



# THE UNIVERSITY *of* EDINBURGH

## Electronic Senate

23 April to 7 May 2025

## Confirmed e-Senate Report

Comments raised via e-Senate can be accessed on the [Senate Members Portal](#).

### 1 Conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus / Emerita (e-S 24/25 4A)

Senate approved the conferment of the title of Professor Emeritus / Emerita on the following professors:

- Professor Judy Barringer, School of History, Classics and Archaeology
- Professor Greg Cowie, School of GeoSciences
- Professor Elaine Dzierzak, Edinburgh Medical School
- Professor Bill Earnshaw, School of Biological Sciences
- Professor Peter Keightley, School of Biological Sciences
- Professor Brian Main, Business School
- Professor Stephan Malinowski, School of History, Classics and Archaeology

Senate noted the special minutes provided for each professor.

Six members commented on this item.

Three members communicated their approval, with two members expressing a preference for conferment of the title of professor emeritus / emerita to be moved to ordinary meetings of Senate.

One member provided additional information in support of the conferment of the title of professor emeritus on Professor Bill Earnshaw. It was reported the Professor Earnshaw had recently been elected to membership of the National Academy of Sciences.

One member queried, in the context of the University's financial circumstances and the recent announcement on the freezing of academic promotions, whether recipients of the title of professor emeritus / emerita would continue to benefit from university office and laboratory space and from university resources.

One member did not approve the conferment of the title of professor emeritus / emerita via e-Senate on the principle that they considered Senate approval should be granted through quorate affirmation in an ordinary Senate meeting. The member added that a proportion of the special minutes did not adequately communicate how the professors would remain involved in scholarship and with the university; and communicated an expectation that the special minutes be revised accordingly.

## **2 Communications from the University Court (e-S24/25 4B)**

Senate noted the communications from the University Court as detailed within the paper and which related to Court's meeting of 24 February 2025.

Seven members commented on this item. Several comments indicated a desire from Senate members for Court Communications papers to include significantly more detail on how items relevant to Senate have been considered by the University Court.

Senate members' comments have been shared with the paper author.

### **2.1 Principal's Report**

One member noted that the Principal had reported on the introduction to Parliament of the Tertiary Education and Training (Funding and Governance) (Scotland) Bill, and sought further information on how the University Court would be engaging with the Bill as it developed.

### **2.2 Senate report**

In addition to the generalised comments on the level of detail provided within Court Communications papers, as referenced above, three members commented specifically on the level of detail associated with the Senate report item and a perceived low level of engagement by the University Court with Senate business.

At its meeting of 24 February 2025, Court received reports of Senate Business conducted at the Senate meetings held on 22 May\*, 18 June\*, 9 October\*, and 11 December 2024 and on 5 February 2025. Court also received reports of e-Senate business conducted between 13 and 27 November 2024, and between 8 and 22 January 2025. \*Where indicated, Court had previously received reports on the Senate meetings, and in these instances the reports related to the provision of confirmed minutes which Senate had approved on 5 February 2025.

### **2.3 Finance**

One member commented that they found the information contained within the University Finance SharePoint site to be lacking and unconvincing. Another member made reference to the April 2025 special meeting of Senate, and communicated a need for robust scrutiny of financial data by the University Court.

### **2.4 Student intakes 2025-26 – Early application insight**

One member queried whether early application data had been presented chronologically and, if so, whether any noticeable changes could be observed following the announcement that course and programme closures were likely. Another member commented that the report only made sense to them as they held prior knowledge on how student intake targets had been set.

### **2.5 Annual People Report for 2023-24**

Two members noted reference to there having been a notable reduction in the University's gender pay gap, and commented that recent moves to cap and then pause promotions, and also to cancel contribution rewards, could adversely affect such progress. One member suggested that members of the University Court should pay special note to the impact of such action on pay gaps and inequalities in career

progression; and highlighted findings in the [University's Equal Pay Audit & Equal Pay Statement 2021](#) (pg. 10) which had indicated an adverse impact on the gender pay gap at grade 10 which had arisen from a previous pause on staff promotion.

One member queried the relevance of findings from the 2023-24 academic year, given the impact that the University's financial situation was now having on staff at the University.

Another member noted that examples of positive developments had been highlighted, and queried whether consideration had been given to negative examples or issues for improvement.

### **3 Report from the Knowledge Strategy Committee (e-S24/25 4C)**

Senate noted the report from the Knowledge Strategy Committee (KSC) as detailed within the paper, and which related to the Committee's meetings of 30 January 2025 and 27 March 2025.

Senate members' comments on the report from the Knowledge Strategy Committee have been shared with the paper author.

#### **3.1 Comments relating to the meeting of 30 January 2025**

Two members commented on the report of the January 2025 meeting as follows:

##### **3.1.1 Knowledge Strategy Committee – Future Governance Update**

One member commented that there had not been proper Senate consultation on the future of the work currently assigned to the Knowledge Strategy Committee. The member added that they were concerned that the proposal might adversely affect academic governance and oversight associated with the University's IT strategy.

##### **3.1.2 Sustainable IT Update**

One member commented that the benefits of ELM be benchmarked not just against external genAI providers but also against a backdrop of the university actively discouraging the use of genAI outwith contexts where it had a specifically designed research or pedagogical purpose. The member considered that ELM compared considerably worse on all the criteria mentioned in the report.

##### **3.1.3 ELM Infrastructure Rollout Update**

One member commented that they were alarmed that unproven statistical language models were being progressed within the helpdesk infrastructure. The member urged caution and requested active measures to detect and mitigate against the risks of misinformation. The member queried whether the ISG Ethics Board submission and evaluation had been published, and whether it could be shared with members of Senate.

Another member observed that reference was made to there being a relatively low number of ELM users, and queried whether this was inconsistent with previous statements made on the value of ELM.

### **3.1.4 Chief Information Officer Update**

One member sought further information on consolidation within the technology sector, and made reference to a prior request for such information made through e-Senate.

### **3.2 Comments relating to the meeting of 27 March 2025**

Three members commented on the report of the March 2025 meeting as follows:

#### **3.2.1 Information Services Group Planning 2025-2030**

One member commented that, in the context of discussions on actions intended to address the University's financial circumstances, the member queried a college specific arrangement with a third-party organisation and the criteria which had led to the signing of such an agreement. The agreement had not been referenced within paper e-S24/25 4C.

#### **3.2.2 Committee Governance Update**

One member commented that there had not been proper Senate consultation on the future of the work currently assigned to the Knowledge Strategy Committee. The member added that they were concerned that the proposal might adversely affect academic governance and oversight associated with the University's IT strategy.

#### **3.2.3 Sustainable Printing Project**

Three members commented on the project, and the associated goal of reducing the University printer fleet by 50% and reducing overall printing by 50%. It was queried:

- How the 50% reduction targets had been reached, and what evidence such targets had been based on.
- What financial savings were anticipated from such reductions.
- Whether any consideration has been given to occupational health and safety issues associated with increased usage of screens.
- How decisions would be taken on which printers to retire or replace.

## **4 College Management Structure 2025-26 (e-S24/25 4D)**

Senate noted the College Management Structure for the 2025-26 academic year.

Three members commented on this item. One member queried the purpose of the paper. One member queried whether all College leadership roles should sit a grade 10. One member queried whether savings could be achieved through the rationalisation of some College leadership roles.