

**Minutes of the Special Meeting of the Cardiff University Senate held on Thursday 6 March 2025 at 13:30, via Zoom.**

**Attendance**

Professor Wendy Larner	P	Dr Hesam Kamalipour	P
Professor Rudolf Allemann	P	Dr Tahl Kaminer	P
Professor Stuart Allan	P	Professor Deborah Kays	P
Professor Anthony Bennett		Professor Andrew Kerr	P
Dr Emma Blain		Professor Urfan Khaliq	P
Shola Bold		Professor Mark Llewellyn	P
Professor Kate Brain	P	Professor Eshwar Mahenthiralingam	P
Professor Gill Bristow	P	Dr Olaya Moldes Andres	P
Dr Andreas Buerki	P	Claire Morgan	A
Professor Christine Bundy	P	Greg Mothersdale	A
Professor Kate Button	P	Professor Joy Myint	P
Eve Chamberlain	P	Ana Nagiel Escobar	P
Professor David Clarke	P	Rebecca Newsome	
Lauren Cockayne	P	Professor Gerard O'Grady	P
Professor Vicki Cummings	A	Joanne Pagett	P
Professor Juliet Davis	P	Micaela Panes	P
Michelle Deininger	P	Dr Vassiliki Papatsiba	A
Dr David Doddington	P	Catrin Edith Parry	P
Dr Derek Dunne	P	Dr Juan Pereiro Viterbo	
Professor Dominic Dwyer	P	Dr Oliver Pierce	P
Professor Tim Edwards	P	Dr Jenny Pike	P
Professor Edwin Egede	A	Professor Simon Pope	P
Professor Rachel Errington	P	Michael Reade	P
Fflur Evans	P	Cadi Rhys Thomas	P
Professor Dylan Foster Evans	P	Kate Richards	P
Graham Getheridge		Professor Stephen Riley	P
Professor Hayley Gomez	P	Dominic Roche	P
Dr Sandy Gould	P	Professor Karl Schmidt	P
Professor Julian Gould-Williams	P	Dr Yasemin Sengul Tezel	P
Professor Clare Griffiths		Professor Gavin Shaddick	P
Professor Mark Gumbleton	P	Professor Katherine Shelton	P
Professor Thomas Hall		Professor Phil Stephens	
Dr Natasha Hammond-Browning	P	Dr Andy Skyrme	A
Professor Adam Hedgecoe	P	Helen Spittle	P
Dr Jonathan Hewitt		Georgia Spry	P
Madison Hutchinson	A	Tracey Stanley	P
Professor Aseem Inam	P	Professor Patrick Sutton	P
Dr Anthony Ince	P	Dr Catherine Teehan	P
Professor Nicola Innes	P	Dr Jonathan Thompson	P
Claire Jaynes	P	Professor Damian Walford Davies	P
Luke Jehu	P	Matt Walsh	P
Professor Dafydd Jones	P	Professor Roger Whitaker	P
Dr Kathryn Jones	P	Professor Jianzhong Wu	P
Dr Nicholas Jones	P	Dr Xuesheng You	P

**In Attendance**

Laura Davies	Dr David Langley
Sally-ann Efstathiou	Siân Marshall (minutes)
Rhodri Evans	Dr Paula Sanderson
Tom Hay	Simon Wright (Secretary)
Victoria Holbrook	Darren Xiberras

**1102 Welcome and Introductions**

Noted

1102.1 that the special meeting of Senate had been called in line with Ordinance 3 to discuss Academic Futures; that Academic Futures would also be discussed at the meeting of Senate on 12 March 2025;

1102.2 the Chair reminded members of their responsibility to behave respectfully and treat others with courtesy.

**1103 Apologies for Absence**

Noted

1103.1 that apologies received would be recorded in the Minutes.

**1104 Declaration of Interests**

The Chair reminded the Committee members of their duty to disclose any potential conflicts of interest. No declarations of interest were noted.

**1105 Academic Futures**

Received and considered paper 'Motions on Academic Futures submitted for Senate Special Meeting' and a response from the University Executive to the paper comprising the papers 'Covering Note', 'Transformation Consolidated Activities' and 'University Response – Finance'.

1105.1 Motion 1: Owing to the lack of a clear and compelling Business Case, the Senate is not convinced on the evidence shown of the necessity for and validity of the Academic Futures project as a path to a sustainable future for our University. The Senate requires this motion is reported to Council under Ordinance 5, 8.7(4).

The proposer, Professor Julian Gould-Williams spoke to the Motion.

Noted

1105.1.1 that Senators were seeking to fulfil their responsibility as set out in Ordinance; that given the importance and impact of the Academic Futures proposals, Senate had a responsibility to scrutinise the response from UEB and the evidence for the propositions made; that this was the first opportunity for Senators to provide a response and feedback on the proposals;

1105.1.2 that despite the response from UEB to the Motions, concerns remained in the following areas:

- (i) the timeliness of the data;
  - (ii) the lack of clarity around how decisions would be made, including any criteria against which alternative proposals would be assessed;
  - (iii) the absence of any selection criteria for compulsory redundancies;
  - (iv) that key pieces of information were regarded as confidential and could not be shared with Senate;
  - (v) that UEB was not prepared to reflect on the previous decisions made that had contributed to the current crisis;
- 1105.1.3 that an absence of transparency created doubt and caused staff considerable anxiety and a lack of confidence in the outcome; that Senate would be unable to make informed decisions without full and clear information;
- 1105.1.4 that in response to the motion, the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor advised:
- (i) that the discussion document detailing the proposals was academically led and set out actions to safeguard the University for future generations; that it was imperative for Senators to engage with the proposals and provide enhancements and alternatives, particularly where Senators do not feel they are clear and compelling;
  - (ii) that UEB remained wholly convinced of the significance and the scale of the academic and financial drivers to which the proposals sought to respond and therefore the necessity for, and validity of the process;
  - (iii) that UCU at branch and national level had noted the structural unsustainability of the current funding model and this emphasised that the process for consulting on these proposals was an imperative and not optional;
  - (iv) that paper 3 (UCU branch position regarding Cardiff University finances) demonstrated a misunderstanding of the financial and operational position, which had been addressed in the University Executive response;
  - (v) the student recruitment position had worsened since the consultation document was issued, [Redacted];
- 1105.1.5 that more information was needed to enable meaningful engagement with the proposals, for example, it was unclear how the School mergers and reduction of staff numbers in the College of Physical Sciences and Engineering would enable financial sustainability;
- 1105.1.6 that data packs had been shared with staff and students; that the financial gap would not be fully closed with the current proposals and that further work was planned in relation to Professional Services; that the process of compiling the budget and plans for 2025-26 had started;
- 1105.1.7 that modelling of student numbers and staff: student ratios on the basis of academic proposals had been undertaken and that some members felt the full modelling should be shared;
- 1105.1.8 the Motion was put to a vote by Senate members and the Motion was carried; 73 members present, 44 voting for and 18 against.
- 1105.2 Motion 2: The Senate recommends to Council (under Ordinance 5, 8.7(3)) that it postpone any final decision on the 'Academic Futures' Proposals until such a time as UEB demonstrate conclusively that they have worked in true partnership with trade unions, staff and students (as expected by Welsh Government,

according to their statement of 18 Feb 2028 [1]), until Medr have reported on the result of their review into Higher Education subject provision in Wales (same WG statement of 18 Feb 2028) and until Council are satisfied that UEB proposals fully comply with the call of the Welsh Government Minister for FE and HE, Vikki Howells on 18 February 2025 [2], to 'use available reserves to minimise job losses'. And that the motion is reported to Council under Ordinance 5, 8.7(4).

The proposer, Dr Andreas Buerki spoke to the Motion.

Noted

- 1105.2.1 that the motion proposed that Council consider three matters before making a final decision on the proposals:
- (i) whether social partnership working with unions, staff and students has taken place?
  - (ii) whether available reserves were being used to minimise losses?
  - (iii) whether a decision could be delayed in order to await the outcome of the Medr review of subject demand, provision and distribution in HE in Wales commissioned by Welsh Government?
- 1105.2.2 that there was merit in delaying a decision as UEB plans may need to be revised in light of the Medr review; continuing as planned seemed imprudent and that rushing into a decision could lead to irreparable damage to the University;
- 1105.2.3 that in response the Vice-Chancellor advised:
- (i) that the University Executive Board considered themselves as custodians of the University and shared with staff a desire to ensure a successful University for the future;
  - (ii) that there was detailed engagement as part of the formal consultation process which was longer than at other equivalent organisations (90 days rather than 45 days);
  - (iii) that the Vice-Chancellor had spoken regularly to the HE and FE Minister and had shared the same information with her office as Senate had received;
  - (iv) the University was using its reserves each time it ran an operating deficit; that reserves could only be spent once and work was required to ensure the University was appropriately positioned both financially and academically;
  - (v) the University was an autonomous organisation; Medr as a regulator was clear that their role was not as a commissioning body and that Medr could not tell the University what to teach; the outcome of review would not be binding on autonomous institutions;
- 1105.2.4 that members indicated that it was desirable for the process of restructuring and downsizing to be extended to minimise the impact on staff and the process itself and the Vice-Chancellor advised that following the current consultation period decisions would be taken in June, which would be followed by an implementation period that would take much longer to complete;
- 1105.2.5 that it was a challenging context for meaningful consultation; it was difficult for staff to engage and present creative ideas when they felt afraid; it was difficult for a 90-day consultation period to feel beneficial in this context; that staff felt in

limbo and wished to have more time to rethink their careers and their position in the University and which could bring a greater ethic of care into the process; the Vice-Chancellor reiterated her commitment to supporting staff through the process, which was acknowledged as challenging for all involved;

- 1105.2.6 [Redacted]; that in 2023-24 only £50m was spent on capital investment; this needed to be significantly higher to cover the range of investment required in carbon net zero, residences, digital strategy, estates maintenance, etc.;
- 1105.2.7 the Motion was put to a vote by Senate members and the Motion was not carried; with 69 members present, 29 voting for and 34 against;
- 1105.3 that the Vice-Chancellor confirmed these discussions would be reported to Council via a report from Senate.