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UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE

PUBLISHED BY AUTHORITY

NOTICES

Calendar

23 October, *Friday*. Congregation of the Regent House at 10 a.m.

24 October, *Saturday*. Congregation of the Regent House at 10 a.m.

29 October, *Thursday*. Ballot of the Regent House, voting closes at 5 p.m.

1 November, *Sunday*. All Saints' Day. Commemoration of Benefactors. Scarlet Day. Preacher before the University at 11.30 a.m., The Reverend Dr Malcolm Guite, Fellow of Girton College and member of Pembroke College (*Lady Margaret's Preacher*).

3 November, *Tuesday*. Discussion **in the Senate-House** at 2 p.m. (see below).

9 November, *Monday*. Michaelmas Term divides.

Discussions (Tuesdays at 2 p.m.)	**Congregations (at 10 a.m. unless otherwise stated)**
3 November	23 and 24 October
15 December	28 November

Discussion on Tuesday, 3 November 2026

The Vice-Chancellor invites members of the Regent House, University and College employees, registered students and others qualified under the regulations for Discussions (*Statutes and Ordinances*, 2025, p. 112) to attend a Discussion on Tuesday, 3 November 2026. Following a request from the Chair of the Board of Scrutiny, the Council has arranged for the Discussion to take place **in person at 2 p.m. in the Senate-House**.

The following items will be discussed:

1. Thirty-first Report of the Board of Scrutiny, dated 5 October 2026 (p. 51).
2. Report of the Council, dated 21 October 2026, recommending a reduction in the officer staff at University Information Services (p. 64).

Attendees should aim to be seated in the Senate-House by 1.55 p.m. with the Discussion starting promptly at 2 p.m. Matriculated members of the University are requested to wear gowns; a small number of gowns are kept on site and may be borrowed on arrival.

Contributors unable to attend the Discussion in person may email their remarks to Discussions@admin.cam.ac.uk, by no later than 10 a.m. on the day of the Discussion for reading out by the Proctors,[1] or may ask someone else who is attending to read the remarks on their behalf.

For general information on Discussions see the *Reporter* website at https://www.reporter.admin.cam.ac.uk/discussions.

[1] Any comments sent by email should please begin with the name and title of the contributor as they wish it to be read out and include at the start a note of any College and/or Departmental affiliations held.

Report of the Council pursuant to Special Ordinance A (ii) 7 (divestment from fossil fuel and arms companies): Notice in response to Discussion remarks

15 October 2026

The Council has received the remarks made on the above Report at the Discussion on 14 July 2026 (*Reporter*, 2025–26: 6830, p. 572; 6834, p. 661).

There were remarks on both of the recommendations of this Report, repeated below:

1. For the reasons given in paragraphs 11 and 12, the Council has decided to withhold authorisation of the initiated Grace and recommends that the Regent House approves that decision.
2. The Council recommends that the Regent House endorse its approach to the University's investment in companies that manufacture conventional weapons, as described in paragraph 5 of this Report.

Several contributors (including Mr Copeman, Professor Grosse Ruse-Khan and Mr Haynes) challenge the technical reasons behind the first recommendation, suggesting there is a case for the supremacy of the views of the Regent House in decisions concerning the investment strategy of the University Endowment Fund (CUEF). The authority of the Cambridge University Endowment Trustee Body (CUETB) is not delegated to it by the Regent House; it is directly vested in the CUETB by the University's Statutes and Ordinances. The Regent House does not have any overall responsibility for the investments of the CUEF. Even if it did have such responsibility, the constraints that make the Council unsuitable to represent the University as trustee of the CUEF would also apply to the Regent House or another body appointed by it, with the same concerns arising around conflicts of interest. The express function of the CUETB is 'to represent the University in its capacity as sole trustee of the CUEF', including by representing the interests of unitholders (i.e. investors) as a whole.[1] In addition to the University, there are 18 Colleges and 6 charitable trusts invested in the CUEF, each with its own investment policy.

[1] See Regulation 5 of the Ordinance for the CUETB (*Statutes and Ordinances*, 2025, p. 126).

In discharging its responsibilities to those unitholders as a whole, the members of the CUETB are discharging trustee functions in respect of the CUEF and there can be no doubt that they are accordingly bound both constitutionally and by law to act in the best interests of all investors in the CUEF.

Whilst trustees of a charity can legitimately have an investment strategy that takes into account non-financial considerations, those trustees must have the *discretion* to determine that investment strategy. The Grace initiated by members of the Regent House *mandates* a specific investment strategy and therefore conflicts with a basic principle of trust law because it removes any discretion to follow an alternative strategy. The courts have routinely rejected arrangements that fetter trustee discretion. The Council is therefore recommending to the Regent House that it support the Council's decision not to authorise submission of the Grace.

The CUETB represents the University as trustee of the CUEF, but there is also the role of the University as investor in the CUEF. The duties and powers vested in the Council in Statute A IV 1(*a*) identify it as the University's charity trustee body in the general sense. In accordance with those duties and powers, how the University chooses to invest is a matter for decision by the Council, after taking into account other factors, including the views of the Regent House. Earlier this year, the Council discussed over the course of several meetings the findings of a working group it had commissioned to consider matters relating to investments in and research funded by companies belonging to the defence industry. The Council agreed to adopt the Working Group report's 11 recommendations. The Council also considered the Grace that is the subject of this Report, alongside the comments of its Working Group on investments in companies that manufacture conventional weapons, and decided to support a monitoring regime for this category of investments.

The remarks indicate widespread support for the Council's acceptance of the Working Group's recommendation to exclude investment of any University funds, either directly or indirectly, in any company that manufactures weapons that are illegal under English law. However, there is a difference of opinion concerning the Council's position on investment in companies that manufacture conventional weapons. Several commentators (including Mr Alaeddin, Mx Denis, Dr Estefan, Mr Fleishman, Ms Jackson, Dr Matar and Mr Shabana) draw attention to the use of conventional weapons in conflicts around the world and question the decision of the Council not to exclude investment in companies involved in their manufacture on ethical grounds, with some reflecting on the reputational risks of not doing so. Many in this group consider it unacceptable for the University to derive any financial gains from investment in such companies. Mr Copeman refers to a student referendum in which 84% of the over 4,000 students who voted supported a motion 'to end university investments and collaborations with institutions involved in occupation and weapons manufacture'. Professor Grosse Ruse-Khan suggests that the 'justifications presented [by the Working Group] for distinguishing between divestment from fossil fuels and arms are not sound, and certainly do not align with the criteria trustees would need to consider in their decisions on divestment'. Mx Denis notes that 'the nature of investments is such that money invested in one can be invested in another', and queries whether the returns on investments in the arms industry outweigh those achieved on investments in other industries.

Another group of contributors (including Mr Chalmers, Professor Dennis, Sir Christopher Greenwood, Professor Jones, Professor Penty, Dr Rutter and Professor Sutcliffe) observes the rise of interstate conflict and the importance of the defence industry to the preservation of national security and to the national economy, with increases in government spending on defence and related research. Sir Christopher Greenwood and others argue that whilst war is wrong, defence is not. Ms Hooper and Mr Lewisohn draw attention to the difference between investments in this category and those in fossil fuel companies, contrasting the existing energy transition towards renewables, which supports a policy of divestment, with the increasing investment in defence. Ms Hooper notes a lack of clarity on how divestment from the latter will materially reduce conflict or improve security. Mr Odgers notes the effectiveness of the CUEF 'fund of funds' model, and Dame Madeleine Atkins and Professor Maxwell observe the importance of the CUEF's continued strong financial performance in sustaining the University's mission, whilst Professor Philpott notes that stewardship provides leverage whilst divestment removes influence. Mr Lewisohn, after noting that the managers of funds in which the CUEF is invested were willing to support the CUEF's plans to reduce exposure to fossil fuel companies, anticipates that most of those managers would be unable or unwilling to adopt a policy of divestment from the defence sector, limiting the CUEF's ability to maintain its strong returns.

The Council, guided by the principles governing trustee decision-making to which several commentators refer, considered a similar range of arguments in reaching its decision to support a monitoring regime for – and not commit to a reduction to zero holdings in – this category of investments. The second recommendation of this Report asks Regent House members to endorse the Council's approach to the University's investment in companies that manufacture conventional weapons.

The Council agrees with Mr Copeman and Dr van Houten that the CUETB's decision in July to adopt a zero % monitoring threshold for investments in the conventional weapons category under the transparency reporting regime is a welcome development. Mr Lewisohn notes that the category the CUETB will use is the broader aerospace and defence sub-sector, as defined by MSCI's Global Industry Classification Standard. A zero % threshold means that the CUETB will receive a transparency report on all investments in this category annually, allowing the CUETB to review the level of exposure and the activities of those companies. It will then consider, based on its Responsible Investment Policy and the appetite of unitholders, whether it is necessary to discuss with UCIM measures to reduce that exposure or take other actions. The CUETB will, while adhering to confidentiality constraints around investments, communicate the conclusions of its annual monitoring exercise to the Council and other unitholders. The Council strongly welcomes this development and considers it a significant improvement over previous arrangements. More generally, the Council, together with several contributors, supports further discussion with the CUETB on what more can be done to improve transparency.

The Council is submitting Graces (Graces 1 and 2, p. 66) for the approval of the recommendations of this Report.

Reserved Matters Application for Cambridge West

15 October 2026

The Council has agreed, on the recommendation of the Estates Committee and the Planning and Resources Committee, to submit a Reserved Matters Application (RMA)[1] for a tennis and padel centre at Cambridge West. Plans for the centre are not yet sufficiently advanced to seek Regent House approval for its construction, as required by Statute F II 3 (*Statutes and Ordinances*, 2025, p. 47). However, the University must secure a Reserved Matters consent by 21 June 2027 to preserve the Cambridge West Outline Planning Consent granted in 2024, and the approval process is expected to take six months. If no qualifying RMA is determined by 21 June 2027, the outline consent will lapse, requiring a new outline planning submission before future development can proceed.

The project to build the tennis and padel centre supports the strategic objectives of both the Cambridge West Innovation District and the University's Strategy for Sport 2023–27. It will improve sports provision for students, staff and the wider community, support the growth of University sport, provide winter training facilities for University tennis teams and contribute to the long-term development of Cambridge West. A Grace will be submitted to seek approval for the construction of the new facility once the project has been taken through the Full Business Case process.

[1] For further information, see: https://www.gov.uk/guidance/making-an-application#approval-of-reserved-matters.

Demolition of a building on the Island site

15 October 2026

The yard servicing the University buildings on the Island site on the Cambridge Biomedical Campus is occupied in part by a small, modular building which has been vacant since 2020. The building is redundant and the School of Clinical Medicine has asked for it to be demolished, to maintain sufficient access for contractors and delivery vehicles serving the Island site following the planned installation, by Cambridge University Hospitals, of a new electricity substation, also within the service yard.

The estimated cost of demolition is £110,000. Subject to Regent House approval, the work is expected to be carried out in December 2026. The Council is submitting a Grace (Grace 3, p. 66) for the approval of the demolition of the building.

Statutes approved

15 October 2026

The Director of Governance and Compliance has received notice from the Clerk of the Privy Council that His Majesty the King, at a Council held on 14 October 2026, was pleased to approve amendments to Statute A IX 10, which were submitted in accordance with Grace 1 of 18 February 2026[1].

These changes update the text concerning limitations on the jurisdiction of the Commissary.

[1] See *Reporter*, 6815, 2025–26, p. 350.

VACANCIES, APPOINTMENTS, ETC.

Electors to the Professorship of Theoretical Linguistics (2000)

The Council has appointed members of the *ad hoc* Board of Electors to the Professorship of Theoretical Linguistics (2000) as follows:

Professor Sharon Peacock, *CHU*, in the Chair, as the Vice-Chancellor's deputy

(*a*) *on the nomination of the Council*:
Professor John David Rhodes, *CC*
Professor George Tsoulas, *University of York*

(*b*) *on the nomination of the General Board*:
Professor Anna Cardinaletti, *Università Ca' Foscari*
Professor Katarzyna Małgorzata Jaszczołt, *N*
Professor Napoleon Katsos, *T*

(*c*) *on the nomination of the Faculty Board of Modern and Medieval Languages and Linguistics*:
Professor Patrick Honeybone, *University of Edinburgh*
Professor Ianthi Tsimpli, *F*
Professor Jocelyn Wyburd, *CL*

Vacancies in the University

A full list of current vacancies can be found at https://www.cam.ac.uk/jobs.

Professorship of Theoretical Linguistics (2000) in the Department of Theoretical and Applied Linguistics; tenure: from 1 October 2027 or as soon as possible thereafter; informal enquiries: Professor Napoleon Katsos, Head of Department (email: nk248@cam.ac.uk); closing date: 30 November 2026; further details: https://www.cam.ac.uk/jobs/professorship-of-theoretical-linguistics-gn51420; quote reference: GN51420

The University actively supports equality, diversity and inclusion and encourages applications from all sections of society.

The University has a responsibility to ensure that all employees are eligible to live and work in the UK.

NOTICES BY FACULTY BOARDS, ETC.

Annual meetings of the Faculties

Asian and Middle Eastern Studies

The Co-chairs of the Faculty Board of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies give notice that the Annual Meeting of the Faculty will be held at **2 p.m. on Tuesday, 27 October 2026**, in Rooms 8 and 9, Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Sidgwick Avenue.

The main item of business will be the election of four members of the Faculty Board – one member under category (*a*) (i), two members under category (*c*) and one member under category (*d*) – in accordance with Regulation 1 of the General Regulations for the Constitution of the Faculty Boards (*Statutes and Ordinances*, 2025, p. 597).

Nominations for election should be received by Helen Meijer (email: ames-admin@ames.cam.ac.uk), Faculty of Asian and Middle Eastern Studies, Sidgwick Avenue, not later than Friday, 23 October 2026.

Earth Sciences and Geography

The Chair of the Faculty Board of Earth Sciences and Geography gives notice that the Annual Meeting of the Faculty will be held **at 2.15 p.m. on Tuesday, 17 November 2026** at the Department of Geography. Interested members should contact the Secretary of the Faculty Board, Megan Paul Lynch (email: facultyboardesg@admin.cam.ac.uk) for the agenda. Notice of any business should reach the Secretary via the email address above no later than 9 a.m. on Tuesday, 10 November 2026.

Law

The Chair of the Faculty Board of Law gives notice that the Annual Meeting of the Faculty will be held at **1 p.m. on Thursday, 12 November 2026** and it will be possible to attend the meeting either in person or online. The main item of business will be the election of two members of the Faculty Board in class (*c*) to serve from 1 January 2027, in accordance with Regulation 1 of the General Regulations for the Constitution of the Faculty Boards (*Statutes and Ordinances*, 2025, p. 597).

Nominations for election, confirmed by the proposer and seconder, for which the consent of the candidate must be obtained, and notice of any other business, should be received by Helen Waring (email: officersPA@law.cam.ac.uk), not later than 12 noon on Monday, 2 November 2026.

Music

The Chair of the Faculty Board of Music gives notice that the Annual Meeting of the Faculty will be held at **4 p.m. on Wednesday, 18 November 2026** at the Faculty of Music. Interested members should contact the Secretary of the Faculty Board, Jennifer Goodwin (email: facultymanager@mus.cam.ac.uk) for the agenda.

Notice of any business should reach the Secretary via the email address above no later than 9 a.m. on Monday, 26 October 2026.

Physics and Chemistry

The Chair of the Faculty Board of Physics and Chemistry gives notice that the Annual Meeting of the Faculty will be held at **2.15 p.m. on Friday, 13 November 2026** at the Institute of Astronomy. Interested members should contact the Secretary of the Faculty Board, Megan Paul Lynch (email: facultyboardpc@admin.cam.ac.uk) for the agenda. Notice of any business should reach the Secretary at the email address above no later than 9 a.m. on Wednesday, 4 November 2026.

REPORTS

Thirty-first Report of the Board of Scrutiny

The Board of Scrutiny begs leave to report to the University as follows:

Summary of recommendations detailed in the Report:

(*a*) The Board recommends that, in accordance with Statute A IX 2, the Council apply to the Chancellor for a declaration of the true meaning of the Statutes and, in particular (but without limitation), the true meaning of Statutes A III 1 and 3, A IV 1 and A V 1, including the distinction between 'powers' and 'responsibilities', the exclusivity or concurrence of the powers conferred by those Statutes, and the scope, under any of them, for the Council to authorise and the Regent House to enact a Grace (e.g. for an Ordinance) that is 'advisory' or not binding.

(*b*) The Board recommends that the Council consider requiring the Registrary (with the advice of the University Draftsman) to advise on and assist in preparing all Graces to be submitted to the Senate or the Regent House, whether initiated by the Council itself or proceeding from any University body, or from individual members of the Senate or the Regent House.

(*c*) The Board (i) recommends that the Council review the standing of the Senior Leadership Team to be assigned responsibilities in relation to risk, as asserted in the University's financial statements, and (ii) urges the Vice-Chancellor to monitor the meetings of the Team to ensure that it operates as a means of effective coordination without impeding or circumventing the University's formal governance processes.

(*d*) The Board recommends that the General Board and the Council continue to strengthen the strategic articulation of the University's long-term financial model to all stakeholders.

(*e*) The Board recommends that the General Board review its arrangements for the oversight of strategic academic risks. Such a review should: consider how emerging risks to academic provision, professional accreditation, financial sustainability and departmental resilience are identified and escalated; clarify the respective responsibilities of Departments, Schools and the central University; ensure that communications accurately reflect the status of institutional decision-making; and set out clear expectations for consultation with the Regent House where decisions may have significant academic or constitutional implications.

(*f*) The Board endorses Recommendation 8 of the Teaching Review pertaining to 'curriculum clarity' and underlines the need to give full care and attention to the robust articulation and compatibility of learning goals and professional competences across all Departments and Faculties.

(*g*) The Board recommends that the University be determined and proactive in communicating the advantages of any new educational models and inclusive practices that emerge as compelling, while also offering support and advice to those for whom change is not straightforward.

(*h*) The Board recommends that the University continue to communicate evolving minimum legal and regulatory requirements concerning GenAI to Schools and Departments, ideally from an authoritative and easily accessible central source. Similarly, central definitions of academic misconduct and misuse of technology should be regularly updated and communicated to reflect the changing situation.

(*i*) The Board recommends that the University both articulate minimum standards and, perhaps more importantly, provide mechanisms for sharing best practice to ensure that policy, staff development, student guidance and assessment practices keep pace with the rapid evolution of the technology.

(*j*) The Board recommends that the General Board and the Information Services Committee actively develop and communicate policy to support due diligence and transparent procurement processes by Schools, Faculties and Departments, to ensure that risks are managed and safeguards implemented in relation to the licensing and use of GenAI products.

(*k*) The Board recommends that the General Board periodically review areas where multiple bodies have related remits, with the aim of ensuring that institutional structures remain coherent, strategically aligned and clearly understood.

(*l*) The Board recommends the establishment of a small, independent review group to examine the current grievance procedures, including the differences in arrangements applying to different categories of staff; consult those who have experience of using or administering them; consider the relevant data, evidence and experience (including elsewhere in the sector); and make clear recommendations before any changes are developed by the Human Resources Committee and considered by the Council.

1. The Board of Scrutiny is established by Statute to provide independent analysis and oversight on behalf of the Regent House by scrutinising the Annual Report of the Council (including that of the General Board to the Council), the Abstract of the Accounts, and Reports proposing allocations from the Chest. The Board has the right to comment on related matters that it believes should be drawn to the attention of the University, including issues of policy and governance.

2. In recent years the Board has repeatedly drawn attention to concerns regarding financial sustainability, institutional coordination, operational delivery, transparency, and the implementation of major transformation programmes. The Board recognises the substantial efforts undertaken across the University in response to these challenges and welcomes signs of increasing attention to strategic prioritisation and operational oversight.

3. However, the Board remains deeply concerned that both the matters canvassed in this Report and events subsequent to it may reflect an emerging culture in which insufficient challenge, as well as limited participation, ineffective listening and diminishing institutional accountability[1] and trust leads to a lack of robust decision-making. Where a culture of supportive challenge is not well established, critical discussion can quickly escalate into questions around trust and behaviour.

4. The Board remains concerned that the scale and complexity of the University increasingly challenges traditional mechanisms of governance, assurance and coordination. The collegiate and devolved structures of the University remain one of its defining strengths; but they also require increasingly sophisticated systems of communication, reporting, financial understanding and operational management if institutional coherence is to be maintained.

5. A recurring theme in the Board's work this year has been the distinction between strategy and assurance. In many areas, the University adopts ambitious strategies, reviews, frameworks and plans. However, the Board has frequently found it difficult to determine whether implementation is proceeding effectively; whether outcomes are being measured consistently; whether responsibilities are sufficiently clear; and whether the institution possesses adequate mechanisms to assure itself that intended benefits are actually being realised.

6. The Board is particularly concerned that the cumulative burden of transformation activity, financial constraint, regulatory complexity and administrative growth risks creating a widening gap between institutional ambition and operational delivery capacity. In some areas, substantial effort has been devoted to programme governance, consultation and planning processes without equivalent clarity regarding sequencing, affordability, prioritisation, measurable outcomes or institutional ownership.

7. In this Report, the Board focuses particularly on University governance and constitutional arrangements; financial sustainability; the oversight of strategic academic risk; teaching reform and inclusive practice; the implications of generative AI for teaching and assessment; institutional overlap and organisational complexity; administrative growth; and student and staff grievance systems.

Governance

Powers of the Regent House, the Council and the General Board

8. The Council's 2024–25 Annual Report records two Graces initiated by members of the Regent House (on injunctions and on benefactors' names) and one amendment to a Council Grace (on Academic Career Pathways) initiated by members of the Regent House; the Council held each of these to be 'advisory' or not binding on the Council or the General Board but nonetheless authorised their submission to the Regent House.[2] In the course of 2025–26, the Council authorised the submission of two further Graces (concerning the process for suspending or terminating admission to a Tripos) that it similarly held to be 'advisory'.[3]

9. The Board observes, first, that this recent practice contrasts with practice in relation to comparable Graces initiated by members of the Regent House in the immediately preceding years. For example, in 2023–24, the Council authorised an amendment to its Grace on the Employer-Justified Retirement Age, with no indication that it would be advisory; and the Council respected the defeat of its Grace on an additional Pro-Vice-Chancellor.[4] In 2022–23, the Council decided not to authorise submission of a Grace on fossil fuel industry ties and sought the Regent House's approval of that decision in accordance with Special Ordinance A (ii) 7;[5] and the Council authorised submission on two Graces concerning arrangements for examinations, one of which was approved but neither of which was said not to bind the Council or the General Board.[6] Moreover, on at least one occasion in the 2025–26 academic year, the Council decided not to authorise submission of a Grace (on divestment from fossil fuel and arms companies) and sought the Regent House's approval of that decision in accordance with Special Ordinance A (ii) 7, rather than authorising the Grace but holding it to be ineffective.[7]

10. Second, the Board observes that both the concept of an 'advisory Grace' under Special Ordinance A (ii) and authorisation of the submission of Graces that the Council holds to be ineffective or beyond the powers of the Regent House appear to be constitutional novelties.[8] A Grace is an 'act, vote or decree of the Regent House or the Senate';[9] it is a 'resolution'[10] that, when enacted, takes effect as a Statute, Ordinance, Order, election, decree or conferral of a degree. In this light, the Board shares the concerns expressed to it about the constitutional power for the Regent House to enact 'advisory' Graces (even if this were expressed in the text of the Graces, which it was not in any of the cases mentioned above) and about the constitutional power of the Council to authorise submission of an ineffective Grace.

[1] Accountability: Accountability is the acknowledgement and assumption of responsibility for actions, decisions, and their consequences. Thomson Reuters Practical Law (n.d.) Accountability principle. Practical Law. Available at: https://uk.practicallaw.thomsonreuters.com/w-014-8164 (Accessed: 12 August 2026). Among others, three critical factors to consider within an accountability structure are clear timelines, formal reporting mechanisms, and robust whistleblowing and grievance procedures.

[2] *Reporter*, 6808, 2025–26, p. 176 at p. 181.

[3] *Reporter*, 6827, 2025–26, p. 508. (Note that a member of the Board of Scrutiny was the petition lead for these Graces and several other members of Board supported them, all in their personal capacities.)

[4] *Reporter*, 6762, 2024–25, p. 152 at p. 157.

[5] *Reporter*, 6673, 2022–23, p. 84.

[6] *Reporter*, 6720, 2023–24, p. 131 at p. 139.

[7] *Reporter*, 6830, 2025–26, p. 572 at p. 574.

[8] The Board acknowledges two earlier instances in which the Council, though not describing a Grace as 'advisory' or 'not binding', authorised the submission of a Grace (both on fossil fuel investments) that it considered, in the case of the 2017 Grace, 'could not operate as a mandate in respect of the exercise of the Council's fiduciary responsibility for the University's investment practices': *Reporter*, 6489, 2017–18, p. 197 at p. 199 (see paragraph (iv)(*a*) under Governance and constitutional matters) and *Reporter*, 6450, 2016–17, p. 292; and *Reporter*, 6733, 2024–25, p. 430.

[9] Statute A X 2(*g*) (*Statutes and Ordinances*, 2025, p. 12).

[10] Statute A VIII (*c*) (*Statutes and Ordinances*, 2025, p. 10).

11. Third, the Board observes that the Council's reasons for holding Graces to be 'advisory' or not binding on the Council or the General Board reflect a growing disparity in the understanding of basic elements of University governance.

The Board notes divergent understandings about the functions, powers and relations between the Regent House, the Council and the General Board. On one understanding, that of the Council:

- The Council has 'exclusive authority to conduct legal proceedings on behalf of the University', by virtue of Statute F II 2 and the Ordinance on Legal Powers.[11]
- The Council has 'sole responsibility for decisions about investments'.[12]
- The Council has authority to decide what information should be published about benefactors, by virtue of being 'the trustee body of the University and the University's principal policy-making body under Statute A IV 1(*a*)'.[13]
- The General Board would not be bound to implement the provisions of a Grace – or at least those provisions resulting from an amendment initiated by members of the Regent House (the relevant Notice does not indicate a view on whether the rest of the Grace is binding) – on the basis that the General Board 'is responsible under Statute A V 1 for the academic and educational policy of the University, and under Statute C II 2 for processes for the management of employment by the University'.[14]
- The General Board 'has broad powers vested in it, most notably as set out in Statute A V 1(*a*), which makes it responsible for the University's academic and educational policy and for the management of the University's academic and educational affairs'; '[t]hese powers are … directly vested in the General Board in Statute'; and, though these powers are 'qualified by reference to the powers of the Regent House and the responsibilities of the Council', the 'powers of the Regent House are (in this context) its legislative powers'.[15]
- The 1994 reforms to the Statutes recommended by the Wass Syndicate envisaged that powers would, by Statute, be transferred from the Regent House and vested exclusively instead in the Council and the General Board within their independent respective remits.[16]
- The residual powers of the Regent House are to enact Special Ordinances and Ordinances within its remit, to hold the Council and the General Board accountable by receiving and voting on their Annual Reports, and to conduct the elections that are within its remit.

12. The Board also observes that the first sentence of *The Regent House*: *A University governance guide*, produced by the Governance and Compliance Division, has been changed. The November 2023 edition begins, 'The Regent House is the University's governing body …'; this reflects Statute A III 1. The subsequent Easter Term 2025 edition begins, 'The Regent House is the University's legislative and principal electoral body';[17] the Board has not been able to identify an express basis for this text in the Statutes but, rather, understands it to be an interpretation of the Statutes, consistent with the change that appears to have taken place in the Council's understanding between 2023–24 and 2024–25.

13. Whereas the Council expresses its view clearly by Notice, competing views are more varied and are expressed in different places (including, of course, relevant fly-sheets and Discussion remarks). While it may be, therefore, that no particular single person asserts all of the following, the Board nevertheless identifies the key elements of a second understanding about the functions, powers and relations between the Regent House, the Council and the General Board:

- The Regent House is the 'governing body' of the University, pursuant to Statute A III 1, and may, by Grace, exercise 'powers of enacting, issuing and amending Special Ordinances, Ordinances and Orders' (i.e. powers that might be called legislative, by Special Ordinances and Ordinances, and also powers that might be called executive, by Orders[18]), 'except so far as such powers are assigned by Statute to any other authority', pursuant to Statute A III 3.[19]
- Statute A IV 1(*a*) assigns 'responsibilities' to the Council and 'power to take such action as is necessary for it to discharge these responsibilities' but does not assign to the Council 'powers of enacting, issuing and amending Special Ordinances, Ordinances and Orders' so as to engage the proviso to Statute A III 3. No Statute expressly assigns 'sole responsibility' or 'exclusive authority' to the Council in any matter.
- Statute F II 2 provides that the 'Council shall be responsible for the care, management, and maintenance of all property … owned by the University or held in trust for University purposes, except such as may be committed by Statute or Ordinance to the care and management of some other University body'; it does not assign to the Council 'powers of enacting, issuing and amending Special Ordinances, Ordinances and Orders' so as to engage the proviso to Statute A III 3.

[11] *Reporter*, 6795, 2024–25, p. 771.

[12] *Reporter*, 6759, 2024–25, p. 112.

[13] *Reporter*, 6795, 2024–25, p. 771.

[14] *Reporter*, 6778, 2024–25, p. 456.

[15] *Reporter*, 6827, 2025–26, p. 508.

[16] For the Council's view in relation to the General Board in particular, see *Reporter*, 6827, 2025–26, p. 508. In the Report of the Wass Syndicate (*Reporter*, 5399, 1988–89, p. 613) see, in particular, paragraphs 5.1.5 (p. 621), 8.1.4 (p. 625) and 9.3.2 (p. 627).

[17] The same proposition is asserted at https://www.cam.ac.uk/about-the-university/how-the-university-and-colleges-work/governance, where a somewhat circumscribed role for the Regent House is presented, without reference to its being the 'governing body' of the University: 'The Regent House is responsible for making changes to the University's Statutes and Ordinances. It also receives and debates reports from various University bodies, and submissions from its members.'

[18] The concept of an 'Order' was introduced into the Statutes by the University Commissioners in 1925–26 to refer to 'an approved Grace which is neither a Statute nor an Ordinance': *Reporter*, 2561, 1925–26, p. 146.

[19] An example of such assignment is Statute A I 8 (*Statutes and Ordinances*, 2025, p. 3), which provides for the Senate to enact Ordinances regulating its own procedure.

- The Ordinance on Legal Powers was made by the Regent House and can therefore be amended by the Regent House; moreover, if the Council's view of the Statutes is correct, the Ordinance is and has been ineffective.
- The characterisation of the members of the Council as 'charity trustees' for the purposes of section 177 of the Charities Act 2011 confers on the Council no powers in addition to those conferred by the Statutes, save where a provision of that Act confers specific powers notwithstanding the Statutes (the Statutes being the 'trusts' of the University, within the meaning of section 353(1) of the Act).
- Statute A V 1(*a*) assigns 'responsibilities' to the General Board; in relation to those responsibilities, Statute A V 1(*d*) assigns only a 'power to make regulations … such regulations not to be inconsistent with the provisions of any Statute, Ordinance or Order'; accordingly, the proviso to Statute A III 3 is not engaged; further, pursuant to Statute A V 1(*a*), the responsibilities of the General Board are expressly '[s]ubject to the powers of the Regent House'.
- Accordingly, in relation to the Graces that the Council has held to be 'advisory' or not binding, the Council and the General Board may have relevant executive powers that are concurrent with those of the Regent House but have no powers that exclude those of the Regent House under Statute A III 1; this understanding of concurrent (rather than exclusive) powers is afforced by the words 'principal' in Statute A IV 1(*a*) and 'subject to' in Statute A V 1(*a*).
- The Report and recommendations of the Wass Syndicate are consistent with the continuing and relevantly overriding powers of the Regent House, which was to remain the 'final arbiter of University policy'.[20] Moreover, the Wass Syndicate's recommendation that the General Board be given the power to make and amend Ordinances[21] was not translated unchanged into the Statutes: by the time it was enacted in 1994,[22] the power, exercisable only 'after consulting other bodies, as appropriate', was confined to enacting Ordinances and issuing Orders relating to a narrower range of subordinate bodies than originally proposed (following a ballot in December 1993)[23] and also to a narrower range of examinations; in particular, on the recommendation of the Statutes and Ordinances Revision Syndicate, 'the regulations for the degrees of B.A. and M.A. [were] excluded from General Board jurisdiction, as [were] the general regulations for Honours Examinations and the regulations for allowances to candidates … it [was] proposed that these should remain under the control of the Regent House'.[24] In the current version of the Statutes, following the 2014 technical review, the power is not to make 'Ordinances' but merely 'regulations', and those regulations are expressly subordinate to Statutes, Ordinances and Orders.[25]
- In any event, what matters is what the Statutes provide, not what the Wass Syndicate may have envisaged.
- The exclusivist view taken by the Council would have implausible consequences. Consider an analogy. Statute A I 3 confers power on the Chancellor to admit candidates to degrees; and it does so without qualification. Regulation 4 of the Ordinance on Admission to Degrees provides that no degree shall be conferred upon any person unless certain procedural steps have been taken, one of which is a Grace approved by the Regent House.[26] If the Council considers that an Ordinance requiring a Grace to suspend or terminate admission to a Tripos would be contrary to Statute because Statute A V 1(*a*) assigns 'responsibility' (not 'power') for academic and educational policy to the General Board,[27] it might appear to follow that Regulation 4 of the Ordinance on Admission to Degrees is invalid because it is inconsistent with Statute A I 3.
- The view taken by the Council in respect of amendments initiated by members of the Regent House to Graces initiated by the Council has the further implausible consequences that the Regent House would have power to enact a Grace as initiated by the Council but not the power to amend it before enactment, even where the submission of those amendments is authorised by the Council, and that the Regent House would have power to make an Ordinance by Grace initiated by the Council but not subsequently to amend that Ordinance by Grace initiated by members of the Regent House.

14. Beyond expressing concern that they have arisen, the Board takes no position in relation to these or any other arguments; it sets out these views simply to illustrate the profound and apparently deepening disconnect about fundamental provisions in the University's Statutes. The extent of that disconnect is reflected in the fact that nearly a thousand members of the Regent House joined the petition for one of the Graces that the Council held to be 'advisory'.[28] The Board considers it imperative that an authoritative interpretation of the Statutes be obtained as promptly as is practicable, to strengthen confidence in the University's governance framework and governing institutions.

[20] *Reporter*, 5399, 1988–89; see paragraph 5.1.8 (p. 622); see also the diagram at Appendix E (p. 645).

[21] *Reporter*, 5399, 1988–89, paragraph 5.1.7 (p. 621–22).

[22] See Grace 1 of 26 January 1994 and Order in Council dated 22 June 1994.

[23] See *Reporter*, 5573, 1993–94, paragraph 5.2 (p. 388) and recommendation I(*b*) (p. 390).

[24] *Reporter*, 5549, 1992–93, paragraph 5.1.8 (p. 775); and see schedule K to the Statutes as amended by Grace 1 of 26 January 1994 and Order in Council dated 22 June 1994.

[25] Moreover, in considering any proposal for enacting or amending an Ordinance that is likely to prove controversial, the General Board agreed to consult the Regent House by Grace: see the 'Statement of intention' (*Statutes and Ordinances*, 2025, p. 122), also adopting the recommendation of the Statutes and Ordinances Revision Syndicate: see *Reporter*, 5549, 1992–93, paragraph 5.1.9 (p. 775) and recommendation VIII (p. 814).

[26] *Statutes and Ordinances*, 2025, p. 171.

[27] *Reporter*, 6827, 2025–26, p. 508.

[28] *Reporter*, 6815, 2025–26, p. 337 and p. 344.

15. Accordingly, **the Board recommends that, in accordance with Statute A IX 2, the Council apply to the Chancellor for a declaration of the true meaning of the Statutes and, in particular (but without limitation), the true meaning of Statutes A III 1 and 3, A IV 1 and A V 1, including the distinction between 'powers' and 'responsibilities', the exclusivity or concurrence of the powers conferred by those Statutes, and the scope, under any of them, for the Council to authorise and the Regent House to enact a Grace (e.g. for an Ordinance) that is 'advisory' or not binding.**

Preparation of Graces

16. When the Council of the Senate replaced the Caput in 1856, its first enumerated duty was to 'consider *and prepare* all Graces to be offered to the Senate, whether proceeding from individual members of the Senate or from Syndicates'.[29] When University governance was modernised under the 1926 Statutes, the first enumerated duty of the Council was again to 'consider *and prepare* all Graces to be submitted to the Senate or the Regent House, whether initiated by the Council itself or proceeding from any University body, or from individual members of the Senate.[30] Although this provision disappeared with the amendment of Statute A IV 1 in 1974, it remained the practice of the University Draftsman into recent decades to assist members of the Regent House in drafting proper and effective Graces. In addition to avoiding technical infelicity (or invalidity) and promoting efficiency, this practice promoted the good governance objectives of transparency, due process and participation. The Board was therefore surprised to note that, in respect of a 2026 Grace (on divestment from fossil fuel and arms companies) initiated by members of the Regent House, which the Council decided not to authorise because of its incompatibility, as drafted, with trust law, 'a modified version … apparently compliant with trusts law … was put before the Council' but was, it seems, taken no further.[31]

17. Preparation of legislative texts is no less a specialised skill in 2026 than in 1926 or in 1856; indeed, the regulatory thicket is considerably denser. The Board, of course, expresses no view on the policy of the 2026 Grace, or the alternative policy that the Council pursued; however, the Board suggests that it might have been preferable for the Council properly to 'prepare' the Grace proposed by members of the Regent House, so that the competing policies could be tested on their merits, rather than on technicalities. Although preparation of Graces is not listed among the duties of the Registrary in the amended Special Ordinance C (iv) proposed by Grace 2 of 29 July 2026,[32] the Council's consultation report on proposals for changes to senior administrative offices signalled that, under the redistribution proposed, 'a significant part of the Registrary's role would involve engaging with the wider academic community and its formal structures such as the Regent House'.[33]

18. Accordingly, **the Board recommends that the Council consider requiring the Registrary (with the advice of the University Draftsman) to advise on and assist in preparing all Graces to be submitted to the Senate or the Regent House, whether initiated by the Council itself or proceeding from any University body, or from individual members of the Senate or the Regent House.**

Senior Leadership Team

19. The Council's 2024–25 Annual Report also makes reference to the 'Senior Leadership Team', defined '[f]or this purpose' as comprising 'the Vice-Chancellor, the Pro-Vice-Chancellors, the Heads of the Schools, the Registrary, the Chief Financial Officer, the Executive Director of Development and Alumni Relations, and the Executive Director of Communications and External Affairs'.[34] Though not novel,[35] the prominence of the 'Senior Leadership Team' is relatively recent: so far as the Board has been able to ascertain, it first appeared in the *Reporter* in connection with a Council Notice about Pro-Vice-Chancellors more than a decade ago;[36] however, it acquired capital letters only in the Council's 2022–23 Annual Report.[37] More recently, the Audit Committee's Report has started referring to an 'extended senior leadership team'.[38] The Estates Division and the University Information Services now also appear to have 'senior leadership teams'.[39]

20. The Board has been told that the Senior Leadership Team is a coordinating and deliberative group; that it takes no decisions but, rather, generates ideas to be taken forward in Syndicates and Committees; and that it is used as a forum for consultation, and for communication, about proposals and decisions. The Board heard evidence that the Senior Leadership Team has no formal composition or standing orders, keeps no minutes and publishes no reports; the Board understands that the full group meets weekly and that a subset excluding the Heads of School meets weekly in addition.

[29] Cambridge University Act 1856, s. 5 (emphasis added).

[30] 1926 Statutes, Statute A IV 1 (emphasis added).

[31] *Note of Dissent*, *Reporter*, 6830, 2025–26, p. 574.

[32] *Reporter*, 6835, 2025–26, p. 681 at p. 683 and p. 692 at p. 693.

[33] *Reporter*, 6823, 2025–26, p. 447.

[34] *Reporter*, 6808, 2025–26, p. 176.

[35] Members of the Regent House have drawn attention to the phenomenon in Discussion remarks for several years; see, for example: *Reporter*, 6685, 2022–23, p. 318 and *Reporter*, 6740, 2023–24, p. 565.

[36] *Reporter*, 6358, 2014–15, p. 26.

[37] *Reporter*, 6720, 2023–24, p. 131.

[38] *Reporter*, 6765, 2024–25, p. 209 at p. 211 (paragraph 5) and *Reporter*, 6809, 2025–26, p. 198 at p. 200 (paragraph 5).

[39] See, for example, *Reporter*, 6704, 2022–23, p. 723 at p. 731 (see Annex D) and *Reporter*, 6829, 2025–26, p. 541 at p. 545.

21. The Board naturally endorses all effective forums for cooperation and communication between officers; coordination between the elements of the University's complex governing framework is to be welcomed. However, it has also been reported to the Board that some proposals are not taken through formal governance structures until the Senior Leadership Team has 'signed them off'. The Board also notes that the University's financial statements now routinely assert that the Senior Leadership Team 'is responsible for identifying and managing risks across the University's activities'.[40] These give the Board some pause.

22. Recourse to informal, un-minuted meetings of the Senior Leadership as a necessary step in the process of decision-making risks diverting the general management of the University from the hands of the Council, the General Board, Syndicates and Committees, where the Statutes envisage it should lie. Assigning 'responsibilities' to such a body – not least important responsibilities for identifying and managing risks – strikes the Board as, at the very least, unwise. While coordination is obviously a sound function for meetings of such a body, consultation and communication – beyond a certain point – appear to the Board more controversial, both in view of the risk of circumventing statutory structures and because the membership of the Senior Leadership Team might appear at once over-inclusive and under-inclusive: over-inclusive, in that it blurs the division of responsibilities between the Council and the General Board; and under-inclusive in that it excludes the elected members of the Council and the General Board.

23. Accordingly, **the Board (i) recommends that the Council review the standing of the Senior Leadership Team to be assigned responsibilities in relation to risk, as asserted in the University's financial statements, and (ii) urges the Vice-Chancellor to monitor the meetings of the Team to ensure that it operates as a means of effective coordination without impeding or circumventing the University's formal governance processes.**

Financial sustainability

24. The Board welcomes the continued progress made in strengthening financial planning, and the clearer articulation of the University's financial position through the Allocations Report and accompanying supporting information.[41] Compared with previous years, there is greater transparency regarding the assumptions underlying financial planning and the actions being taken to improve the University's long-term financial sustainability.

25. However, the Board notes that the University's own financial planning suggests that the period in which financial improvement could be achieved primarily through incremental efficiency savings may be coming to an end. The Resource Management Committee concludes that further material reductions in professional services expenditure are unlikely without structural and organisational change.[42] This represents an important shift in emphasis. The challenge facing the University is therefore no longer simply one of identifying further efficiencies, but of determining the longer-term operating model required to achieve financial sustainability.

26. The Board observes that the University's medium-term financial planning continues to anticipate a recurring operating deficit within the Academic University, albeit at a significantly reduced level compared to recent years. Whilst this represents welcome progress, it raises a broader strategic question regarding the University's intended long-term financial model. Greater clarity would assist the Regent House in understanding the University's long-term financial strategy, including the role, if any, of recurring operating deficits within its planned operating model and the means by which the University intends to achieve long-term financial sustainability, without suffering an appreciable opportunity cost by using investment gains and Press and Assessment surpluses to offset operating deficits instead of investing in new initiatives.

27. The Board recognises that the University's legacy financial systems required replacement and welcomes the introduction of the Enhanced Financial Transparency (EFT) programme as a significant investment in the University's financial infrastructure. Improved financial information, more consistent reporting and greater transparency should support better decision-making across the institution. However, the Board considers it important to distinguish between improvements in financial systems and improvements in the University's underlying financial position. Better information can enable better decisions, but it does not, of itself, resolve structural financial challenges. The financial benefits of EFT will therefore depend not solely upon the implementation of the system itself, but upon the decisions that are subsequently taken using the improved information that it provides. This is a process that will take years rather than months; EFT itself will also continue to evolve over time; consequently, the improvements in financial efficiency that continue to be attributed in some quarters to the implementation of EFT should not be over anticipated. Better information does not, by itself, improve finances; better decisions do.

28. **The Board recommends that the General Board and the Council continue to strengthen the strategic articulation of the University's long-term financial model to all stakeholders.** In particular, future reporting should demonstrate more clearly how investments in financial systems, transformation programmes and organisational change contribute to measurable improvements in financial sustainability, organisational effectiveness and the long-term resilience of the Academic University.

[40] See, for example, the section on Principal risks and uncertainties, and the Statement of internal control, in *Reporter*, 6694, 2022–23, p. 487 at p. 496 and p. 503; *Reporter*, 6731, 2023–24, p. 298 at p. 308 and p. 315; *Reporter*, 6773, 2024–25, p. 294 at p. 305 and p. 312; and the University's Annual Reports and Financial Statements 2025, available at https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2025-26/weekly/6833/Annual_Reports_Financial_Statements-2025.pdf, p. 32 and p. 42.

[41] See *Reporter*, 6808, 2025–26, p. 176; and the University's Annual Reports and Financial Statements 2025, available at https://www.admin.cam.ac.uk/reporter/2025-26/weekly/6833/Annual_Reports_Financial_Statements-2025.pdf.

[42] Resource Management Committee; 6 January 2026; Minute 26.01.

Strategic academic risk

29. Events surrounding the future of the Department of Veterinary Medicine were among the most significant governance issues considered by, and beyond, the University in 2025–26.[43] Although the immediate catalyst was the Department's failure to retain full accreditation by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS), the issues under consideration reflected a combination of long-standing academic, operational and financial challenges. The debate extended well beyond veterinary education itself and raised broader questions concerning strategic oversight, institutional decision-making, consultation and accountability. The Board's observations are not directed towards the merits of the decisions ultimately reached, but rather towards the governance processes by which those decisions were developed, communicated and scrutinised.

30. The Board notes that both the accreditation difficulties and wider questions concerning the Department's long-term financial sustainability had developed over an extended period before reaching the point at which fundamental decisions about the future of the course were being considered.[44] This raises wider questions about how strategic risks affecting academic provision are identified, monitored and escalated within the University's governance structures. Professional accreditation, financial sustainability and academic resilience are institutional risks as well as departmental ones, particularly where a course contributes significantly to the University's teaching, research and public reputation. In such circumstances, there is a legitimate expectation that Schools and the central University work together to identify emerging risks sufficiently early to avoid decisions having to be taken under significant time pressure and internal and external lobbying. It is not clear that the Vet School was as well supported in the years leading up to recent events as it might have been.

31. The Board was informed that there was a request to increase undergraduate student numbers from the Department in 2019, before the present difficulties arose, which the Board understands was not pursued. Whether or not such an increase would have addressed the challenges subsequently encountered, the episode illustrates the importance of taking a long-term view of academic sustainability. Where departments identify structural pressures that may threaten future resilience, there should be clear mechanisms for considering whether institutional decisions, including those relating to student numbers, resourcing and infrastructure, can mitigate those risks before they become matters requiring urgent intervention. Clearly, strategic decisions affecting academic provision, student numbers and financial sustainability are closely interconnected. Considered in isolation, individual decisions may appear reasonable; taken together, however, they may have significant implications for the long-term resilience of a department.

32. Perhaps the most significant governance issue arising from the episode concerned constitutional process rather than the substantive outcome. The two Graces submitted to the Regent House reflected a widespread concern that decisions of such significance should be subject to formal consultation and approval by the Regent House, rather than being implemented solely through the General Board's regulatory power and general responsibility.[45] Whether or not that concern was ultimately justified, the level of support for the Graces demonstrated the importance attached by members of the Regent House to transparency, consultation and constitutional accountability when major academic decisions are contemplated. The constitutional debate that followed suggests that, for many members of the Regent House, trust in the process by which decisions were being reached became almost as important as the decision itself.

33. The Board further notes concerns regarding the sequencing of decision-making and the communication of those decisions. Consideration was initially given to the suspension of admission to the undergraduate Tripos before there was an agreed long-term strategy for veterinary education. During this period, applicants were informed – not by the Department or by the Colleges, who admit to Tripos courses pursuant to Statute B I 3(*a*), but by the School of the Biological Sciences – that the School had 'recommended that the University cease veterinary medicine education at Cambridge', albeit that this was a recommendation subject to further discussion before a final decision would be made. During the course of its enquiries, the Board received two different explanations as to why this communication was considered necessary. The first explained that it was necessary to pre-empt an anticipated leak of the information, and the second explained that communication was a requirement of the regulator. Neither of these explanations fully addresses the governance questions concerning whether external communications should anticipate a decision that remained subject to consideration by the University's central bodies and by whom such communications should be made and when. Where decisions have significant implications for recruitment, reputation and stakeholder confidence, it is particularly important that communications accurately reflect the status of, and responsibility for, institutional decision-making. This is especially important where communications may discourage future applicants and thereby have implications for the long-term viability of a programme under review.

34. Communication with other stakeholders was also widely perceived to have been unsatisfactory throughout much of the process. This contributed to uncertainty amongst staff, students and the wider veterinary profession, and appears to have undermined confidence in both the decision-making process and institutional leadership. The publication of the General Board's analysis and its commitment to keep the Regent House informed represented important steps towards rebuilding confidence, but the episode nevertheless illustrates the importance of clear and timely communication whenever significant institutional change is under consideration.

35. More broadly, the Board considers that this episode demonstrates the value of earlier institutional engagement with strategic academic risks. Earlier intervention, clearer governance arrangements and more structured communication may help to reduce the need for decisions to be taken under significant time pressure and thereby strengthen confidence in both the process and the outcome. The issues raised by the future of veterinary education are therefore not confined to a single Department or School but have wider implications for how the University manages strategic academic risks across the institution.

[43] See, for example, the Topic of concern to the University: Support for the Veterinary course: *Reporter*, 6808, 2025–26, p. 162.

[44] The General Board noted initial findings of the Veterinary School Review Group in its 2024–25 Annual Report: see paragraph 1.2, *Reporter*, 6808, 2025–26, p. 183.

[45] See, further, the discussion in the Governance section above.

36. The Board notes the General Board's decision to continue admissions to the Vet.M.B. course, the appointment of new leadership and the progress that has subsequently been made in addressing the Department's challenges. Securing and maintaining accreditation must now remain a priority, both for current and future students and for the reputation of the University.

37. **The Board recommends that the General Board review its arrangements for the oversight of strategic academic risks. Such a review should: consider how emerging risks to academic provision, professional accreditation, financial sustainability and departmental resilience are identified and escalated; clarify the respective responsibilities of Departments, Schools and the central University; ensure that communications accurately reflect the status of institutional decision-making; and set out clear expectations for consultation with the Regent House where decisions may have significant academic or constitutional implications.** There may be a need for the General Board, or the Councils of the Schools, to maintain and annually to update and publish more granular academic risk registers in relation to the institutions under their supervision.

Teaching Review and inclusive practice

38. Opportunities and, indeed, the appetite, to modernise and improve, at a broad and fundamental level, the ways the University designs and delivers its teaching will not arise frequently. Arguably, the impetus provided by the University's Teaching Review (published in April 2025)[46] was restrained somewhat by its major preoccupation, namely, the reduction of workload. By its own admission, the Review was undertaken as a result of justified concerns relating to the deleterious impact of excessive workload on students; and similarly, complaints of overwork and the under-payment of teachers, articulated most pointedly by the 'Justice 4 College Supervisors' campaign. The implementation phase of the Review will begin in September 2026, with all scheduled teaching – lectures and supervisions – to be fully monitored, accounted for, and kept within reasonable limits and set hours. The Board of Scrutiny will expect to be able to assess the response of Departments and Faculties in meeting these obligations.

39. The language of constructive alignment, a notion first coined by John Biggs in 1996,[47] is prevalent in the Review. For example, a major goal, stated on page 1, is to create courses that are 'more agile', an aspiration qualified by a stipulation that such courses need to be 'clearly aligned to educational goals'. It would be interesting to speculate which alternative goals may have hitherto informed the design of courses. It is difficult to discern whether this language of constructive alignment is deployed intentionally, or whether it has simply become embedded in the parlance of higher education. However, given the importance of defining educational goals in the context of multidimensional challenges that are currently facing the delivery of education, it is surely vital to invoke a tested theoretical framework in an explicit and deliberate manner, not least to drive transformation at the required tempo and consistency across the University. **The Board endorses Recommendation 8 of the Teaching Review pertaining to 'curriculum clarity' and underlines the need to give full care and attention to the robust articulation and compatibility of learning goals and professional competences across all Departments and Faculties.** It is also apparent that the stipulation of these goals is pivotal as the HE sector navigates the challenges of AI use.[48]

40. Further to this, the Review emphasises the power of dialogue and sharing between colleagues to effect change. Recommendation 7 of the Review expresses this commitment, with some assessment of progress promised for Easter Term 2026.[49] This commitment is sound if progress is being made, but faith in 'exchange and reflection' could nonetheless be over-emphasised, especially since those who are charged with undertaking these complex reflections on their curricula and practice have already been judged to be overworked and underpaid, and may not be in any position to influence or coordinate changes. It could be argued that reflection can only be undertaken with regard to what has occurred, or is currently occurring, as part of everyday teaching practice, so there may be an implicit bias in favour of maintaining the status quo or making only modest adjustments. Alongside change led organically and by collective discussion, there may be some changes mandated by law and external regulators and, by necessity, implemented uniformly.

41. A case in point is the notion of 'inclusive practice'. The phrase appears in passing four times in the Review and connotes the aspiration to give all students equitable access to learning, especially by 'removing barriers' to learning. Inclusive practice represents a paradigm shift in the delivery of teaching and assessment, from a reactive mode – providing bespoke remedies and adjustments after the fact as deviations from 'normal' expectations – to one of proactive anticipation of the diversity of need amongst all students. In the new paradigm, the curriculum and modes of assessment resemble a network of possibilities through which a student can navigate to their best advantage according to their abilities and strengths, guided by their academic and pastoral advisers. Diversity being the norm, adjustment of a standard model is practically and conceptually redundant.

42. Accelerated by philanthropic donations, a number of inclusive practice pilots have been set up. Financial backing for these innovations is indispensable, as the implementation of inclusive practice in education (just as with its cousin, 'universal design for learning') is famously resource-heavy, especially initially. It would be unfeasible to move to an inclusive practice model through local and incremental reform. From the website copy relating to an award of £300k to the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages and Linguistics, it is said that 'the programme aims to accelerate progress and embed inclusive educational practice across the University by September 2028'.[50] It is also explained that the programme brings together recommendations from the Teaching Review, the Review of the Approach to Provision for Disabled Students, and the University's Access and Participation Plan. It can be added that the ADRC will play its part in the programme, and the draft strategic plan 2026–29 set out by Student Support Services also declares an interest in removing barriers to education, though it is not clear how Student Services will contribute to these innovations.

[46] See the 2024–25 Annual Reports of the Council and the General Board: *Reporter*, 6808, 2025–26, p. 176 and p. 183.

[47] Biggs, J., 1996. Enhancing teaching through constructive alignment. Higher education, 32(3), pp. 347–64.

[48] See, further, the discussion on Generative AI use in teaching and assessment below.

[49] 'Teaching Review: Final Recommendations', p. 21; see *Reporter*, 6781, 2024–25, p. 533.

[50] https://www.mmll.cam.ac.uk/news/mmll-awarded-funding-pilot-project-universitys-pathways-inclusive-practice-programme.

43. With such a convergence of interests and priorities, the direction of travel seems clear: inclusive practice could, in all likelihood, become the standard educational model across the University, perhaps within two years. Indeed, it is difficult to see how any other outcome could be countenanced. **The Board recommends that the University be determined and proactive in communicating the advantages of any new educational models and inclusive practices that emerge as compelling, while also offering support and advice to those for whom change is not straightforward.** The piecemeal implementation of inclusive practice, resulting in a fragmented offering that leaves students with differing levels of access across different subject areas, could not be counted as progress. Centralised, one-size-fits-all exam mitigation processes might be a casualty of inclusive practice, should Departments and Faculties formulate their own alternative modes of study and assessment that are properly mediated by their standards of professional competence. It might be preferable that mitigations and adjustments be eventually devolved back to Departments, rather more in line with current practice at the University of Oxford.

Generative AI use in teaching and assessment

44. The Board highlights a concern that touches on many of the motivations of the Teaching Review, yet is entirely absent from it: the use of generative AI in the University's educational provision and assessment, as it relates to quality of teaching and learning, allows for flexibility and difference in approach across diverse disciplines, and addresses profound changes in cultures of practice in secondary education that feed each subsequent generation of incoming undergraduate students. This concern was flagged in §39 of the Board's Thirtieth Report, and similar concerns about the use of GenAI have been raised at the University of Oxford.[51] The Board considers that GenAI is no longer solely a matter of educational technology or blended learning, but an institution-wide governance issue affecting teaching, assessment, academic standards, procurement, legal compliance and information governance.

45. Current policy places fair use at the School and Faculty/Department level, with guidance being provided at local level. Guidance at the broader University level on the use and general policy of GenAI falls under the remit of the Blended Learning Service. At the moment, that guidance is sometimes contradictory and vague, and is spread across several documents (AI Policy Framework, University Statement on AI and Assessment, and the guidance on Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct).[52] **The Board recommends that the University continue to communicate evolving minimum legal and regulatory requirements concerning GenAI to Schools and Departments, ideally from an authoritative and easily accessible central source. Similarly, central definitions of academic misconduct and misuse of technology should be regularly updated and communicated to reflect the changing situation.**

46. It is encouraging to see, as specified in the guidance on Plagiarism and Academic Misconduct, that 'The University is *continuing* to develop guidance materials to support staff and students in the effective and appropriate use of Artificial Intelligence tools and Large Language Models'.[53] However, the process by which this is taking place is opaque. The Board understands that documentation is being produced at the departmental level but flags the desirability of consultation, comparison and review at the School level and in collaboration with the Blending Learning Service. The Board has some concern about the adequacy of the resources presently available to support informed development and implementation of policy in this varied and rapidly evolving domain.

47. Numerous students, supervisors, and examiners have expressed worries that the potential for misuse of generative AI makes the evaluation of many aspects of students' performance meaningless. As the University's own 'Undergraduate supervisor guidance on the use of AI' notes,[54] tools that purport to detect AI in students' writing are often unreliable; therefore, detecting those who use it contrary to instructions may be difficult, although the technology is changing all the time.

48. The Board notes that the suggestions for timely relevant response have included: devolving the creation of fair use policy to GenAI working groups within disciplines, who may use the technology differently in their respective fields and may wish to adapt their learning outcomes accordingly; providing resource for an 'academic champion' in each Department so that policy and practice is not outsourced and remains field and disciplinary practice specific; and devolving responsibility for maintaining quality through one-on-one pedagogical engagement with College Tutors and Directors of Studies (an advantage of the Cambridge system that other universities are now trying to replicate in response to the dangers GenAI poses to the development of original critical thinking).

49. Such devolution requires further thinking if it is to be effective. Whilst individualised teaching and learning is a benefit of Cambridge's supervision system, we note that supervisors are sometimes left to conduct supervisions with little support on how to deal with AI. Filling this gap will help to ensure we maintain the quality that a Cambridge degree offers. Further, it will help fulfil some of the central purposes of the Teaching Review, especially its recommendations for articulating the value of teaching (no. 4), supporting supervisors and Directors of Studies (nos. 5 and 6), and reflecting on educational practice (no. 7).

[51] See the *Oxford University Gazette*, Vol. 156, Supplement (1) to No. 5488 (Thursday, 26 March 2026).

[52] https://blendedlearning.cam.ac.uk/artificial-intelligence-and-education.

[53] https://www.educationalpolicy.admin.cam.ac.uk/plagiarism-and-academic-misconduct/artificial-intelligence-ai (emphasis added).

[54] https://blendedlearning.cam.ac.uk/artificial-intelligence-and-education/using-generative-ai.

50. **The Board recommends that the University both articulate minimum standards and, perhaps more importantly, provide mechanisms for sharing best practice to ensure that policy, staff development, student guidance and assessment practices keep pace with the rapid evolution of the technology.** In particular:

- Departments should orient students at induction or at the start of each year towards how Cambridge thinks GenAI should be used *and* how specific departments engage with its use.
- 'Academic champions' or other such roles should be fully supported to address the risks inherent in use of GenAI when advising students.
- Faculty Boards and Degree Committees should consider re-evaluating the possibility of introducing vivas for assessment in cases of suspected misuse of AI. We note that plagiarism claims are often not readily provable by textual analysis alone in the case of GenAI, and are potentially very time-consuming to investigate. The Board recognises that introducing viva-style assessments has resource implications, too, but suggests that these outweigh the costs to quality and the proven ineffectiveness of detection products. Resources need to be provided to ensure that this does not simply add to staff workload, a primary concern of the Teaching Review. Ultimately it is important that students, educators, and employers are confident in the value of a Cambridge degree.

51. Lastly, the Board expresses concern that the challenges that GenAI poses may be exacerbated by partnerships with firms that promote and sell GenAI products, where there is no comprehensive information on what products the University buys in, or which partnerships are being developed. Given their potentially close integration into research and teaching, at the level of ideas and expression rather than merely technical support or publication, such partnerships pose special problems with respect to academic integrity, intellectual property and data protection. Subject-specific platforms may be offered to departments (perhaps at a developmental stage), where greater benefit accrues to the supplier than to the users, particularly where licensing terms are drafted in Silicon Valley, or when End-User Licensing Agreements are amended with widespread ramifications. Central University support is required to identify and mitigate risks and conflicts of interest. **The Board therefore recommends that the General Board and the Information Services Committee actively develop and communicate policy to support due diligence and transparent procurement processes by Schools, Faculties and Departments, to ensure that risks are managed and safeguards implemented in relation to the licensing and use of GenAI products.**

Institutional overlap

52. As the University has developed, it has established a wide range of institutes, centres, strategic initiatives and programmes to respond to emerging academic and societal priorities. This has brought considerable benefits, enabling innovation, attracting external funding and allowing new areas of interdisciplinary research and teaching to flourish. However, the cumulative effect of this organic growth is that there are now areas in which multiple University bodies operate with closely related remits or overlapping external identities.

53. The Board does not regard this as evidence of institutional failure. Rather, it reflects the success of the University in responding to new opportunities over an extended period. Nevertheless, periodic strategic review is necessary to ensure that organisational structures continue to support, rather than impede, the University's objectives. Such review should consider whether responsibilities remain sufficiently distinct, whether collaboration is being maximised, whether unnecessary duplication has emerged, and whether the University's external profile is presented with sufficient clarity to students, staff, partners and funders.

54. The sustainability landscape illustrates this challenge, as is reflected in the Council's comments, in its 2024–25 Annual Report on an academic strategy for environmental sustainability.[55] The University has developed a number of highly successful institutes, centres and educational programmes concerned with sustainability. While each has a clear individual rationale, the overall landscape would benefit from periodic strategic review to ensure that responsibilities remain complementary, collaboration is maximised, and the University's overall offering is presented with clarity to external audiences. It is important to avoid the impression that different agencies are in competition.

55. The problem also manifests in the proliferation of committees. Senior staff diaries are booked out months in advance by committees. There seem to be frequent reasons to form new committees, and only rarely reasons to abandon old ones. Evidence presented to the Board suggests that the proliferation of committees sometimes leads to a lack of clarity about which body has responsibility (as in the case of procuring digital examination software) and that particularisation of remits when there are many committees sometimes leaves gaps between remits.

56. **The Board therefore recommends that the General Board periodically review areas where multiple bodies have related remits, with the aim of ensuring that institutional structures remain coherent, strategically aligned and clearly understood.** Such reviews should seek to preserve the diversity and entrepreneurial character of the collegiate University while providing greater clarity of purpose, accountability and coordination.

Administrative growth and complexity

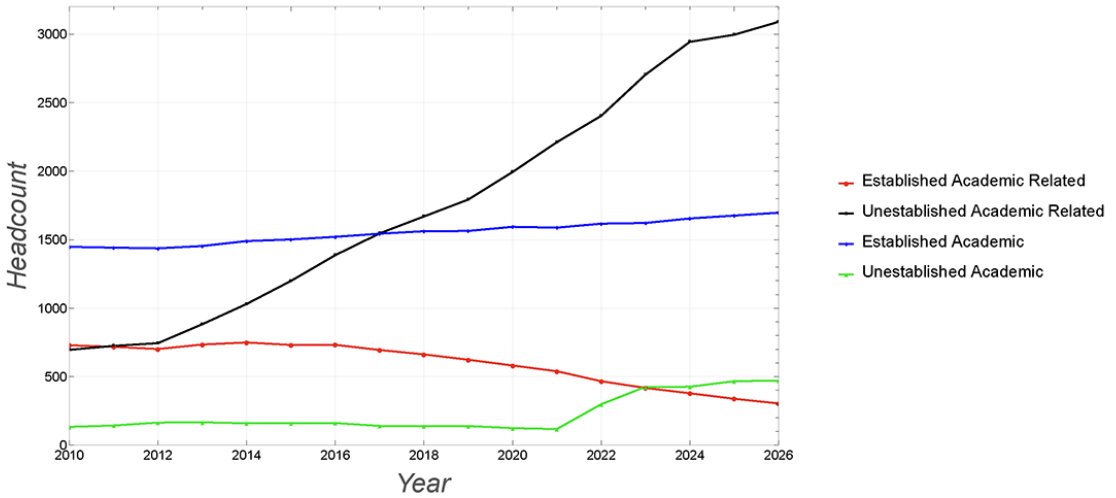
57. The Council's 2024–25 Annual Report records consideration of 'a report tracing the growth in non-academic staff numbers since 2018, noting particularly pronounced increases over [the 2022–23 and 2023–24 academic years], while student numbers and research activity had remained broadly stable'.[56] The Board notes that expansion of central administration has become a widely observed trend across research-intensive universities worldwide, often raising questions about proportionality, efficiency and alignment with core academic mission.

[55] *Reporter*, 6808, 2025–26, p. 176.

[56] *Reporter*, 6808, 2025–26, p. 176.

58. The issue has increasingly become the subject of scholarly analysis. A recent paper in *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*[57] developed a mathematical model of how universities create, maintain and remove internal processes, balancing productive work with administrative overhead. It shows that, as processes accumulate, administrative costs grow, which can crowd out resources for core activity. It was inspired by developments at institutions such as the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, where faculty grew by 9.2% between 1985 and 2023, while administrative staff grew by 189%. The simulations reveal that organisations overproduce processes relative to their ability or willingness to remove them, causing a build-up of outdated rules and increasing waste. Overall, the study highlights how imbalances in process creation, pruning and administration can trap organisations in inefficient states.

Figure 1: *Headcount of categories of staff over the period 2010–26, showing rapid growth in unestablished academic related posts and little growth in academic posts*

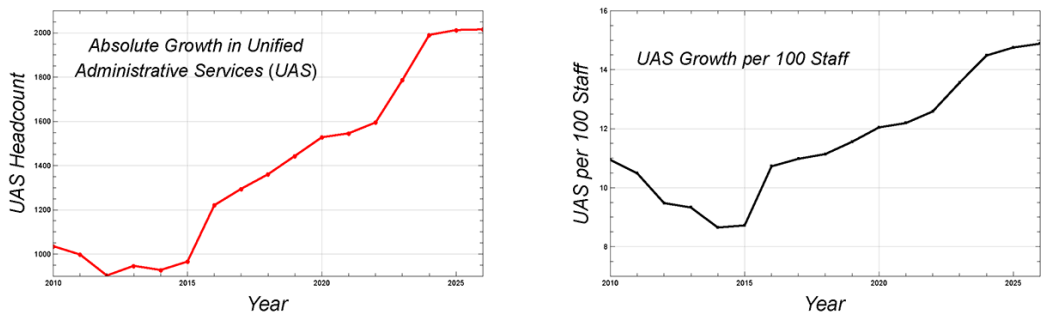


59. Of course, over the last decade, there has also been increased regulatory complexity, compliance requirements, heightened student service expectations, as well as the professionalisation of university management. All this has warranted an increase in administrative headcount. However, this raises concerns that unchecked administrative expansion may have introduced additional layers of process, diluted accountability and distanced decision-making from core academic activity.

60. The Board has analysed headcount data for the University of Cambridge (see Figure 1). The overall headcount grew by approximately 43% between 2009 and 2026 (from 9,452 to 13,545), but this growth was uneven across staff groups and functions. Growth in core academic staff was relatively modest. Established academic roles increased from 1,453 to 1,697 over the period, representing growth of around 17%. While unestablished academic roles grew more quickly (from 136 to 472, +247%), they remain a smaller component of the overall workforce.

61. The most pronounced change was in academic-related (professional and administrative) staff. Established roles in this category declined (from 742 to 305, −59%), but this has been more than offset by a very large increase in unestablished roles, which rose from 682 to 3,090 – an increase of approximately 353%. This represents the single largest area of workforce expansion in absolute terms.

Figure 2: *Absolute* (*left*) *and relative* (*right*) *growth in the size of Unified Administrative Services over the period 2010–26*



[57] https://www.pnas.org/doi/10.1073/pnas.2527106123. Also on arXiv.

62. Data seen by the Board shows that administrative and support functions have also expanded significantly more rapidly than core academic staff. Central administration (UAS) grew from 1,065 to 2,016 staff, an increase of 89% (see Figure 2). Growth has not, however, been evenly distributed across UAS. Academic Division increased by 248%, Cambridge Research Office by 220% and Finance by 180%, while Human Resources increased by 76%. Estates also grew substantially, from 242 to 420 staff (74%), including particularly strong growth in the most recent period. These changes suggest that the overall increase in UAS headcount reflects significant shifts in the scale and composition of central administrative activity. The figures may also reflect internal transfers of personnel between divisions, as well as genuinely new posts, so the changes should not necessarily be interpreted as wholly representing net new administrative growth.

63. Noting recent commendable action by the Council to limit unplanned growth and to monitor non-academic staff headcount more closely, the Board considers that these trends warrant continued scrutiny to ensure that workforce growth (academic and non-academic) remains proportionate, strategically aligned and supportive of the University's core academic mission. The most recent data does appear to indicate that the rate of workforce growth is beginning to slow.

Student and staff wellbeing systems

People Strategy

64. In its Thirtieth Report, the Board applauded the ambition behind the *People Strategy*,[58] which is set out around five core themes: talent attraction; reward and recognition; talent management; culture and community; and organisational effectiveness. However, it noted that a lack of specificity made it difficult to assess progress, identify bottlenecks or hold those responsible for delivery to account. Accordingly, the Board recommended that each component of the People Strategy be assigned a clearly identified owner, with explicit, measurable targets and defined timelines.

65. In its response to the Thirtieth Report, the University set out proposals, including 'a set of initial measures that will be published in Lent Term 2026 on the HR website as a dashboard, together with a progress report updated in real time' and emphasised that 'the new HR system (myHR) will significantly increase the ability to measure activity in greater range and detail'. The Board notes that a document entitled '*People Strategy*: *Progress so far*'[59] has now been provided. This update highlights several areas of genuine progress, including improvements in family leave policies, financial support for international hires, and changes to pay and progression. However, these advances are concentrated in specific domains, particularly benefits, and do not (yet) reflect coherent transformation across all five themes. Much of the activity described remains relatively small-scale, including the production of guidance, case studies and 'spotlight' material, alongside events, training and communities of practice. While these are useful, they do not in themselves constitute ambitious institutional change.

66. More fundamentally, the document describes what has been done, but provides limited evidence of what has changed as a result. There are no clear metrics on recruitment outcomes, retention, staff satisfaction, diversity, productivity or performance. Without such outcome measures, it remains difficult to assess either the effectiveness or the overall level of success of the Strategy. The emphasis continues to be on activity and delivery rather than demonstrable, large-scale improvement.

Race Equality Charter

67. The Council's 2024–25 Annual Report[60] noted the University's application to renew its Advance HE Race Equality Charter Bronze Award.[61] The Board is delighted to note that it was successfully renewed in February 2026. It considers the associated action plan[62] to be commendable, comprehensive and credible as a statement of intent. At the same time, it notes that the plan places considerable emphasis on activities such as developing, reviewing and providing training, with comparatively less clarity on how success will be defined and measured. Where success measures are included, these tend to focus on process indicators, such as training uptake, rather than on demonstrable changes in staff or student experience. Much of the anticipated impact is framed over the medium to longer term, which, while understandable, can give the impression that progress is weighted towards future delivery. In several areas, actions prioritise further analysis and recommendation, with implementation less clearly articulated.

Medical Research Council Units

68. Concerns about process, governance and transparency are also reflected in the Board's consideration of the organisational change arising from the subsuming of Medical Research Council (MRC) Units into university departments. Following the MRC's decision to withdraw core Unit funding from 2025, the MRC Epidemiology Unit became the first at Cambridge to undergo this process. In April 2026, it transitioned to IMS Epidemiology (Institute of Metabolic Science Epidemiology), part of the Institute of Metabolic Science in the School of Clinical Medicine. According to data seen by the Board, this resulted in 29 redundancies, in addition to other staff departures.

69. Information received by the Board suggested significant deficiencies in the process, which was overseen by a Project Board. These include concerns about whether consultation met statutory requirements, the late and incomplete release of key documentation, weaknesses in the business case, limited financial transparency, and the decision to run collective and individual consultation processes concurrently. As further Units – and potentially other Departments – undergo similar transitions, it is important that these issues be addressed. The Board was reassured to note that a lessons learned exercise has been undertaken.

[58] https://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/university_of_cambridge_people_strategy_2024-27_update2_date_7_10_24_175dpi.pdf.

[59] https://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/people_strategy_progress_so_far.pdf.

[60] *Reporter*, 6808, 2025–26, p. 176.

[61] https://www.race-equality.admin.cam.ac.uk/race-equality-charter.

[62] https://www.race-equality.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/university_of_cambridge_rec_2025-2030_action_plan.pdf.

Grievance procedures

70. These concerns about process, governance and transparency are not confined to organisational change. The Board also considers that the University's grievance procedures require significant review and reform. The Board notes that there are widespread concerns about the effectiveness of the grievance procedures for staff. There appears to be broad recognition, both within the HR Division and among staff, that reform is necessary. The current procedures can be time-consuming and costly, while there are concerns that the process can become unnecessarily adversarial, with insufficient emphasis on early and informal resolution. The length of some investigations can also place a significant burden on those involved, with potentially detrimental effects on their wellbeing and mental health. There are difficulties, too, in relation to sanctions and the appeal process. The Board was dismayed, but not altogether surprised, to hear evidence that staff are losing faith in grievance processes on several fronts, and is concerned that this may mean that poor behaviour is not being addressed.

71. At present, a central role in the grievance process is played by the Responsible Person (RP), who is responsible for overseeing the process and ensuring that it is conducted fairly, impartially and in accordance with the University's procedures. In principle, the RP arranges or oversees the investigation, considers the evidence and representations of those involved, and ultimately determines whether the grievance is upheld and what action, if any, should be taken. The RP is also responsible for keeping the parties appropriately informed and ensuring that the matter is dealt with within a reasonable timeframe.

72. In practice, however, the demands of the role can be substantial, and RPs may have limited time to devote to what can be a lengthy and complex process alongside their other responsibilities. As a result, they may rely heavily on support and assistance from the Human Resources Division and, in complex cases, from the Legal Services Division. There is also increasing difficulty in finding colleagues willing to take on the role. The responsibilities are considerable, the process can be prolonged, demanding and stressful, and there is often little benefit to the individual undertaking the role. While additional remuneration may be an inappropriate incentive and difficult to quantify, it is to be regretted that such 'academic citizenship' service is not explicitly acknowledged in review and promotions exercises. On the contrary, RPs can sometimes be named as respondents in lawsuits; the legal and personal advice and support made available to RPs in these situations may be variable. This raises questions about the sustainability of the current arrangements and whether the responsibilities placed on RPs are realistic.

73. The Board also notes that the procedures available to staff are not uniform, and may differ according to the contractual or employment arrangements under which individuals are engaged. While there may be legitimate reasons for some differences, the Board considers that a review should examine whether the resulting distinctions remain necessary and justified, and whether greater consistency could be achieved across the University. Staff raising comparable concerns should, so far as practicable, have access to procedures that provide comparable standards of fairness, timeliness and independence, irrespective of the particular employment framework that applies to them. While a number of HR policies have been changed, the Board suggests that reform to the relevant Special Ordinance is likely required to provide realistic timeframes and proportionate and relevantly delimited processes without compromising academic freedom.

74. The Board considers that the University has already established a useful precedent for reviewing sensitive, University-wide policies through its review of the Employer Justified Retirement Age (EJRA). A small, academic-led group was established with a clear remit to examine the existing arrangements, gather evidence and views from across the University community, and make recommendations.

75. Any substantial reform of the grievance procedures will require broad-based support and should be developed through a similarly transparent and evidence-based process. In particular, **the Board recommends the establishment of a small, independent review group to examine the current grievance procedures, including the differences in arrangements applying to different categories of staff; consult those who have experience of using or administering them; consider the relevant data, evidence and experience (including elsewhere in the sector); and make clear recommendations before any changes are developed by the Human Resources Committee and considered by the Council.** Such an approach would provide confidence that reform is being undertaken objectively, with proper regard to the interests of those who use and administer the grievance process, and for academic freedom and legal compliance.

5 October 2026

Judith Plummer Braeckman, *Chair*
Annouchka Bayley
Stephen Cowley
Martin Dixon
Wyn Evans
Nazia Habib
Francesca Moore
Martin Parker Dixon
Benjamin Spagnolo
Daniel Trocmé-Latter
Connor Wood

Report of the Council recommending a reduction in the officer staff at University Information Services

The Council begs leave to report to the University as follows:

1. As a result of a proposed organisational change at University Information Services (UIS), three academic-related offices are impacted and are potentially at risk of redundancy. This Report sets out the business case for the organisational change and asks the Regent House to approve the Council's recommendation that there should be a reduction in the officer staff[1] at UIS.

Background

2. The University appointed a new Chief Information Officer (CIO) and Director of University Information Services in April 2025. Since joining the University, the CIO has undertaken a high-level assessment of the UIS function and its current service provision with support and input from the Information Services Committee (ISC). The ISC has emphasised that the University's IT and digital service needs to improve, so that it provides the level of service the University needs to support its academic mission.

3. Over the year following his appointment, the CIO engaged with a wide range of members of the University community to understand the performance of UIS and the staff experience of using existing IT and digital services, systems, applications and infrastructure. The overwhelming feedback from the University community is that, despite the best efforts of UIS staff, UIS needs to make material improvements to the services it provides and the way it operates.

4. In April 2026, with the support of the ISC, UIS started an organisational change process, driven mainly by two factors:

- The ISC agreed that UIS needed a 'reset' of its leadership to deliver its strategic objectives, including development of a digital strategy.
- The ability to achieve operational objectives, including the urgent need to reduce the projected overspend in the 2026–27 financial year and meet the University's 5% savings target for professional service teams (see below).

5. UIS's vision for the future is to be a high-performing, professional service department, which provides services to support the academic mission of the University. The organisational change process is the first step in a process leading to the re-design of UIS services and the development of a new University-wide digital strategy.

6. The Council remains committed to avoiding compulsory redundancies wherever possible. However, it agrees with the CIO and ISC that the proposed small reduction in offices at UIS (less than 1% of the total staff FTE) is a necessary step as part of an organisational change to tackle recurrent and persistent operational challenges and address many of the concerns that have been raised across the University community and highlighted in external reviews of UIS, recent internal cyber security audits, senior leadership feedback, and a Gartner self-assessment of UIS maturity.

Organisational change process

7. The Organisational Change Policy[2] (OCP) sets out the University's process for managing organisational change in a fair, consistent and legally compliant manner. The OCP applies to all employees of the University. It therefore sets out the whole process for the redundancy of unestablished and assistant staff. For the process as it relates to the redundancy of University officers, the OCP needs to be read in conjunction with the relevant parts of the Statutes and Ordinances, primarily Chapter II of the Schedule to Statute C concerning redundancy.

8. The proposed organisational change seeks to make improvements to a range of services across UIS, which impacts all staff groups. The process for UIS has therefore involved the review of assistant and other unestablished roles as well as University offices held by professional service staff. UIS has 428 FTE staff in 2026, including 50 established academic-related officers. Based on headcount, the following is a breakdown of the UIS workforce by staff category: 11% academic-related officers, 12% assistant staff, and 77% unestablished academic-related staff.

9. To ensure fairness and consistency in the approach taken and enable all possible mitigations to be taken into account, Steps 1 and 2 of the OCP process have been run at the same time for all categories of affected UIS staff. Step 3 of the OCP has now started for affected assistant and other unestablished staff.[3]

10. The consultation period under Step 2 of the OCP remains open for a small group of potentially affected offices. This Report is the first stage of the process set out in Chapter II of the Schedule for that group of offices. This is believed to be the first time that the Chapter II process has been used. The Schedule, including the Chapter II process, applies to 'every person who holds any of the University offices specified or referred to in Statute C I 1(*a*), except the offices of Vice-Chancellor, Chancellor, High Steward, Deputy High Steward, and Commissary', who are referred to in the Schedule as 'academic staff'.[4] It therefore applies to most offices, including those held by non-academic staff.

11. As UIS is an institution under the supervision of the Council,[5] the Council is the competent authority. If the Regent House approves this Report's recommendation by Grace, the Council will consider a report from a Redundancy Committee appointed by the Council making recommendations of individual officers at UIS for dismissal by reason of redundancy. If the Council agrees with those recommendations, after receiving representations from the affected officers, the Council will publish a second Report seeking the Regent House's approval for its recommendations for the dismissal of individual officers by way of redundancy.[6]

[1] See paragraph 10 of this Report.

[2] See: https://www.hr.admin.cam.ac.uk/policies-procedures/organisational-change-policy.

[3] Regent House approval is not required for redundancies in these categories of staff.

[4] See Section 2 of Chapter I of the Schedule to Statute C (*Statutes and Ordinances*, 2025, p. 23).

[5] See the Ordinance for UIS (*Statutes and Ordinances*, 2025, p. 668).

[6] See Sections 4–8 of Chapter II (*Statutes and Ordinances*, 2025, p. 24). References to officers in this Report are in the plural for simplicity, but the recommendation in a second Report could be for one dismissal.

Operating context

12. There are several operational factors that have prompted this organisational change process.

- The UIS annual Chest budget operating costs have risen from £23.47m in 2021 to £42.73m in 2026.
- The UIS headcount has risen from 289 FTE in 2021 to 428 FTE in 2026.
- UIS needs to make a 5% contribution to the professional services savings target. The 2025–26 Chest budget for UIS is £42.2m, therefore UIS needs to find recurrent annual savings of around £2.1m.
- The budget forecasts for 2026–27 and 2027–28 show between 5 and 10 percent cost increases for software licences and support costs for many of the University's core systems.
- UIS needs to make changes to its staff structure so that it has the right skills and capabilities to assist with the digital strategy development process.

Objectives of the organisational change process

13. The proposed organisational change is seeking to achieve the following objectives:

- An updated UIS Senior Leadership Team to make accountabilities clearer.
- Removal of interim and acting up arrangements, which in some cases have been in place for more than two years.
- Recurrent reduction of the UIS pay budget by approximately £0.4m per year.
- Strengthening strategy and technology senior leadership by creating a Chief Technology Officer role.
- Progression towards a clearer product delivery approach.
- Reconfiguration of User Centred Design resources that predominantly focus on the design of websites.
    - o Reduction in this team is required, as the University has over-invested in this area. This team comprised 34 staff at its peak in 2024 and was grown to deliver the digital presence programme. This proposal will reduce this team from its current size of 22 staff to 11.
    - o Despite best efforts of the staff in this area, investment has failed to deliver the expected benefits for the University, therefore there are further proposed reductions in this area. UIS is looking at how to better support internal and external websites as part of the new digital strategy.
- Service modernisation:
    - o Closure of the UIS Print Service, which has shown a reduction in user demand of 80% in the past two years. An alternative print service which is based at the Old Schools is provided by the Estates Division.
    - o Closure of the UIS Training Service, which provides foundational training for Office-based products (Word, Excel, Office 365) and some HR systems. The demand for these services has declined by two thirds in the last two years.
- Reduction from two Chief Information Security Officers to one, to improve accountability, while the strategy for further strengthening cybersecurity is developed.
- Creating clearer accountabilities for cyber security technical resources which will report to the one remaining Chief Information Security Officer.
- Strengthening commercial and contractual skills and capabilities, so that UIS can focus on driving costs down across all elements of its £25m non-pay (largely software licencing) budget.

14. **The Council recommends** that the Regent House decide that there should be a reduction by way of redundancy in the academic staff[1] at University Information Services, as described in this Report.

21 October 2026

Deborah Prentice,
Vice-Chancellor
Gaenor Bagley
Jo Dekkers
John Dix
Alex Halliday
Ella McPherson
Scott Mandelbrote
Ewa Marek
Sally Morgan
Richard Mortier
Mezna Qato
Alan Short
Pieter van Houten
Andrew Wathey
Garth Wells
Stephen Wilson

[1] See paragraph 10 of this Report.

GRACES

Graces submitted to the Regent House on 21 October 2026

The Council submits the following Graces to the Regent House. These Graces, unless they are withdrawn or a ballot is requested in accordance with the regulations for Graces of the Regent House (*Statutes and Ordinances*, 2025, p. 113), will be deemed to have been approved at **4 p.m. on Friday, 30 October 2026**. Further information on requests for a ballot or the amendment of Graces is available to members of the Regent House on the Regent House Petitions site.[§]

1. That the Regent House approve the Council's decision to withhold authorisation of the initiated Grace, for the reasons given in paragraphs 11 and 12 of the Report of the Council, dated 23 June 2026, pursuant to Special Ordinance A (ii) 7 (divestment from fossil fuel and arms companies) (*Reporter*, 6830, 2025–26, p. 572).[1]

2. That the Regent House endorse the Council's approach to the University's investment in companies that manufacture conventional weapons, as described in paragraph 5 of the Report of the Council, dated 23 June 2026, pursuant to Special Ordinance A (ii) 7 (divestment from fossil fuel and arms companies) (*Reporter*, 6830, 2025–26, p. 572).[1]

3. That approval be given for the demolition of a building on the Island site as described in the Council's Notice dated 15 October 2026.[2]

[1] See the Council's Notice, p. 47.

[2] See the Council's Notice, p. 49.

[§] Accessible by members of the Regent House at https://universityofcambridgecloud.sharepoint.com/sites/RegentHousePetitions [University account required].

Graces to be submitted to the Regent House at a Congregation on 23 October 2026

The Council has sanctioned the submission of the following Graces to the Regent House at a Congregation to be held on 23 October 2026.

That the following persons be admitted to the degree of Master of Arts under the provisions of Statute B II 2:

1. Sarah-Jayne Blakemore, Bye-Fellow of Emmanuel College, Professor of Psychology in the Social Sciences (2000) in the Department of Psychology.

2. Timothy Ivor Dalgleish, Fellow of St Catharine's College, Dawson Professor of Young People's Mental Health (2024) in the Department of Psychology.

3. Emma Catrin Davies, Fellow of Trinity College.

4. Claudia Domenici, Fellow of Selwyn College, University Associate Professor in the Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages and Linguistics.

5. Kathryn Anne French, Commercial Operations Director (English) in the Press and Assessment Department.

6. Simran Kalra, Director of People and Culture, South Asia (People and Culture) in the Press and Assessment Department.

7. Alexander Lira Karidis, Head of Business Partnering, English (People and Culture) in the Press and Assessment Department.

8. Gareth Huw Brian Morris, Head of Strategy (Strategy and Integration) in the Press and Assessment Department.

9. Amar Karatparambath Rajakumarandass, Vice President, India Operations Centre (Technology) in the Press and Assessment Department.

10. Arun Rajamani, Managing Director, South Asia (International Education) in the Press and Assessment Department.

11. Khaled Soufani, Fellow of Clare Hall.

12. Claire Varlet-Baker, Product and Services Director (International Education) in the Press and Assessment Department.

Graces to be submitted to the Regent House at a Congregation on 24 October 2026

The Council has sanctioned the submission of the following Graces to the Regent House at a Congregation to be held on 24 October 2026.

That the following persons be admitted to the degree of Master of Arts under the provisions of Statute B II 2:

1. Rachel Claire Evans, Fellow of Jesus College, Professor of Materials Chemistry in the Department of Materials Science and Metallurgy.

2. Rachel Elizabeth Holmes, Fellow of Wolfson College.

3. Anthony John McNiff, Fellow of Lucy Cavendish College.

4. Howard Paul Nelson, Fellow of Lucy Cavendish College.

5. Alberto Roselló-Díez, Fellow of Robinson College, University Associate Professor in the Department of Physiology, Development and Neuroscience.

ACTA

Approval of Grace submitted to the Regent House on 7 October 2026

The Grace submitted to the Regent House on 7 October 2026 (*Reporter*, 6838, 2026–27, p. 31) was approved at 4 p.m. on Friday, 16 October 2026.

R. B. SACHERS, *Director of Governance and Compliance*

END OF THE OFFICIAL PART OF THE 'REPORTER'

COLLEGE NOTICES

Events

Trinity Hall

Thouless Natural Sciences Lecture

'Gambling harms in the UK: Speaking science to power', by Professor Henrietta Bowden-Jones, OBE, DL (University of Cambridge and University College London), will take place on Thursday, 29 October 2026 at 5.45 p.m., in person at the Trinity Hall Lecture Theatre, Trinity Lane, and online via livestream; free, all welcome; further details and booking: https://www.trinhall.cam.ac.uk/college-events/thouless2026/

SOCIETIES, ETC.

Cambridge Philosophical Society

A. V. Hill Lecture

This year's lecture, 'The organisation of goal-directed behaviour in the brain', delivered by Professor John Duncan, FBA, FRS (University of Cambridge), will take place on Monday, 26 October 2026 at 5.30 p.m., in person at the Bristol-Myers Squibb Lecture Theatre, Yusuf Hamied Department of Chemistry, Lensfield Road; free and open to all; further details: https://www.cambridgephilosophicalsociety.org/events/event/john-duncan

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