellbeing Strategy would be launched in January 2026, with a full internal and external communications plan to raise awareness and maintain continued engagement with key stakeholders. A series of KPIs would be developed to ensure progress in implementation of the Strategy could continue to be monitored.

ENDORSED: The University Mental Wellbeing Strategy for onward consideration by Academic Governance, Education and Student Experience Committee (14 November 2025) and Council (9 December 2025).

13. <u>Research Performance Report 2024/25</u> <u>(SEN/11/25-26 Confidential)</u>

13.1 Senate was provided with an overview of the Research Performance Report 2024-25 by Professor Anni Vanhatalo (Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact) on behalf of the Vice-President & Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Research and Impact who had been overseas and therefore unable to attend this meeting.

13.2 The performance report included information on the University's research income, awards and applications at the end of July 2025. It also set out the University's progress against plans for income, Contribution to Full Economic Cost (CtFEC), awards and applications.

Closed Minute - Confidential

13.2.1 Work would continue on the implementation of Faculty action plans to secure research income and the development of increased effectiveness in the production of high-quality applications.

13.3 The following comments were raised by Senate members:

13.3.1 One Senate member reported attendance at a recent UKRI meeting where the inclusion of funding applications within promotion criteria had been the subject of discussion. It was noted that UKRI funding had reduced at a time when applications had increased, and this prompted a comment about the requirement to include submission of applications within the University's promotion criteria. Senate members considered there could be opportunity to work with the Russell Group to develop a greater sector-wide focus that recognised research awards in promotion criteria so that the current institutional focus was not perceived to impede on the longer-term academic career trajectory of staff and their ability to secure roles at other institutions.

13.3.2 There appeared to be a sector wide move away from applications for charity funding. It was noted that cost recovery was a significant factor in choice of funding source, as charity funding or Government funding typically resulted in lower levels of cost recovery. It was acknowledged that industrial partnerships would present opportunities to be considered.

13.3.3 That in light of increased competition for UKRI funding it would be important to consider other funding bodies (including ESRC, EPSRC, BBSRC and NERC).

13.3.4 Senate members were provided with assurance that a qualitative and quantitative review had been conducted and work undertaken with ESE colleagues on Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) applications to draw out the key elements of successful research funding applications. In addition, a list of expert members of staff that had served on a panel was maintained to ensure lessons learned, insights and expertise were shared collectively across Faculties.

13.3.5 That there was a need for a sustained institutional focus on increasing the quality and quantity of research bids across the institution, and to explore opportunities to provide increased recognition for collaborative writing and submission of team bids to help incentivise this way of working.

13.4 In response to a comment that highlighted the importance of support for Early Career Researchers. Senate members were advised of the Fellowships project focused on supporting Early Career Researchers being undertaken by the Research and Impact Executive Committee (RIEC). More information would be presented to Senate in due course.

AGREED: To provide more information on the Early Career Researchers Fellowships project.

ENDORSED: The Research Performance Report 2024/25 for onward consideration by Research and Innovation Committee (14 November 2025) and Council (9 December 2025).

14. **<u>Draft Research and Innovation Strategy (2026-31)</u>** <u>(SEN/12/25-26 Confidential)</u>

14.1 Senate was provided with an overview of the latest draft of the Research and Innovation Strategy 2026-31 by the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact, and Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Business Engagement and Innovation.

14.2 The draft Research and Innovation (R&I) Strategy 2026-2031 that was presented to Senate reflected feedback from across the University community and UEB.

14.3 There had been several changes since the draft strategy had been presented to Senate in March 2025, the changes included:

14.3.1 The integration of research and innovation into one cohesive strategy.

14.3.2 Influence and reputation had been elevated to a strategic priority that would underpin excellent performance.

14.3.3 The draft strategy had been aligned with the Government's Industrial Strategy.

14.4 Senate members were invited to provide feedback on the draft strategy and requested to encourage colleagues to provide feedback via the online platform that was due to be launched later in the month.

14.5 Senate was provided with an overview of the work that had been started to update the University's Digital Research Infrastructure (DRI). This would integrate high-performance computing, mid-tier computing, research data storage and secure research environments into a resilient, scalable and sustainable ecosystem.

14.6 The following was noted in discussion:

14.6.1 Senate was advised significant activity was underway across the institutes following a recent institutional review. It was recognised it would be increasingly important for the institutes to be aligned with the ambitions of the UK Industrial Strategy 2025.

14.6.2 The Digital Research Infrastructure project focused on the provision of data centres and computers, and replacement of existing infrastructure across both cloud and on-premise facilities. A business case for investment was scheduled to be presented to Council for approval in 2026.

14.6.3 The University had initiated work to explore AI procurement for all staff and students. There would be opportunity for further discussion by Senate when more information becomes available. In the meantime, Senate members were advised to visit the University's Enabling AI website for information, guidance and toolkits to support all staff, including researchers.

14.6.4 In response to a question about the opportunity to market and share services across the South-West. Senate was advised this had been considered alongside the strategic partnerships already in place. The University was recognised as a supporter and enabler and these benefits would remain an important consideration.

ENDORSED: The Draft Research and Innovation Strategy 2026-2031 for onward consideration by Research and Innovation Committee (14 November 2025) and Council (9 December 2025).

15. **<u>Update on Knowledge Exchange</u>** <u>(SEN/13/25-26 Confidential)</u>

15.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor for Business Engagement and Innovation provided an update on Knowledge Exchange.

15.2 The University's strategic ambition in relation to Knowledge Exchange was to build strategic partnerships that translated research into public benefit and economic growth, enhanced regional productivity and job creation, and supported faster innovation through collaborative exchange of knowledge and technology.

15.3 Knowledge Exchange was intended to drive impact, influence, reputation and revenue of the University, and contribute to use the power of education and research to create a greener, healthier and fairer future.

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15.3.1 The University had a wider interest in relation to reputation and influence to use the power of education and research to make a difference. The University had used the academic strength of colleagues and raised awareness of significant issues with legislators, business and financial services. Examples of work in relation to Global Tipping Points and the carbon cycle were provided as examples of where colleagues had used academic strength to raise awareness.

15.3.2 There was a continued focus on translating research and education into real-world impact and enabling the development of key strategic partnerships to drive cultural and policy change.

15.4 Senate members raised the following comments:

15.4.1 Collaborative work by researchers had resulted in positive outcomes, however, it was recognised that researchers would require dedicated time to undertake business engagement activity for their own future benefit as well as the value this activity would bring to the University. It was noted that the University's promotion criteria included business engagement activity. Senate members were advised that business engagement was acknowledged as vital work to support future career development of researchers. It was intended that colleagues from across the Russell Group PVC network would help to increase the profile of business engagement activities with Government and work had been planned to initiate this workstream in Spring 2026.

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15.4.2 In response to a question about a specific time allocation within roles for business engagement activities it was noted that work across departments would be planned and allocated based on business need by Heads of Department. It was recognised that staff would need to retain a broad range of skills for their own future professional development and for the benefit of the University.

15.4.3 Challenges associated with the current pace of change and increase in new activities and workstreams were recognised. The use of Impact Fellows who would work solely on short-term commercial projects had been explored. Impact Fellows could provide a flexible source of resource to manage a variable level of demand. Senate members were encouraged to continue to liaise with Heads of Departments if they had concerns about workload.

15.4.4 One Senate member queried if Exeter Innovation colleagues may be able to provide support for academics in areas where there had been limited experience to draw upon within Faculties.

15.5 In relation to student experience:

15.5.1 There could be a negative effect on influence, impact and revenue if the University did not provide students with knowledge engagement in the classroom and research inspired learning experience.

15.5.2 That it would be beneficial to provide opportunities for academics to develop business engagement contacts to provide students with the experience that is expected.

15.5.3 It was noted that the Business School had a well-established business engagement track record, but this had not been straightforward to replicate in other departments.

15.5.4 There had been an increase in work placements available and work was underway to broaden the reach of placements across the region. There would be benefits to introduce a structured approach to support colleagues across the University to share expertise and experience.

15.5.5 Introduction of the minors, and wider implementation of C4C workstreams, was highlighted as a potential opportunity for the enhancement of business engagement activity across disciplines.

15.5.6 One Senate member provided the example of Law Clinic students that provide advice, work with alumni and develop business connections that extend into executive education opportunities.

15.6 The importance of using all available opportunities to build relationships was emphasised, and increased use of AI may also have a positive impact.

15.7 One Senate member highlighted that it would be important to overcome the barriers that had potential to stifle the development of business relationships and limit opportunity. An anecdotal example of not being permitted to use company logos on University websites was provided as an example.

15.8 Senate members that represented HASS provided examples of links with industry and an overview of how business engagement had been incorporated within course modules.

15.9 The Chair thanked Senate members for their contribution to a valuable discussion.

16. <u>Items Brought Forward from Part II</u> (SEN/14/25-26)

16.1 There had been no requests for items to be brought forward from Part II. The Chair highlighted that the Digital Learning Resource Policy (SEN/34/25-26) would be approved as a Part II item and extended thanks to all members of Senate that had contributed to the revision of the policy.

17. Chair's Closing Remarks

17.1 The Chair thanked all Senate members for their input and engagement. Senate members were advised the remainder of meetings for the academic year, with the exception of the joint Council and Senate meeting, would take place online.

Part II - Papers to Endorse

Academic Assurance
Academic Assurance Plan 2025/26 (SEN 15/25-26)
Student Protection Plan 2025/26 (SEN/16/25-26)
Assurance Report on OfS Conditions of Registration
- Condition E6 (Misconduct and Sexual Harassment) (SEN/17a/25-26)
- Freedom of Speech Update (SEN/17b/25-26)

Research
Annual Research Integrity Policy Statement (SEN/18/25-26)
Researcher Development Concordat Annual Signatory Report (SEN/19/25-26)

Exeter Innovation
Exeter Innovation Corporate Partnerships Update (SEN/20/25-26)

Governance
Senate Annual Report 2024/25 (SEN/21/25-26)

Honorary Graduate Approval Nominations (SEN/33/25-26)
Education Board: Terms of Reference and Membership (SEN22a/25-26 and SEN/22b/25-26)
Postgraduate Research Board: Terms of Reference and Membership (SEN/23/25-26)

Part II - Papers to Note

Senate Appeals Report (SEN/24/25-26)
Academic Promotions Report (SEN/25/25-26)
Military Education Report (SEN/26/25-26)
Council Minutes: May and July 2025 (SEN/27/25-26 and SEN/28/25-26)
Education Board Minutes (SEN/29/25-26)
Postgraduate Research Board Minutes (SEN/30/25-26)
Entrance to Scholarship Selection Committee Minutes (SEN/31/25-26)
Digital Research Infrastructure Overview (SEN/32/25-26)

Part II - Papers to Approve

Digital Learning Resources Policy (SEN/34/25-26)

Awards of Degrees, Diplomas and Certificates and Conferment of Degrees in Absentia: The award lists, approved by the Vice-Chancellor on behalf of Senate, since the last meeting may be inspected by contacting Student Records.

Dates of meetings for 2025/26

11 March 2026
29 April 2026 (joint meeting with Council)
17 June 2026