APPROVED

THE UNIVERSITY OF MANCHESTER

SENATE: ACADEMIC QUALITY AND STANDARDS COMMITTEE
TEACHING, LEARNING AND STUDENTS

23 JULY 2026

Present: Professor Jenn Hallam (Chair), Professor Andrew Brass, Professor Naomi Chambers, Professor Sarah Dyer, Professor Scott Heath, Professor Rebecca Hodgeson, Ann Lee, Professor Andrew Mawdsley, Dr Simon Merrywest (from minute 4), Professor George Moulton, and Jack Newton.

Apologies: Professor Rob Appleby, Professor Hannah Cobb, Dr Jen McBride, Dr Katie Moore, Professor David Schultz, and Alec Severs.

In Attendance for all items: Paul Brierley (Interim Director of Student and Academic Services), Dr John Marsh (Senior Governance Manager), and Jane Holland (Governance Manager) (minutes).

In Attendance for: AI/School Board Motion: CoPilot (minute 4): Paul Gregory (Programme Director - M365 Copilot Programme), Professor Bijan Parsia (Professor of Computer Science), and Dr Luke Yates (Senior Lecturer in Sociology).

In Attendance for: Course Unit Framework (CUF) in the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures (SALC) (minute 5): Dr Marco Biasioli (Lecturer in Russian and Eastern European Studies and UCU Executive Member), Dr J Michelle Coghlan (Senior Lecturer in American Studies and NEC Member for UCU), Professor Fiona Devine (Vice-President and Dean of Faculty of Humanities), Emma Rose (Interim Executive Director of Faculty Operations, Faculty of Humanities), and Sarah Williams (Teaching and Learning Manager, Programme Enhancement).

1 Welcome and Declarations of Interest

Noted:

a) the new UMSU Faculty Officers were welcomed to their first meeting as members;
b) the Chair thanked the outgoing members for their contributions to the work of the Committee;
c) this additional meeting had been arranged to consider two items; 1) AI/School Board Motion: CoPilot, and 2) Course Unit Framework (CUF) in the School of Arts, Languages and Culture (SALC);
d) that there were no declarations of interest in relation to the agenda.

2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Agreed: to approve the minutes of 24 June 2026.

3 Action Log

Noted: the Senate AQSC TLS Action Log;

4 AI/School Board Motion: CoPilot

Received:

a) CoPilot 365 Risks report;

b) a motion passed at the School of Social Sciences (SoSS) School Board on 10 July 2026 to pause the MS365 Copilot working environment mandatory rollout to students pending further consultation;
c) Microsoft 365 Copilot: Engagement with Microsoft on Product Feature Concerns report.

Noted:

a) the CoPilot 365 Risks report and the SoSS School Board motion were being presented to the Committee for consideration due to there being no Senate meeting in close proximity. This would provide an opportunity for timely discussion and formulation of actions and next steps;
b) the School Board motion called for a pause to the mandatory rollout of integrated Microsoft 365 Copilot to students pending further consultation, on the basis that the proposed default automation could create significant challenge across a number of identified priority areas;
c) discussions were continuing with Microsoft regarding technical options to manage product features, including prompt summaries and automation being controlled through administrative settings at institutional, Faculty or School level. An update on the position would be provided to Committee members after the next meeting with Microsoft; **Action: Chair/ Programme Director - M365 Copilot Programme/Associate Vice-President (Teaching Excellence and Innovation)**
d) the next steps would continue to be informed by the Copilot Coordination and Advisory Group and by a test, learn and adapt approach. There would be further engagement with Microsoft on the functionality and choice of features available;
e) it was acknowledged that many students already had access to generative AI tools outside the University environment, and that the University would support informed and pedagogically sound use, rather than addressing access to AI as an isolated technical issue. Consideration would need to be given to how students should use generative AI in their learning and assessment. There were concerns around automated Microsoft 365 functionality which students might not knowingly or intentionally use;
f) the importance of co-creation with students and staff was emphasised. Guidance and training would be developed at programme level and would be aligned to the disciplines, including areas where AI was already embedded in practice. This would also support students to develop capability in using AI responsibly for future study and employment opportunities; **Action: Associate Vice-President (Teaching Excellence and Innovation)**
g) student and staff engagement with AI guidance, training and support would be progressed, including consideration of how programme-level expectations would be addressed; **Action: Copilot Coordination and Advisory Group/TLS Leads**
h) members discussed equity of access, including differential access to paid or premium tools, and the importance of ensuring that students had an equitable baseline of access and support;
i) work would continue on developing guidance and support for responsible use of AI, including equity of access, academic integrity, skills development and social responsibility. **Action: Associate Vice-President (Teaching Excellence and Innovation)/Copilot Coordination and Advisory Group**

Agreed:

i. continued commitment to supporting staff and students with the responsible and pedagogically informed use of AI, with further engagement to be routed through existing working groups and advisory structures;
ii. that the preferred position was that default prompt summaries and automated functionality should not be made available to students, unless the University was able to manage or disable these features;
iii. that the date for proceeding with the rollout had not been confirmed and that discussions with Microsoft about the technical capability to control the automation would continue;
iv. that further consultation, and the development of guidance and training would be undertaken before any wider student implementation.

5 Course Unit Framework (CUF) in the School of Arts, Languages and Cultures (SALC)
Received:

a) a report requesting a suspension to the withdrawal of 18 SALC postgraduate taught part-time programmes;
b) a management response setting out the Faculty's position on the concerns raised.

Noted:

a) a discussion about the proposed withdrawals and possible implications, including reduced access to part-time postgraduate study, particularly for underrepresented groups;
b) concerns remained about the evidence base for the withdrawals, with members requesting clearer articulation of the data considered;
c) the grouped withdrawal submission reflected standard practice and supported streamlined paperwork. Separate submissions could be provided in future if required;
d) the withdrawal decisions had been informed by a number of factors, including recruitment patterns, student experience, national trends, and sustainability. Several programmes had had no acceptances and others had very small numbers. There was discussion about the costs and resource implications of maintaining programmes with limited recruitment;
e) the Faculty had considered equality impact and had engaged EDI colleagues prior to making decisions on the withdrawals. The need for assurance was emphasised, particularly on how equality and access considerations had informed the decision-making process;
f) that the educational value of part-time students was important, and the contribution they made to the wider learning environment. It was recognised that the scale of the proposed withdrawals had created a perception among some staff that part-time postgraduate provision was no longer a priority in SALC. The Faculty remained committed to part-time, flexible and accessible postgraduate provision, including through Manchester Online, and M2035 Strategy-related work;
g) members discussed whether implementation of the withdrawals should be paused and whether the matter should return to Senate, particularly as there was no replacement provision in place. There was support for developing a future portfolio with continued AQSC oversight;
h) it was clarified that the programmes had already been withdrawn from advertising for 2027 entry, while existing students would continue and recruitment for 2026 entry would proceed where applicable.

Agreed:

i. that the wider issues raised would be addressed through structured follow-up, rather than considering the programme withdrawals in isolation. A progress update would be provided to the next meeting, and would include assurance, next steps and engagement with the report authors on future part-time postgraduate provision and the handling of disagreements in programme development decisions. SALC and Faculty leadership would also communicate clearly that part-time postgraduate provision, widening access and flexible provision remained priorities. Consideration of any further recommendation to Senate would be held pending the September AQSC update; **Action: Vice-President and Dean of Faculty of Humanities/Head of SALC/Lecturer in Russian and Eastern European Studies and UCU Executive Member/Senior Lecturer in American Studies and NEC Member for UCU**
ii. that the programme development guidance and documentation would be updated to ensure that any disagreements arising through approvals, amendments, withdrawals or suspensions were explicitly recorded through the relevant approval and reporting routes. This would be taken forward for the start of the next academic year; **Action: Teaching and Learning Manager (Programme Enhancement)**
iii. that SALC leadership would develop a process or framework for consultation, discussion, recording and resolution of disagreements in programme development and withdrawal activity, with an update to be provided to AQSC in September on engagement, communications, future provision and assurance around consultation and management of disagreements. **Action: Vice-President and Dean of Faculty of Humanities/Head of SALC**