



Senate

<b>Paper Title</b>	<b>Report for Senate on formation of the new School of Society and Environment (SSE)</b>
<b>Outcome requested</b>	Senate is asked to note the report
<b>Points for Senate members to note and further information</b>	This report updates Senate on the proposal which was considered at its meeting on 12 June 2025, including the bringing into being of SSE from August 2025.
<b>Questions for Senate to consider</b>	N/A
<b>Regulatory/statutory reference points</b>	In accordance with Article 8 of the Charter, the power to approve changes to the University's high-level structure of faculties, schools and institutes (the 'academic organisation') is reserved to the Council, on the recommendation of the President and Principal and wider senior executive team. In accordance with Article 22 of the Charter, the Council is required to consult the Senate on matters of academic policy before approving any such changes.
<b>Strategy and risk</b>	The formation of the new School aligns with Strategy 2030 and the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences Enabling Plan. It addresses broader strategic risks to the sustainability of the disciplines previously contained within the Schools of History and of Geography, and hence not just to research and education within these disciplines, but to the wider reputation and research and education environment of the Faculty and University.
<b>Reporting/consideration route for the paper</b>	This paper is based on reports to the HSS Faculty Project Board for the formation of SSE.
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## **Report for Senate on formation of the new School of Society and Environment**

1. During the planning cycle for the 2025/26 academic year, an option was developed to form a new School of Society and Environment within the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, containing the disciplines previously within the School of Geography, the School of History and the School of Politics and International Relations. The proposal aimed to improve multi-disciplinary sustainability and resilience and It was proposed that the new School should be brought into being in the University Ordinances on 1 August 2025.
2. Senate was asked to advise on this proposal at its meeting on 12 June 2025. This report updates on the proposal's subsequent development, its approval by Council at its meeting on 10 July 2025, the subsequent change to the University Ordinances and the bringing into operation of the new School.
3. At the point when the proposal to form a new School was submitted to Senate, the process to determine its name was not yet complete. This was complete by the Senate meeting of 12 June 2025. Following extensive engagement with staff, colleagues within the disciplines to be contained within the new School selected Society and Environment as best encompassing its remit and ambition. This name was presented to Senate as part of the discussion of the proposal.
4. In the course of discussion at Senate, Senate members expressed a range of views about the proposal and identified a number of academic risks and opportunities associated with it. Additional mitigations were developed as a result. Both the views expressed at Senate and these mitigations were noted and considered during subsequent discussions of the proposal by the Senior Executive Team and by Council.
5. The Senior Executive Team, having formally considered the range of views expressed by staff, students and Senate, recommended to Council that the new School be created with effect from 1 August 2025.
6. Council considered the proposal at its meeting on 10 July 2025. Council approved the creation of the School of Society and Environment from 1 August 2025 and the corresponding change to Ordinance 9, setting out the academic organisation of the University.
7. Following an internal call for expressions of interest, Professor Martin Coward was appointed Head of School. Professor Coward was previously Head of the School of Politics and International Relations, and served as Interim Academic Lead on preparations to implement the proposal to form the School, subject to the decision of Council. Professor Coward's term will run to 31 August 2028.
8. Significant work took place over the summer to ensure that SSE could come into operational existence for the start of the new teaching year. This included a reorganisation of Professional Services roles to meet the needs of the new School, in line with the HSS Faculty Operating Model; the scoping and implementation of systems

changes to enable operations; the operation of five workstreams (in which all staff were invited to participate) to discuss vision, governance, research and education strategy, process alignment and risk; extensive engagement with students, and the appointment of a senior leadership team for the School.

9. This work enabled the School to being operations effectively during September 2025. It held its first away day on 4 September, and held a successful Welcome Week for new and returning students from 15 September 2025.

10. Staff within the School have agreed a strong and clear vision that encapsulates its strength, ambition and purpose: 'The School of Society and Environment (SSE) addresses pressing questions of historical change, governance and sustainability through world-class expertise across the humanities, social and environmental sciences.'

11. Over the next year, the School will continue to align roles and processes, including its workload model; review its portfolio and recruitment activities; balance the development of a new, interdisciplinary research culture with continued momentum on key REF activities across existing Units of Assessment; and build on current NSS progress, refreshing advisor training and foregrounding student voice to improve students' experience. Together, all these will enable future focus on educational alignment, the launching of new programmes and the embedding of interdisciplinarity to enhance research and increase grant capture.

12. The School is currently located across three locations on campus. Recognising the importance of co-location for staff and student experience and operational delivery, HSS is committed to identifying a new location as part of its wider space strategy.

13. The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences is grateful to all those who have been involved in developing and implementing the creation of the School of Society and Environment, including Senate members for the extensive discussion they gave to this proposal.

Professor Dan Todman, Interim VP Humanities and Social Sciences  
26 September 2025