

VC's message

Welcome to the Leadership Bulletin.

This is a new briefing for our leadership teams across the University designed to give an overview of key developments. It will issue fortnightly during term time and we aim to include, as a regular feature, a more in-depth analysis of a topical issue – this week Brexit. Previous copies of Leadership Bulletin will be available on the [OVC website](#). Please do cascade the bulletin across your teams and departments. We hope it is helpful and please do feel free to forward suggestions and content.

This week of course we are welcoming our new students and those returning to us. Welcome weekend was a pleasure to be at and I thank all those involved in making it run incredibly smoothly. It was a huge success!

Over the last month we have been finalising the strategy refresh documentation and last week Senate agreed that the draft of 'Kent 2025' could be forwarded to Council for discussion and approval on 5 October. Senate also took note of emerging sub-strategies on Education and the Student Experience, Research and Innovation and Engagement and our Civic Mission. These three documents will continue to be developed with input from the relevant senate boards and the engagement group. Copies of these papers can all be found on the [Strategy Refresh pages](#).

I am confident that the renewed ambitions and a focus on key priorities set out in the refreshed strategy will not only build on the past achievements of our staff, students and alumni, but will also ensure we are successful and sustainable for the longer term.



Executive Group Update

EG on 11 September agreed that there should be a new policy developed on teaching constraints to help address increasing timetabling challenges and enable schools to operate within a shared framework. Proposals will be developed through relevant committees. EG also agreed that work should be taken forward to develop a new staff reward strategy.

On 18 September, Extended Executive Group discussed our recruitment position which is challenging this year as student numbers are significantly lower than anticipated, with a consequent impact on the budget. We will update the [set of FAQs](#) that have been created to help staff and managers understand the University's current financial situation and the 2018/19 budget as the impact of the recruitment position becomes clearer.

There was also discussion of the NSS outcome for 17/18 and areas that we need to work on, as well agreement on the next steps in preparing for the forthcoming TEF. EEG also agreed to look further at a number of options for widening our student recruitment, including through international engagement and distance learning.

Senior Leaders Update

Since August, six new members have joined Senior Leadership Forum; Professor Chris Holland, Founding Dean of Kent and Medway Medical School; and five new Heads of School, Professor Nigel Mason, Physical Sciences; Dr Adrian Pabst, Politics and International Relations; Professor David Wilkinson, Psychology (interim); Dr Karen Jones, History (interim); and Professor David Stirrup, English (acting).

Human Resources have updated the '[Pay during adverse weather](#)' policy. They have also developed a [HR Data Privacy Statement](#) applicable to everyone employed or engaged by the University to meet the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation. Line managers and staff are encouraged to read the new policies.

The Athena Swan team have been successful in two bids to EPSRC as part of their 'Inclusion Matters' programme. One project is joint with the University of Lincoln and the second project with the University of Nottingham.

The Long Read: Brexit

In my [blog last week](#), I noted that the UK was now less than 200 days away from March 29th 2019, when the UK would leave the European Union and expressed the hope that there would be a deal of some kind.

Clearly the impact of Brexit is a matter of great concern to the University and a cause of unease for many colleagues, especially non-UK EU citizens. While I remain hopeful for a pragmatic solution, I want to reassure you that the University is aware of the range of possible outcomes and is working to address them, as far as we are able to do so. We value our status as the UK's European university and have on-going planning around a range of issues and outcomes.

As you may know, in April 2016, University Council acknowledged the negative consequences Brexit would have on the University and we have been monitoring the situation in a number of ways since. The University carried out an assessment of the risks and impact on staff and students and on our European Centres. Legal and financial support was offered to staff to address issues related to the right to remain and residency. In addition, individual meetings with Heads of School were set up for all colleagues concerned about the situation. Faculties also carried out various assessments of the impact on staff and on research funding. We also initiated a series of bi-lateral engagements for future post-Brexit relationships across various Universities, which is on-going, and we have developed a regional European strategy of links with Lille, Ghent and KC Leuven, in addition to our wider partnerships across Europe.

I would also like to reassure you that we are addressing a possible 'no-deal' scenario. The Dean for Europe, Jeremy Carette, has been leading excellent work in this area and initiated a 'no-deal' review of Brexit for the University back in June in the light of increasing concerns. This is now underway and will consider the full impact of staff employment, student recruitment, student mobility and access to UK Higher Education, Erasmus, research funding and wider Brexit related issues that may affect the university. The Faculty Deans will feed into this report with a review of the impact across Schools. We will be exploring the implications of a disruption of transport or our supplies with relevant Professional Service Departments and colleagues in Human Resources continue to [monitor developments that will affect staff](#).

The political timetable is still highly uncertain. I had hoped that that we would get a clearer picture of the final shape of what might be agreed between the UK and the EU after the European Council meeting on 18 October but the timetable seems to be slipping. The extended executive group will be reviewing our own next steps at a meeting in November when we will be considering both Jeremy's report and a paper from HR on how we can best support staff over what might be a turbulent period. I will update colleagues across the University on the situation and outline our response as soon as possible after that meeting.

One issue that has been raised with me concerns the 'People's Vote' and the University's position on this. On this point, we have to respect the diversity of opinions across the University. We have, however, as part of a strong learning community, supported a range of debates addressing Brexit and European issues, especially in this academic year, the 20th anniversary of our European Centres. For example, the University Chancellor, Gavin Esler, who has been significantly involved in the public debate for a second vote, will be speaking at the 20th anniversary lecture in Brussels on 19th October. Gavin will also be ['In Conversation' with Lord Adonis](#), discussing Brexit in Canterbury on the 20th September.

We take seriously our position as the UK's European university in this challenging time and will continue to seek to support colleagues and our students in the coming months. I hope this information is helpful and if there are other issues you wish to flag or raise please do not hesitate to contact Jeremy or myself. *Professor Karen Cox*

Policy Update

The University has a corporate subscription to the Wonkhe newsletter which gives a daily update on HE policy developments. Anyone wanting to be added to the reading list should contact Megan Wells (M.M.Wells@kent.ac.uk).

The [USS Joint Expert Panel \(JEP\) report](#) has been released. The recommendations include a re-evaluation of employers' attitude to risk; adopt a more consistent approach between the 2014 and 2017 valuations; ensuring fairness and equality between generations of scheme members; and ensuring the valuation uses the most recently available information.