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UNIVERSITY OF
CAMBRIDGE

NOTICES

Calendar

30 January, *Friday*. Congregation of the Regent House at 2 p.m. (degrees in absence only).

13 February, *Friday*. Lent Term divides.

17 February, *Tuesday*. Discussion by videoconference at 2 p.m.

22 February, *Sunday*. Preacher before the University at 11.30 a.m., Professor Robin Osborne, Fellow of King's College, Emeritus Professor of Ancient History (*Hulsean Preacher*).

Discussions (Tuesdays at 2 p.m.)

17 February

17 March

Congregations (at 10 a.m. unless otherwise stated)

30 January, 2 p.m. (degrees in absence only)

28 February

16 March, 2.45 p.m. (ceremonial installation of the Chancellor)

28 March

11 April

Congregation of the Regent House on Monday, 16 March 2026: Formal Installation of the Chancellor

26 January 2026

Further to her Notice of 2 December 2025 (*Reporter*, 6806, 2025–26, p. 129) and in accordance with Special Ordinance A (ii) 2(a), the Vice-Chancellor informs members of the University that an additional Congregation will take place on **Monday, 16 March 2026 at 2.45 p.m.** This will be for the formal installation of the Chancellor, The Right Honourable Lord Smith of Finsbury, M.A., Ph.D., Honorary Fellow and former Master of Pembroke College. Music will be performed in honour of the Chancellor.

TIMETABLE

Ticket-holders who are not processing will need to be in their places in the Senate-House no later than **2.30 p.m.** If the weather is dry, the first of two processions listed below will form in the Schools Arcade at 2.35 p.m. Those in the categories listed beneath who wish to take part in the first procession must give notice of their intention, and processional tickets will be issued to them up to the number of places available. If the weather is wet, the first procession will not take place and those in this procession will be requested to take their seats in the Senate-House upon arrival. The second procession will form shortly before 2.40 p.m. The Congregation will end by about 3.30 p.m. There will be a small, private reception afterwards, but due to restrictions on space this will be by separate invitation.

DRESS

Members of the University attending the Congregation wear academical dress in accordance with the relevant regulations. 16 March 2026 will be a 'Scarlet Day', so Cambridge Doctors are requested to wear their festal gowns. All graduates are invited to wear hoods if they have them and undergraduates should wear their gowns. In accordance with Regulation 4 of the General Regulations for Academical Dress (*Statutes and Ordinances*, p. 178), any member of the University (other than the Chancellor, Vice-Chancellor, High Steward, Deputy High Steward, Commissary, Proctors, Registry, or Esquire Bedells) who is a graduate of another university or degree-awarding institution, may, on this occasion, wear the academical dress appropriate to that degree.

ADMISSION TO THE CONGREGATION

Admission to the Senate-House and Yard will be by ticket only and entry to the Yard on this occasion will be by the South-East Gate, from King's Parade.

TICKETS

All members and all staff (including retired staff) of both the University and the Colleges are invited to apply for tickets. To encourage wider participation from within the University, applications for guest tickets will not be accepted.

Applications for tickets should be made online at <https://eur.cvent.me/rMrbqQ>. Those who are not able to apply online should please write to: Chancellor's Installation, The Vice-Chancellor's Office, The Old Schools, Cambridge, CB2 1TN. Queries may be sent to vcevents@admin.cam.ac.uk. Applications must be made not later than **15 February 2026** and cannot be made in person or by telephone.

Applicants will understand that there may be more applications than places that are available. In that case a ballot will be used to allocate tickets and all applications received by the closing date will be included in the ballot. Successful applications will be acknowledged by **Monday, 2 March 2026**.

Successful applicants who then find that they cannot use their tickets are asked to return them so that their seats may be offered to others. **Tickets are not transferable.**

Further details of the arrangements will be included with the tickets. Those in the classes specified below, who wish to take part in the procession, should state this *clearly* in their applications. Processional tickets will be issued up to the number of places available to seat the procession. Only Cambridge Professors/Clinical Professors at Grade 12 or Cambridge Higher Doctors are eligible to process as Professors or Doctors.

ORDER OF PROCESSION

Having consulted the Proctors, the Vice-Chancellor has prescribed the following special orders of procession before this Congregation.

Those listed below (who have tickets to admit them to the procession, as specified above) assemble in the Schools Arcade no later than 2.35 p.m. (Entering by the South-East Gate from King's Parade).

The Vice-Marshal

Heads of Colleges

The Regius Professors of Divinity, Civil Law, Physic, Hebrew, Greek, History, Botany and Engineering

Professors/Clinical Professors at Grade 12 who are Doctors of Divinity, Law, Medicine (if conferred before 2014), Medical Science, Science, Letters or Music

Doctors of Divinity, Law, Medicine (if conferred before 2014), Medical Science, Science, Letters or Music

The Librarian

Other Professors/Clinical Professors at Grade 12 who are *not* Doctors as mentioned above and the Director of the Fitzwilliam Museum

Members of the Council

The Pro-Proctors

A second procession of the Chancellor, led by the Esquire Bedells, accompanied by the Vice-Chancellor, and followed by the other Principal University Officers, will then proceed immediately after the first.

After the Congregation has been dissolved, the Chancellor will leave in procession with the Principal University Officers and certain Civic Guests.

University Combination Room: Notice of closure on Wednesday, 4 February 2026

The Combination Room will be closed from 3 p.m. to 5.30 p.m. on Wednesday, 4 February 2026 for an event.

VACANCIES, APPOINTMENTS, ETC.**Election**

The following election has been made:

Professor CHRISTOPHER WHITTON, M.A., Ph.D., *JN*, Professor of Latin Literature, Faculty of Classics, elected Kennedy Professor of Latin, with effect from 1 October 2026.

AWARDS, ETC.**Evans Fellowships, 2026–27**

The Advisory Committee for the Evans Fund invites applications for Evans Fellowships for the academic year 2026–27, to support anthropological or archaeological research in or about Southeast Asia. Candidates are expected either to be based in Cambridge, or to plan a visit to Cambridge as part of their overall research.

For further information see <https://www.socanth.cam.ac.uk/about-us/funding/research-funding/evans-fund>. The deadline for applications is **24 April 2026 at 5 p.m.**

OBITUARIES**Obituary Notices**

JOHN ALBERT LITTLE, M.A., Ph.D., Emeritus Fellow and former President, Tutor and Director of Studies of St Catharine's College, formerly Senior Lecturer in the Department of Material Sciences and sometime Proctor (Junior Proctor), President of the Cambridge University Association Football Club, died on 7 January 2026, aged 73 years.

RAYMOND GEORGE JOBLING, MBE, M.A., Fellow and formerly Senior Tutor, Admissions Tutor, Tutor and College Lecturer in Sociology of St John's College, sometime University Lecturer in the Faculties of Economics and Politics and of Social and Political Sciences, Life Vice-President and former Chair of the Psoriasis Association, died on 16 January 2026, aged 84 years.

Sir WILLIAM MARK TULLY, KBE, M.A., Honorary Fellow of Trinity Hall, recipient of the Padma Bhushan and the Padma Shri, journalist, broadcaster and writer, died on 25 January 2026, aged 90 years.

GRACES**Graces to be submitted to the Regent House at a Congregation on 30 January 2026**

The Council has sanctioned the submission of the following Graces to the Regent House at a Congregation to be held on 30 January 2026.

That the following person be admitted to the degree of Master of Studies by incorporation:

1. ROBERT DOUGLAS HEDLEY, Fellow of Clare College, Professor of the Philosophy of Religion in the Faculty of Divinity, Master of Studies of the University of Oxford (1985).

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

2. MARINA BALLARD, Senior Assistant Registry in the Academic Division of the University Offices.
3. LAURA MARIE MACHESKY, Fellow of Robinson College, Sir William Dunn Professor of Biochemistry (1921) in the Department of Biochemistry.
4. EMMA JAYNE MASON, Assistant Registry in the Human Resources Division of the University Offices.

ACTA**Approval of Grace submitted to the Regent House on 14 January 2026**

The Grace submitted to the Regent House on 14 January 2026 (*Reporter*, 6810, 2025–26, p. 212) was approved at 4 p.m. on Friday, 23 January 2026.

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

END OF THE OFFICIAL PART OF THE 'REPORTER'

REPORT OF DISCUSSION

Tuesday, 13 January 2026

A Discussion was scheduled by videoconference. Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Dame Madeleine Atkins, LC, was presiding, with the Registrar's deputy, the Senior Proctor, the Junior Proctor and 357 other persons present.

Remarks were made as follows:

Topic of concern to the University: Support for the Veterinary course

(Reporter, 6808, 2025–26, p. 162).

Abbreviations

CSBS	Council of the School of the Biological Sciences
QVSH	Queen's Veterinary School Hospital
RCVS	Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons
SBS	School of the Biological Sciences

Professor M. A. HOLMES (Head of the Department of Veterinary Medicine, and Churchill College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I strongly believe that closure of the Veterinary Medicine course in Cambridge is not in the best interests of the University. Veterinary education is not just about producing vets to 'treat puppies and fluffy kittens'. Our students, graduates, clinicians and researchers make enormous contributions to society, including ensuring global food security, tackling zoonotic infections, mitigating the harm from antimicrobial resistance, and preparing for the next pandemic. The Cambridge Veterinary Medicine course is unique and irreplaceable, and its closure would be a profound loss to the University and society, both locally and globally.

I have serious concerns over the evidence and the processes that led to the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences making a recommendation to the General Board that the University should cease veterinary education at Cambridge.

1. I was allowed to make a brief statement and answer questions prior to the Council's consideration of the options and then excluded from the subsequent lengthy discussion and vote as I was deemed to have a conflict of interest. I believe that every Head of Institution at that meeting was conflicted as all other Departments are in competition for the same funds.
2. The options considered all included the substantial costs of a new building (if we are to relocate) and/or to sustain our current estate. These requirements were imposed on us by the University who made no provision for the accommodation of our Department before applying for planning permission to repurpose our site. Either we should be allowed to retain our site, or the costs of our relocation should have formed part of the costing of the West Cambridge Master Plan.
3. The timing of the announcement was disgraceful and the scale of the communications for a recommendation (not a decision) were totally unjustified. Current students were informed via email by the Head of School, while away from Cambridge and their support structures. Prospective students were emailed while in the process of being interviewed, causing distress to them and chaos in the admissions process.

My staff had been working tirelessly for a year towards a much-improved RCVS accreditation visit. Instead of being able to take a well-earned rest over the holidays they were faced with further uncertainty and the threat of job losses.

4. We fully recognise the need for radical change to the Veterinary course for cost-neutral delivery. We devised a carefully costed and externally scrutinised plan for this which was submitted to the SBS. No other Department has to run a commercial service of the scale that we do. While we understand the frustration of the SBS and the General Board over the Department's financial performance the current leadership team have not been given any opportunity to meaningfully implement our plans or been given any recognition for the significant improvements made over the last year. At no point have we been given the opportunity to raise funds for a new building which, given that over 15,000 people have pledged support on our website to date, we believe is something that should have been considered.
5. The recommendation to close the course, the only one we run, is effectively a recommendation to close the Department. We cannot undertake clinical veterinary research without a hospital. There are much broader implications for the University if this recommendation is accepted as there will be a precedent for closing any course or Department that 'loses money', regardless of its intellectual and societal contribution. No evidence of criteria for closure, other than financial, were systematically considered by the Council of the SBS.

In conclusion I would like to express my fears that the managerial and operational challenges, and the costs of closing down our course will be considerably greater than the resources required to address the underlying faults that led to this situation. I believe that given the opportunity to enact our plans we can rectify our past financial performance, including repayment of our existing debts, without the need to shrink the educational and research capacity of this great University.

Dr N. P. H. HUDSON (Queens' College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I speak as a Member of Parliament, Shadow Defra Minister, and veterinary surgeon and I declare at the outset my strong personal and professional interest as a veterinary graduate of this School and as a Fellow of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons.

We do not produce enough vets in the UK. Our country, and indeed the global veterinary profession, needs quality graduates now more than ever. We face threats to our food security and our biosecurity, both of which vets are pivotal to, and the health and welfare of animals depend on vets, as indeed does public health. I know first hand, as an alumnus and as a period as a Final Year external examiner, the uniqueness and quality of this precious institution, its staff and its students. I have met with the leadership team of the Vet School and I am confident that they have plans in place to secure the School financially and academically for a bright future.

At a time when the UK faces severe biosecurity threats from diseases like Foot and Mouth Disease, African Swine Fever, Avian Influenza and other highly infectious pathogens that could threaten our food security and national economy, when public health is threatened by emerging zoonotic diseases and antimicrobial resistance,

and when countless millions of people derive physical and mental health benefits from their companion animals, a reduction in both the world-class research and the excellent graduates produced by Cambridge would threaten our ability to cope with all of the above and be economically damaging.

The Cambridge programme is unique amongst UK vet schools and produces veterinary science graduates particularly suited to support and tackle national and international challenges which face human society. It is alarming that a University of the global calibre of Cambridge is contemplating downsizing and closing its Vet School, when in recent years other universities in the UK are opening vet schools.

I urge the University to block this closure recommendation and to secure the Cambridge Vet School's future for the benefit of people and animals both here in the UK and internationally.

Mr J. HUFFER (Queens' College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I believe we should save our Vet School.

Firstly, I'd like to state why I believe our Vet School should remain open as a matter of national and global health. Currently our Vet School works with the Animal and Plant Health Agency on monitoring known disease and surveilling new emerging diseases. It also supports a strong research base producing work on epidemiology and disease control and fundamental science that could one day translate to therapies for humans.

This country is currently experiencing a shortage of vets. So to close the best Veterinary course in the world seems like an utterly baffling decision. We live in a world where the next pandemic is just around the corner and when that day comes we are going to need a strong team of people trained in both research and veterinary medicine to tackle it.

I really don't think I can emphasise this strongly enough: to close our Vet School would be an irreparable mistake that would have knock-on effects on animal welfare, food security and global health for generations to come. And I hope, for all our sakes, that this lapse in judgement from the School of the Biological Sciences does not come to pass.

On top of this the support in favour of the Vet School has been staggering, spanning from current and past students, members of University staff, the general public and those working in industry. Not to mention the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the British Veterinary Association and the former Chief Veterinary Officer of the United Nations stating what a colossal mistake it would be to close our Vet School. Their voices are loud, their words moving and their numbers are undeniable. It is clear that the country, if not the whole world, stands with our Vet School.

But perhaps still the enormity of this support has not yet swayed you in favour of our Vet School. So I shall take a more personal approach: Olivia ... is a nurse working at our Veterinary hospital, not only is she one of the most efficient people I have ever worked with but she is also one of the kindest people I have ever met both to the animals under her care and to us students. Akash Alexander, an excellent teacher in both the lecture and operating theatre. And as it turns out a brilliant leader. Milorad Radakovic, head of Veterinary Public Health at our Vet School, a passionate advocate for students diversifying their careers and I would like to think a friend of mine. And Clare Bryant, holding an extensive research position at our Vet School, she is both an unstoppable force and immovable object. These four people, I believe, represent our Vet School as a whole.

Excellence in animal and student care, excellence in teaching, and excellence in contributions to public health and research.

Finally, I'd like to end on a personal note, speaking from the heart I suppose. I love this Vet School, in my time here it has given me opportunities I would not have even imagined when starting. The people I have met through my experience here have been wonderful and brilliant.

Dr M. RADAKOVIC (Department of Veterinary Medicine):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am Associate Teaching Professor of Veterinary Public Health and I am currently the President of European Veterinarians in Education, Research and Industry (EVERI).

I wish to highlight the importance of veterinary contribution, as a regulated profession, to society's efforts in tackling damaging diseases with direct or indirect impact to humans, for example with food poisoning, bird flu, BSE, Covid, and Rabies.

The University of Cambridge's mission is to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning and research at the highest international levels of excellence. While so many aspects of veterinary education at Cambridge present excellent examples of societal contribution, the purpose of this particular statement is, also, to especially highlight the contribution made by the discipline of Veterinary Public Health.

Veterinary Public Health (VPH) is the field of science and practice that uses veterinary knowledge to protect and improve human, animal, and environmental health (i.e. One Health). It sits at the intersection of epidemiology, food systems, zoonotic disease control, animal welfare, and public policy. In practice it's a transdisciplinary role and the Cambridge veterinary course is uniquely positioned, indeed noted by external examiners, for particular strength in VPH skills among our graduating students.

Specifically, Cambridge veterinary graduates and teaching staff, through their VPH skills, make valuable societal contributions by the following means, given as six examples – operating at local and national level but also globally, including in low and middle income countries:

1. *Protecting human health by underpinning zoonotic disease control and prevention*, calling on skills in surveillance, risk analysis, and understanding of pathogen ecology. In practice veterinarians work as front line staff responsible for inspection of all animals before and after slaughter, and for verification of safe and ethical production of animal products.
2. *Enacting antimicrobial stewardship*, the reduction of antimicrobial resistance, and understanding the implications for AMR from human and animal sources.
3. *The promotion of animal welfare as a public good*. Our students go forward literate and able to contribute to meaningful and effective, evidence based debate and legislative developments, and implementation.
4. *The support of environmental health and climate resilience* e.g. through climate resilient farming systems and control of environmental contamination.
5. *The support of economic stability and livelihoods* through prevention and control of animal diseases and maintenance of associated international trade.

Veterinary risk assessment and inspection are central to sanitary and phytosanitary agreements being forged between the UK and EU, enabling greater trade in animal products post-BREXIT and thereby underpinning national food security. Put simply: no vets – no trade.

6. *Contributing to policy, governance and global health security* in all these areas at both UK government and international levels including UN Food and Agriculture Organisation, World Health Organisation, World Organisation for Animal Health, and the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe.

Aside from these the contributions made by our graduates and staff in these areas, even our current students themselves also make a nationally recognised contribution in this field. The VPH Student Ambassadors Network was created by Cambridge students in 2020 and now extends across all UK vet schools, highlighting opportunities for extramural study, closely supported by the UK Veterinary Public Health Association.

In conclusion, the multidisciplinary context of a Cambridge education, which uniquely includes elements co-taught with medical and natural science students, provides an excellent platform for veterinary students to develop their VPH skills and to take these forward into the world. Society is struggling to prepare for the next, likely zoonotic, global pandemic and also trying to feed humanity while balancing the demands of planetary health and biodiversity against the externalities of intensive livestock production and society's expectations over animal welfare. Considering its stated mission for society it would be tragic for the University to turn away from its externally respected and valued role in veterinary education at such a time.

Professor T. L. WILLIAMS (Department of Veterinary Medicine and Fitzwilliam College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, there is no doubt that the academic University needs to find ways to reduce its overall deficit, given the current financial position. An ongoing recurrent deficit is not sustainable and must be addressed, and certainly the implementation of enhanced financial transparency is an important and welcome element of better financial management in the University.

Today's Discussion relates to support for the Veterinary course and the Department of Veterinary Medicine, both of which have recently undergone greater financial scrutiny than probably any other part of the University. However I believe that the issues raised as a result of this scrutiny have shined a spotlight on problems that are not unique to the Vet School and therefore it is important that the solutions we explore to address them are applicable across the University.

Clearly part of the reason for the recommendation of the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences to close the veterinary medicine course is the relatively high cost associated with provision of the undergraduate veterinary course at Cambridge, although the apparent higher cost of the veterinary course is by no means responsible for the entire deficit of the University. The financial settlement between the University and the Colleges is such that the income from student fees is unlikely to cover all the costs of undergraduate education for many courses provided by the University, however reducing the overall deficit should not simply involve cutting loose those courses and parts of the academic University that currently are shown as being

in deficit based on Enhanced Financial Transparency modelling. If we were to follow that approach to the natural conclusion then we as a University would likely cease to be an establishment for undergraduate education altogether. This outcome would also be directly at odds with the Vice-Chancellor's recent assertions that there were no plans to close any courses for financial reasons.

If the opinion of the University is that it should continue to provide undergraduate education despite the financial losses that these activities entail, then other ways to address the University's deficit must be explored.

The deficit is partially accounted for by increased staff costs over recent years, within both academic departments and the professional services that support our work, which have outpaced the increase in income of the academic University. Therefore, part of the management plan for reducing the deficit must be to have better oversight and management of individual members of staff including their workloads and contributions to the University. As an example, the Statutes have some guidance for expected teaching workloads for some established academic staff but there are no key performance indicators or objectives set for other aspects of these roles such as research income or research outputs. At present, there are also insufficient mechanisms in place to allow line managers such as Heads of Departments to adequately hold staff members, including established academic staff, accountable. Without clear expectations of what staff are expected to achieve and without giving line managers the tools to manage staff effectively it should be of no surprise that the productivity of the University has decreased over time. These issues should be addressed as a matter of urgency otherwise productivity will not improve and the financial problem will continue to be compounded.

In addition to exploring strategies for managing our staff, resources and activities more efficiently to cut expenditure, mechanisms to increase teaching income, for example through increased recruitment of overseas undergraduate students who pay significantly higher fees, and increased taught postgraduate programmes should also be explored. These strategies are utilised in other veterinary schools in the UK, however the Department of Veterinary Medicine have not, to date, been given the opportunity to explore these options to increase our teaching income.

Long-term management of the University's deficit is going to require profound organisational and cultural change if we are ever to succeed in eliminating the financial deficit. This is going to require us to be innovative and consider approaches to increase income, but also to 'get under the bonnet' of the University to address some of the long standing structural problems. This is by no means an easy solution, however it is the only approach that will ultimately succeed in achieving the end goal of reversing the current financial deficit across the academic University in the long term. Without such reforms, then the University will face the same budgetary challenges in the near future, regardless of whether or not the veterinary medicine course is discontinued after 2026. At that point, which undergraduate course will be closed next?

I would encourage the Council and University as a whole to consider alternative ways in which the underlying causes of the wider deficit can be addressed whilst maintaining our current educational offering, rather than pursuing the option of closing those undergraduate courses that cost the University the most to provide in order to resolve the financial deficit in the short term.

Dr E. M. BERTIN (Fitzwilliam College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am a 2023 graduate from the Cambridge vet course. Since graduation I have spent two years in mixed practice and am now undertaking an internship and P.G.Cert. qualification in wildlife medicine and surgery, with plans to go on to a career in wildlife medicine. I would like to share my thoughts and experiences as a recently graduated vet on the topic of the recommendations by the CSBS regarding closure of the veterinary course.

There are two key points I would like to raise regarding closure of the veterinary course: the detriment to the veterinary profession and the detriment to the University itself.

The Cambridge vet course is unique in the way it trains vets to think, by providing a deeper education on the background principles of medical science. This allows Cambridge graduates to go onto more varied careers than typical vets from other universities. Despite the small number of Cambridge graduates compared to other vet schools, there is a disproportionately high representation of Cambridge vets in elevated positions within the profession – as referral specialists, clinical directors, leading researchers, and members of government. If the Vet School were to close, the loss of this whole subsector of veterinary graduates would be a serious detriment to the profession in future. Cambridge doesn't just produce first opinion small animal vets. Cambridge produces resilient, well-educated vets who can reason far beyond the average first opinion veterinary surgeon to help our sector progress scientifically.

The University of Cambridge prides itself on being a leading scientific university. Ignoring the value of veterinary surgeons – who sit at the interface of humans, livestock, pets, wildlife and ecosystems – is an insult to the entire veterinary profession. How can the lead scientific university expect to maintain a high quality of research output in a world challenged by climate change and emerging disease threats if it eliminates an entire department which is best placed to understand and respond to these threats? In the course of my training, some of the most formative moments were during discussions of scientific theories and the changing world around us with fellow scientists from other departments and disciplines. Why would Cambridge deprive itself of all the future cohorts of veterinary scientists who have some of the most unique perspectives to contribute to these discussions?

Professor A. R. BIRD (Department of Veterinary Medicine and Girton College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am a Teaching Professor at the Department of Veterinary Medicine and a European Specialist in Veterinary Anaesthesia. I am also a Bye-Fellow and Director of Studies at Girton College. I declare a declaration of interest as a member of the Veterinary Department.

If anyone is in any doubt as to the reaction of the wider world beyond the University of Cambridge, to the School of the Biological Sciences recommendation to close the Veterinary course, I urge you to visit savethevetschool.co.uk. In the last four weeks alone, social media posts from our campaign site have amassed over 500,000 Facebook views and over 130,000 Instagram views.

The statements of support and letters of concern clearly demonstrate the vital role that the University of Cambridge Veterinary Course and Department plays in producing world-leading veterinary specialists, in industry,

government, in our defence against world zoonotic disease threats, in health and trade policy, research and food safety to name but a few. We are a respected and highly regarded Department in the UK and wider world. We don't just treat fluffy kittens.

Keith Sumption, Veterinary Department graduate and former Chief Veterinary Officer of the United Nations has written to the Vice-Chancellor urging the University not to make a colossal mistake. A recent paper written by researchers at the Department of Livestock and One Health, University of Liverpool and the Royal (Dick) School of Veterinary Studies and the Roslin Institute, Edinburgh University, titled 'Are all vet schools equal' demonstrates substantially and significantly higher odds of Cambridge alumni acquiring both specialist clinical and academic postgraduate qualifications, when compared to all other red brick veterinary universities. No other UK university performed better.

The British Veterinary Association wrote to the Chancellor in December stating the strategic national and international asset of the Cambridge Veterinary School and that our closure would represent a profound gamble with public health and scientific excellence. They state us as indispensable as the UK's first line of scientific defence when considering One Health; pandemic preparedness, antimicrobial resistance, food safety and security. This letter is countersigned by twenty presidents of UK veterinary associations. The British Equine Veterinary Association, the British Small Animal Veterinary Association, the British Cattle Association, Veterinary Public Health Association, Association of Government Veterinarians. The list goes on and on. We don't just treat fluffy kittens.

The Veterinary Schools Council, The National Farmers Union, National Office of Animal Health, European Veterinarians in Education, Research and Industry, Federation of Veterinarians of Europe are but a few further national and international organisations who have expressed their alarm in writing at this recommendation to cease the Veterinary course at Cambridge.

The Veterinary course is the Department. Let's not pretend that the recommendation to close the course, and offer our non-clinical researchers 'desks in other departments' will lead to anything other than ultimate closure of the Department. Our course and the Department are one.

Savethevetschool.co.uk shows without doubt the quality of our graduates, the importance of our course in creating leading vets and researchers of the future as well as a statement from the RCVS expressing their deep concern regarding the recommendation, as well as their commendation of the work we have tirelessly done in the last twelve months to move from conditional to full accreditation.

I finish with one remaining question to all those other Departments within the University. Could you be confident, without doubt, that your course would gain the support that we have been inundated with since the School of the Biological Sciences recommendation to close us down. Could you, without doubt, say your course is ranked No. 1 in the UK, or has been proven to produce graduates who go on to do greater things than every, other, comparable course in the UK. Could you say that your Department doesn't lose a single penny. If it does, do you have a plan to resolve this loss? If you do great, so do we, it was rejected in favour of closure.

We have a new team leading our course and our hospital. Our new hospital management team have only been in place since the summer and already, in the first quarter of this academic year, our hospital finances generated a surplus, despite our hands being tied with regards to the major overhaul plans we have to improve our finances further. And yet our proposal to continue ensuring financial stability has been rejected in favour of our removal from the University. If you can't, with confidence, declare your Department in a better position, be afraid, be very afraid. First they came for the architects, then they came for the vets. Which of you will they come for next.

Ms C. D. WALLS (Newnham College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I have a personal interest in this topic in that I am a parent of a pre-clinical vet student. I also have a professional interest in the matter and in how this decision is being taken as I have spent nearly 23 years of my career to date in the education and training of members of the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy. As a member of this institute and as an Associate Trainer, I focus on the ways in which public and third sector organisations ensure that they can deliver the best possible services within the constraints of the funding available and that when services are withdrawn or reconfigured, this is done in the best possible way.

My career to date has taught me that strategic decisions are best made considering both financial and non-financial factors. The rationale for change should be supported by its alignment with the overarching vision and objectives of the organisation making these. Stakeholders impacted by planned strategic change should be consulted and supported throughout the process.

I believe there is clear non-financial benefit to keeping the Vet School open. The Vet School was recently ranked in first place in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings. The most recent Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Accreditation visit continued to grant conditional accreditation to the School. The Cambridge course provides a unique focus amongst vet degrees on scientific understanding which ensures that its graduates are not just equipped to work in practice but also in research. The Vet School is also essential to the One Health vision that the School of the Biological Sciences embraces. The vet profession represents a skill shortage for the UK and vets remain vital to the food and biosecurity of the nation. I believe that these factors combined present good reasons for the University to continue to provide the Vet.M.B. Degree.

The email sent to staff and students on 10 December 2025, stated that 'on-going financial challenges' was prompting a review of the Vet School. However I am told that the financial review of the Vet School has not considered how the loss of income generated from vet students will impact on the wider financial viability of the current Medical and Veterinary Sciences Triposes. Five of the pre-clinical papers that the vets study are taught alongside medical students. The costs of providing these lectures will not change if the vet course is closed. The element of income that is generated by vet students will of course be lost. The General Board and the School of the Biological Sciences should consider the impact that this lost income will have on wider University activities before making their decision regarding the future of the Vet School.

The recommendation to close the Vet School has come without consultation or discussion with the Department itself. I ask that the General Board when meeting to consider the School of the Biological Sciences' recommendation, do not vote to close the Vet School.

Professor J. L. HEENEY (Department of Veterinary Medicine and Darwin College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor,

Establishment of the Veterinary School at Cambridge

The Veterinary School and its academic course represent over 100 years of evolution within the University. Animal disease research began in 1909, when the Department of Pathology established a large animal disease outstation to support research into infectious and zoonotic diseases. This work laid the foundation for Cambridge's later leadership in veterinary and comparative biomedical sciences.

In 1935, following agreement with the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the University introduced a pre-clinical veterinary course and postgraduate diploma. These arrangements, approved through the General Board and relevant Faculty Boards, marked the first formal integration of veterinary education into our academic framework. Following the recommendations of the Loveday Report, the General Board submitted a Report proposing the creation of a full route to the Vet.M.B. Degree, the establishment of the Department of Veterinary Medicine, and the regulatory framework for veterinary teaching and examinations.

The Regent House approved these proposals by Grace in 1949, thereby formally establishing the Veterinary School. To support the new Department, the University approved – through a further Report and Grace – the first development of purpose built veterinary facilities on the Merton Hall Farm site on the West Cambridge estate.

The Veterinary School's building was opened on 20 October 1955 by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II, accompanied by His Royal Highness the Duke of Edinburgh, later our Chancellor. The University continued development of the site between 1958 and 1965, including the construction of farm buildings and large animal facilities.

The distinctiveness of the Cambridge Veterinary Medicine course

1. The Cambridge course in Veterinary Medicine is unique within the United Kingdom in combining a fully accredited professional veterinary curriculum with the rigorous scientific training characteristic of the Natural Sciences Tripos.
2. All veterinary students undertake their first three years alongside the Natural Sciences Tripos, studying with students in biological and medical sciences. This provides a deep grounding in fundamental biological science and the opportunity to complete a B.A. degree before progressing to clinical training.
3. Cambridge is the only UK institution where veterinary and medical students are educated together in their pre-clinical years, sharing teaching in anatomy, physiology, biochemistry, pathology, pharmacology and behavioural science. This fosters cross professional understanding and supports the University's interdisciplinary mission.
4. The University benefits from active societies led by veterinary students, including the Cambridge One Health Society, the Cambridge University Veterinary Zoological Society (CUVZS), and ecological and conservation focused groups. These societies promote interdisciplinary engagement and cultivate leadership in global health and biodiversity.

Strategic importance of the Department of Veterinary Medicine to the University's Mission

The University's highly successful *Dear World... Yours, Cambridge* campaign raised approximately £2.2bn by identifying global challenges in which the University seeks to lead transformative research and innovation. The Department is central to these ambitions, which are as follows:

- (a) *Global health and pandemic preparedness*: expertise in zoonotic disease, viral evolution, comparative immunology, and host-pathogen interactions makes the Department a core contributor to global health research.
- (b) *Sustainable food systems*: research in livestock health, epidemiology, animal welfare, and sustainable production supports the University's commitment to addressing global food security.
- (c) *Biodiversity and ecosystem health*: veterinary and comparative pathology research contributes to wildlife health, conservation medicine, disease ecology, and the protection of endangered species.
- (d) *One Health and interdisciplinary science*: the Department is a cornerstone of the University's One Health agenda, linking veterinary medicine, human medicine, public health, ecology, and global policy.
- (e) *Training future leaders*: the Department educates veterinary clinicians and researchers who will play key roles in global health surveillance, disease control, sustainable agriculture, and translational biomedical research.
- (f) *Cross-disciplinary research to address global research challenges*: veterinarians and postgraduates trained at Cambridge go on to be highly skilled researchers and leaders engaged in interdisciplinary research, not only in other departments at Cambridge, but in other universities in the UK and abroad. The Department punches far above its weight in research of national and international importance.

Global Health and One Health

A unique strategic competitive advantage for Cambridge:

The greatest public health threats of the 21st century, from Avian Flu, Ebola to AMR TB, to the next unknown pathogen, are *zoonotic*, so carried by animals and then spill over to humans. Our Vet School is indispensable as the UK's first line of scientific defence under the *One Health* paradigm.

- *Pandemic preparedness*: Cambridge trains the veterinarians and veterinary scientists who specialise in epidemiology, disease surveillance, and interspecies transmission. Shutting down this source of expertise directly compromises the nation's capacity to predict, prepare for, and respond to future global pandemics. To close it 'is surely a risk that is not worth taking, particularly if the decision is about money'.
- *Irreplaceable research impact*: the Department's research is demonstrably world-leading (91% rated 4* or 3* in the REF). This research has a direct global impact, from developing rapid diagnostics for equine diseases worldwide to informing WHO meningitis guidelines, and most critically, combating Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), a major international health threat.

- *Workforce resilience*: the UK is currently facing a significant veterinary workforce crisis. Closing one of the nation's most prestigious training institutions would exacerbate this, limiting the supply of highly trained professionals needed to ensure food safety, animal welfare, and agricultural health.

International leadership and standing: the University's global reputation is built on excellence across all academic fields and the Veterinary School is a jewel in that crown. Closure would cause significant damage to the Cambridge 'brand' in science and medicine.

- *Unmatched academic synergy*: our Vet.M.B. course is unique, integrating the foundational years into the Natural Sciences Tripos. Our graduates gain a depth of scientific rigor and an interdisciplinary perspective unmatched elsewhere. Graduates are not just clinicians; they are world-leading researchers and future leaders across government, academia, and industry, often facilitated by the immediate international recognition of the Cambridge name.
- *Global standing and scientific breadth*: the Department's unique position, bridging biological sciences, medicine, and clinical practice, is integral to the University's holistic scientific profile. Committing to a closure, particularly at a time when the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons has acknowledged significant progress towards full accreditation, sends a deeply damaging message about our commitment to strategic scientific breadth and the University's status as a world leader in biomedical science.
- *Contradicting progress*: the advice from the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences to cease veterinary education stands in direct opposition to the latest findings from the RCVS, which granted conditional accreditation and acknowledged the 'considerable efforts and hard work' and the 'current trajectory towards meeting the RCVS accreditation standards'. To recommend closure now, despite this demonstrable educational progress, suggests the University is prioritising short-term financial fear over the long-term, high-impact success of its academic mission.

The compelling case for the continuation of Cambridge's distinctive Veterinary School:

The argument for closure is based on financial concerns regarding clinical training and a perceived failure to find a viable clinical services model. However, the decision of the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences was premature, flawed and short-sighted, ignoring both the public good provided and the various viable options to address clinical teaching. The core argument for strengthening and keeping it open is that its value cannot be measured in terms of the financial deficit of a clinical hospital, a deficit for which there are solutions at hand. Viable solutions for delivering high standard clinical training have been established by veterinary schools both nationally and internationally.

The Veterinary School is not merely another Department within a School of the University that is facing financial challenges; it is a strategic, academic, national and international asset, whose closure would represent irreparable damage with a detrimental future impact on Global and One Health and interdisciplinary scientific excellence. While financial sustainability for

professional clinical training is a valid concern in the absence of a government-funded, NHS-like, hospital to support it, the irreplaceable value the Veterinary School provides to the UK and the world far outweighs the internal institutional cost.

The University, being the largest biomedical cluster in Europe, possesses the financial and intellectual resources to resolve these challenges. The professional bodies, staff, and students are united in their assessment that the closure recommendation is ‘hasty, unjustified and flawed’. It is critical for the University’s governing bodies to reject this recommendation, and recognise the Veterinary School’s unique and strategic advantages and the irreplaceable good it provides.

Let us commit to finding a robust, sustainable funding model that preserves Cambridge’s School of Veterinary Medicine at the forefront of global health and scientific leadership.

Ms R. A. RODD (Newnham College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, others are much more capable of speaking about the scientific and educational significance of the Veterinary School so I would like to concentrate on its importance to some of the inhabitants of Cambridge who are much less fortunate than the University academic staff and students. The Veterinary School has worked in partnership with the RSPCA for over 70 years running a low-cost clinic which benefits those students who experience it for practical teaching and the clinic users who receive excellent care for their pets at a charge they can afford. Closing the Veterinary School’s clinical services would inevitably mean the RSPCA clinic would no longer be able to offer a full range of treatments and some of our clients would face the hard decision of euthanasia for conditions that were too expensive for them to afford treatment at another practice. At a minimum, several thousand local pet owners would need to think whether they could afford to have another pet when their existing one dies. Some of these are lonely people whose pet is their only companion.

I hope that the General Board will recognise that these people are their neighbours in the City of Cambridge and deserve to have their interests considered when decisions are made.

Professor J. L. N. WOOD (Department of Veterinary Medicine and Wolfson College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am Alborada Professor of Equine and Farm Animal Sciences and the previous Head of Department of Veterinary Medicine. I am co-chair of Cambridge Infectious Diseases Interdisciplinary Research Centre and Vice-Chair of the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons Fellowship Board.

I speak in strong support of the benefits of the Veterinary Medicine course in Cambridge. Without the veterinary course and teaching programme, there would effectively be no Department of Veterinary Medicine and the great impetus for veterinary research conducted here for societal benefit would be lost.

I am most concerned by the processes followed and the opaque criteria used by the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences to reach their recommendation that veterinary teaching should cease in Cambridge, and how this was communicated long before this was ever a University decision, but will leave others to comment in more detail on this.

Cambridge veterinary graduates are outstanding and have a disproportionately beneficial impact in society, and not just in the veterinary world. It would be a far-reaching tragedy were Cambridge to stop educating such brilliant individuals. Just for example, two alums that I have worked closely with over the last few years include the UK’s Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer Dr Eleanor Brown and the United Nations’ Food and Agriculture Organisation’s Chief Veterinary Officer, Dr Keith Sumption (now recently retired). Both are outstanding individuals who describe the clear benefits of the Cambridge veterinary education that they received.

Moving away from exceptional individuals, it is clear from recently published analyses that Cambridge veterinary graduates disproportionately gain both further science (e.g. Ph.D.) and clinical qualifications, compared to graduates from other UK universities.

The graduate programmes led from the Department of Veterinary Medicine have also supported exceptional individuals to progress into globally important positions. The CIDC Ph.D. programme, running from 2005–2010, has produced individuals who are now, only 15 years later, in very senior positions that include:

- Professor Nicola Lewis, Director of the Worldwide Influenza Centre and the WHO Collaborating Centre for Research and Response at the Crick Institute
- Professor Dan Horton, Director of Science at Defra’s Animal and Plant Health Agency
- Professor Kate Baker, Department of Genetics, Cambridge
- Dr Anna Ludi, Deputy Head of Vesicular Disease Reference Laboratory, Pirbright Institute
- Dr Alison Peel, Sydney Horizon Fellow at the University of Sydney
- Professor David Hayman, Percival Carmine Chair in Epidemiology and Public Health, Professor of Infectious Disease Ecology, Co-Director of the mEpiLab and Director of IDReC at Massey University; Royal Society Te Apārangi Rutherford Discovery Fellow, NZ
- Professor Julian Drewe, Professor of Epidemiological Surveillance, Royal Veterinary College.

I believe that this is unparalleled for a single graduate programme in the sector and exemplifies the nationally and globally significant role of the Veterinary School here. Other colleagues are speaking more in this general area, including in the critical role that Cambridge plays in animal disease control and veterinary public health.

Many of you will have noted the correspondence in *The Times* in December from a large number of senior faculty from Medicine in Cambridge, describing the research and educational benefits of veterinary and human medicine co-existing in an early example of a One Health framework in Cambridge. Faculty from Veterinary Medicine have always played an active role in driving innovative interdisciplinary science in Cambridge; infectious diseases (coincident with activities in conservation), exemplifies this, with Veterinary Medicine Faculty having developed with medical colleagues an interdisciplinary research centre, long before the University actively supported such things. The long-term pandemic planning, as well as pandemic prevention, benefits of the Veterinary programme here in Cambridge would be lost should the recommendation of the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences be followed.

Mr M. COPEMAN (President (Undergraduate) of Cambridge Students' Union and Fitzwilliam College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I want to start by reading from the University's student protection plan – this is a document the University is required to provide to the Office for Students on how it would respond to all manner of shocks that could affect students. Under the risk of a Department closing, it says:

This risk is considered *very low*.
The impact on students should this risk crystallise would be *high*.

The University would not close a faculty or department without undertaking extensive evaluation and strategic planning.

Where is the extensive evaluation and strategic planning? Did it occur without talking to staff at the Vet School? Are students not helpful people to consult with in such an extensive evaluation? The document continues:

Current cohorts would be able to complete their courses without compromising the quality of their education and would be offered ongoing support where necessary.

We now know that this decision was taken with no thought of how such a teach out programme could work. The closest our vet students were given to reassurance was a vague commitment to take 'all reasonable steps' to allow them to continue their education. This is just not good enough. I should say, none of this is to criticise the authors of this document, who wrote plainly reasonable and sensible things. But we find ourselves in a situation where such reasonable and sensible notions have long since departed.

That document was effective from September 2025. Just four months ago, this risk was considered very low. The Vice-Chancellor was reassuring everyone in her new year's address that Cambridge was insulated from the wider financial struggles of the sector. We were absolutely fine in the short term, and if we all just made 5% cuts, we could safeguard the future of our University for the long term. And now the University is on the brink of closing an entire Department, for what can only be described as financial reasons. Was 5% not good enough? Where has all the money gone?

The truth is, if we let the Vet School go now, we set a dangerous precedent of closing Departments when they get too expensive, or too difficult to run. We are not a business; there is no profit to be made in higher education. If we can't use our money to protect the world-renowned research, teaching and study that happens in our Veterinary Medicine Department, I ask the General Board, why have the money in the first place?

Dr C. J. HOULDCROFT (Department of Genetics and Christ's College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I support the continuation of the veterinary medicine course at the University as a pre-clinical and clinical degree.

I have had the great pleasure of observing clinical teaching at the Vet School as part of the University's Advancing Educational Practice Programme. I observed staff delivering teaching that was engaging, inclusive, and most of all – excellent. I have also had the privilege to engage with researchers from the Vet School, doing internationally important work on pandemic prevention. The University, but more importantly the UK, would be poorer without both of these elements of the Vet School.

Dr J. P. SKITTRALL (Trinity College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I must begin with some declarations of interest. I am currently employed by the UK Health Security Agency, and as such am subject to the Civil Service Code. Although the status of the Veterinary School has implications for the United Kingdom's pandemic preparedness, nothing I say should be construed as a comment on that. I am a Fellow of the Royal College of Pathologists, which has written separately (without my involvement) to the Vice-Chancellor to express concern about proposals to cease veterinary education in Cambridge and to support continuation of the veterinary programme.¹ I am about to take up a position as a human clinical academic within the Department of Pathology, which sits within the School of the Biological Sciences – I shall speak more about the interactions between that and this topic later.

Shortly before the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences' meeting, the Vice-Chancellor said to a staff meeting in the University

We're in a relatively strong position comparatively, compared to our peers, which is why you don't hear news about Cambridge closing courses, or having mandatory redundancies, or – you know – in the worst cases in jeopardy of not being able to continue on. We're insulated from those outcomes by particularly the excellent work of Cambridge University Press and Assessment, but also our endowment, from which we do get payout each year.

It is surprising that the members of the SBS Council would decide to take the brave step of openly diverting, I am sure unintentionally, the Vice-Chancellor's publicly stated intended direction of travel. It is also surprising to see this step in the context of the Board of Scrutiny's 'understand[ing] to be the Council's clearly expressed objective that ... cuts should not affect our academic offering'.² This highlights a concern expressed by the Board of Scrutiny in the same Report that 'while it is appropriate that Schools have full decision-making freedom in their own budgets, this may not always be aligned with the Council's aims'.

Recent difficulties the Veterinary School has faced have been well-publicised, and indeed this is not the first time they have been brought for Discussion. As recently as last July, in response to remarks (including mine) at a Discussion from 18 March 2025,³ the Council stated that it 'has confidence in the oversight of the General Board and the commitment of the School of the Biological Sciences to support the Department in advance of the RCVS review in September'.⁴ Does the Council still have that confidence in the General Board, and in the SBS's commitment?

The request for this Topic of concern Discussion states that 'the Department of Veterinary Medicine [was] excluded from the CSBS meeting when the discussion progressed on to consider the whole future of the course',⁵ and the Head of Department has confirmed this today. This raises serious questions both about governance in the School of the Biological Sciences, and about whether the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences has, in fact, validly made a recommendation to the General Board at all.

The reason the Department of Veterinary Medicine has representation on the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences is precisely because the School has a responsibility for oversight of and decisions pertaining to the Department; if the Council of the School has taken a decision about the Department without the input of the

Department – especially if, as the request for this Discussion states, the exclusion of the Department has led to the Council of the School making a critical error of fact – then that calls into question the robustness of its own governance arrangements and I am confident that this is something the General Board will wish to consider when it next meets. I am also confident that the scientists comprising the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences will wish to set the record straight regarding the use of the term ‘unanimous’ to describe the recommendation to the General Board to close the Department of Veterinary Medicine, since I am sure they are all familiar with the principle that one cannot handle data points that belong to a dataset but are inconvenient to one’s conclusion simply by excluding them.

I feel I should also comment on the timing of this recommendation, bearing in mind that the timescale for closing a department is not a short one. The decision appears to have been taken at what I suspect was the last meeting of term of the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences, and despite the magnitude of the decision was only communicated – I am sure inadvertently – to stakeholders after the end of Full Term. This appears to include the Head of the School of the Biological Sciences communicating directly with applicants to Veterinary Medicine, without the knowledge or consent of the colleges to which they had applied, in the middle of the interview period. A plan was then put in place for the General Board to consider this recommendation before the beginning of the Lent Full Term. I am sure that it is entirely inadvertent, yet of course was simultaneously absolutely necessary, that such a robust and defensible recommendation about the long-term future of the University was made when those with the highest level of commitment to the day-to-day delivery of that aspect of the University’s mission were busy occupied with interviewing candidates for admission followed by it being Christmas, and when there was no time for those representing their departments on the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences to consult with members of their departments, and so there was unfortunately no opportunity for the recommendation to be tested and refined.

On the specific topic of communicating with applicants for admission, I am at a loss to understand why somebody involved in this process did not question the good sense of sending a communication to applicants to the University whilst they were in the middle of being interviewed, and again am confident that there will be a review of how this communication occurred, and whether sending that communication involved any misuse of applicants’ personal data. I hope there will be enough good sense for an internal review to take place rapidly and before any external bodies decide they are obliged to become involved.

And now to the recommendation itself. Others have and I am sure others will be able to make more eloquently than I the case for the intrinsic worth of studying animals with a clinical perspective. The overall academic merit of studying this aspect of the natural world, let alone the value to global health, seems obvious but I am going to refrain from further comment lest I stray into areas of policy I have said I shall avoid. Considering academic rather than policy implications, the suggestion that it would be possible simply to cease teaching and research in this one area without impact elsewhere is unrealistic. One of the reasons I have chosen to take up a position in Cambridge is because of the need for my research to interact with, and sometimes cross into, other disciplines – I am medically qualified and use my mathematical

background to study basic molecular virology; my work requires understanding of nucleic acid biochemistry in addition to understanding the clinical importance of the viruses I study in order to direct my time towards areas with therapeutic potential. During my career I have undertaken my current primary research topic sitting in three separate departments of the University, each in a different School – and could name three or four more departments in which my research area would not seem out of place. That the department I am about to join, which contains multiple human clinical academics and is probably the most logical one for me to belong to, sits within the School of the Biological Sciences and not the School of Clinical Medicine, only underscores the point that the clinical application of the biological sciences cannot be detached from the basic science, and vice versa. One of the key strengths of Cambridge is its ability to foster intellectual links between diverse areas. I could count on the fingers of one hand the locations in the UK with the appropriate academic diversity to allow me to undertake my work. Notwithstanding the intrinsic value of the area, veterinary medicine has links with all of the biological sciences and with human clinical medicine in a way that will diminish all of these areas were it not being studied and taught. Considering the value of veterinary medicine only in terms of the desirability of running a veterinary hospital and hence an associated course is not merely narrow in accounting terms: it is narrow-minded.

Given the extent to which the issue has been couched in financial terms, I am sure the General Board will wish to reflect upon the application of conflicts of interests rules to those representing on the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences departments that stand to gain financially from resources that would consequentially not go to the Department of Veterinary Medicine – particularly in light of the way such rules may have been applied to the Department of Veterinary Medicine’s representatives themselves, since it would of course be important to ensure consistency of application.

A broader question this proposal raises, and one in which I have a personal interest as a human medic about to be employed within the School of the Biological Sciences, is the extent to which major decisions about clinically applicable teaching and research in the University should be taken without sufficient input and expertise from those with training and experience in the appropriate clinical domain. The approach to this issue carries with it a whiff of the disdain for ‘practical magic’ of the Learned Society of York Magicians, ‘[who] were gentleman-magicians, which is to say that they had never harmed any one by magic – nor ever done any one the slightest good. In fact, to own the truth, not one of these magicians had ever cast the smallest spell ... But, with this one minor reservation, they enjoyed a reputation as some of the wisest and most magical gentlemen in Yorkshire’.⁶

As the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences has clearly signalled that it does not think that teaching and research in veterinary medicine belong within the School of the Biological Sciences, perhaps rather than closing the Department of Veterinary Medicine the appropriate course of action would be to transfer the Department out of the School? At the very least, the safeguards against clinically impactful decisions being taken by those without direct appreciation of the impact need making substantially more robust – if for no other reason than out of fairness to the non-clinicians who have been tasked with sometimes difficult considerations. The disconnect between financial priorities here and the value being ascribed to different

forms of teaching and research suggests to me we are dealing with more than one form of the problem of the tail wagging the dog; surely there is enough creativity in those leading this University to find a more elegant solution than the rather unethical one of docking the tail?

¹ <https://www.rcpath.org/discover-pathology/news/college-raises-concerns-about-plans-to-close-university-of-cambridge-s-veterinary-school.html>.

² *Reporter*, 6800, 2025–26, p. 64 at p. 67.

³ *Reporter*, 6778, 2024–25, p. 462–466.

⁴ *Reporter*, 6795, 2024–25, p. 770.

⁵ *Reporter*, 6808, 2025–26, p. 162.

⁶ Susanna Clarke, *Jonathan Strange & Mr Norrell* (2004).

Professor C. E. HOOK (Department of Pathology and Homerton College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, to acknowledge my potential conflicts of interest, I make these remarks as the Clinical Professor of Pathology Education and as a Fellow and Director of Studies for pre-clinical veterinary medicine at Homerton College – both roles within which I directly teach Veterinary Sciences Tripos students. I am a practicing clinician at Cambridge University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust. I share fellowship of my professional body, the Royal College of Pathologists, with Veterinary Pathology colleagues with whom I collaborate professionally and academically. My professional body has sent a statement in support of the Department of Veterinary Medicine,¹ and whilst I had no involvement with the drafting of this statement, I endorse it wholeheartedly.

The University emphasises quite rightly, to all those in academic posts, the necessity of good documentation of the impact of work that is undertaken in the name of this University. In many cases, measurement and confirmation of this impact is challenging. This is clearly not the case for our dedicated colleagues in Veterinary Medicine; the client testimonials offered in support of their cause have demonstrated direct and tangible impact sited within our close community. Within these numerous testimonials sit submissions from members of our local community for whom Queen's Veterinary School Hospital (QVSH) offered their only affordable access to veterinary care via the RSPCA clinic. A true lifeline for those who require veterinary care for their companion animals without the financial resources to easily fund this.

The University's 2025 *People, Place, Partnership* civic priorities report² recognises that the impact that we have must have a direct local impact. This report acknowledges the stark inequities across our region – access to affordable veterinary care is a tangible example of how the University, in the form of QVSH, is able to alleviate this burden via its support of the RSPCA clinics.

On the issue of provision of veterinary services, the local community have spoken loudly and clearly, indeed movingly so in many cases – the Veterinary Hospital holds their affection and gratitude. There is an opportunity here to show that the University is listening carefully to our local community, including partner organisations such as the RSPCA, and that we have come to appreciate, as perhaps we did not before, the overwhelmingly positive direct impact that this arm of the University has had on the lives and wellbeing of members of our local community.

All QVSH staff should be immensely proud of this positive impact – as, indeed, should the wider University. I urge members of the General Board to read in detail all of the responses provided to the Vet School from a large spectrum of respondents (staff, students, alumni, professional colleagues and clients) reflecting the widespread diverse impact that colleagues at the Vet School have.

Turning now to the complexity of clinical services which, whether human or animal focused, function as a complex interconnected framework with many output elements critically dependent on multiple input elements – the absence of any of which can lead to system failure. The consequences (unintended and unforeseen) of interference at any point of this framework without truly understanding the convolutions of the component parts can be catastrophic. It is clear from the feedback from respected professional associations, senior members of the veterinary profession and those in national and international senior veterinary and One Health governance roles that components of the Veterinary School framework extend beyond the our immediate physical environment in Cambridge. Change within the Cambridge Veterinary ecosystem may have profound impacts on outputs not within our direct infrastructure. The risk of an inadvertent butterfly effect would, thus, argue for extreme caution before considering effecting change in such a complex system – the risk of adverse reputational harm is, I fear, real and considerable.

I urge the General Board to recognise and acknowledge that there is a moral imperative for the University to continue to support both the direct impactful work within our civic community – delivering demonstrably both on local civic responsibilities, aligning strongly with our stated civic priorities – and also the many groundbreaking contributions to the national and international One Health umbrella acting to keep our population safe in many ways.

¹ <https://www.rcpath.org/discover-pathology/news/college-raises-concerns-about-plans-to-close-university-of-cambridge-s-veterinary-school.html>.

² <https://www.cam.ac.uk/sites/default/files/civic-engagement-report-cambridge-university-22-10-25.pdf>.

Dr M. D. FORTUNE (Department of Public Health and Primary Care and Lucy Cavendish College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I make these remarks as an Associate Teaching Professor in the Department of Public Health and Primary Care and a Bye-Fellow of Lucy Cavendish College. I teach Evidence-Based Practice to both medical and veterinary students and have yet to see an evidence base for the recommendation to close the vet course. The education provided by the Cambridge Vet School is unique in the UK for its focus on research and the Medicine–Veterinary partnership required to approach One Health issues from managing outbreaks of zoonotic disease to combating antimicrobial resistance. The teaching and research which takes place here is vital, not just for animal health, but for improving the health of humans, and entire ecosystems. Removing it would compromise a fundamental component of Cambridge's biomedical reputation and expertise.

Professor P. N. SCHOFIELD (Professor Emeritus of Biomedical Informatics and Robinson College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I share the dismay of many in the Regent House and the broader community at the proposal from the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences to terminate the University's course in Veterinary Medicine. Several speakers have already expressed their concern at the way in which this process has been handled within the University so far, its appalling timing and the misrepresentation of the position of the Veterinary School with regard to both finance and external accreditation.

The key factors and reasoning behind the recommendation of the SBS to terminate the Veterinary Medicine course and, as an inevitable consequence, close the Department, have not been shared with either the Department of Veterinary Medicine or this Regent House. In questions after his presentation to staff and students at the Vet School on 11 December, the Chair of the Council of the SBS was unable to clearly explain the reasoning behind the recommendation. He acknowledged that the quality of education and the ongoing scrutiny by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons were not the main reasons behind the decision; he declined to provide more detail. This reflects the general lack of transparency that has characterised this recommendation from the Council of the School.

In the face of this lack of transparency I ask if the Council of the SBS took into account the damage that, if implemented, this recommendation would do to the opportunities for women in STEM subjects in the University? The Veterinary Medicine course has always been very successful in attracting women scientists and in 2024, for example, women made up 83.1% of students with successful acceptances.¹ Is closing down our most successful STEM subject for women consistent with University's efforts and public commitment to women in STEM, or does it make them seem hypocritical?

I urge the Council of the School to make the factual basis and reasoning behind their recommendations public, and the General Board to take account of the impact of closing this course on opportunities for women in science in the University. I very much fear that closing a successful course with a large majority of women students will seriously undermine the University's reputation for supporting women in STEM subjects.

¹ Undergraduate Admissions Statistics, 2024 cycle: <https://www.undergraduate.study.cam.ac.uk/publications/undergraduate-admissions-statistics>.

Dr W. J. ASTLE (MRC Biostatistics Unit):

Deputy Vice Chancellor, I am a member of the University Council, but I am speaking for myself.

I signed the recent Report of the Council on the proposed disposal of land and buildings at 1–3 Hills Road¹ to allow for the creation of an 'innovation hub' because I don't object to the provision of good facilities to support staff who wish to commercialise their research, provided there is no academic cost to the University. The promotion of commercial activity at the expense of an academic department and its Tripos is a different thing altogether. We are a university, not a regional (or national) development agency.

The West Cambridge Campus has been rebranded as the Cambridge West Innovation District.² The buildings of the Department of Veterinary Medicine have apparently been marked for demolition since at least June 2016.^{3,4} It is said that the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences

had no option but to recommend the closure of the Queen's Veterinary Hospital because it had been told that the School would have to bear the cost of relocating the Department of Veterinary Medicine and its hospital in new buildings, although the Department has no need for new buildings. Please will the Council include in its Notice in response an explanation of the history of the making of decisions about the buildings on the West Cambridge Campus and an explanation of how and on what grounds the decision was made to impose the cost of any new building for the Department of Veterinary Medicine on the School of the Biological Sciences?

Finally, the General Board arranged an extraordinary meeting this Thursday to consider the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences' recommendation to close the veterinary course. There is an ordinary General Board meeting scheduled for 3 February (rearranged from 28 January).⁵ Why the urgency to make this particular decision?

¹ *Reporter*, 6800, 2025–26, p. 73.

² <https://www.cambridgewest.org.uk/>.

³ West Cambridge Illustrative Masterplan, available at <https://www.em.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/masterplan.pdf>.

⁴ West Cambridge Outline Planning Application: Parameter Plans and Parameter Statements, September 2020, available at https://www.em.admin.cam.ac.uk/files/west_cambridge_parameter_plans_and_statement_revised.pdf. See p. 6.

⁵ <https://www.governanceandcompliance.admin.cam.ac.uk/university-committees/general-board-faculties>.

Ms H. E. STEARN (Lucy Cavendish College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am a 1989 veterinary graduate from Lucy Cavendish and most of my working life was spent as a Defra vet. Since retiring, I have been a client of the Vet School with my dog and I am now Chair of the local RSPCA Cambridge & District branch, and that is the aspect I will concentrate on although there are many other important issues.

I would like to quote from the University of Cambridge Civic and Community Engagement statement, that it is

proud to be part of the local community. We are working with people and organisations across the city and region to build strong relationships, develop skills, create jobs, support local growth and share our resources. We are committed to playing a more active civic role – being more visible, more responsive to local needs, and focussed where we can make a real difference through collaboration.

Many people may not be aware of the long standing, successful and beneficial collaboration, started in 1953, between the RSPCA Cambridge & District branch and the University of Cambridge Queen's Veterinary Hospital which has enabled an excellent low cost veterinary clinic to be provided for financially disadvantaged people and their pets across Cambridge and surroundings, covering a catchment area of 1,000 square miles. The cost to clients is about a third of that at a private veterinary practice. This is sustainable because the Clinic is used as a teaching facility for students, and the RSPCA provides financial support. In 2025 the Clinic provided 3,971 veterinary treatments. It is fully booked and requests for appointments are increasing, reflecting the financial challenges poorer people are facing. Without the Clinic, which would have to close if the Veterinary School closed, the most disadvantaged people and their pets in Cambridgeshire would suffer disproportionately. Being unable to afford

veterinary care at a private veterinary practice would certainly have a negative impact on both the mental health of the owners and the welfare of their animals. Sadly euthanasia would be the only option for some treatable conditions. For many people, especially older owners who live alone, having a pet is their only source of companionship, a lifeline. Closure of the RSPCA veterinary clinic after 70 years of partnership with the University is in direct opposition to the University's stated aim for civic and community engagement and would harm the most vulnerable section of Cambridge society.

A further concern relates to the issue of general principle regarding reasonable processes within the University with respect to the recommendation by the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences to the General Board that the University should cease veterinary education at Cambridge.

Another concern is that besides producing much needed, high calibre veterinary surgeons for UK careers, both practising and in research, veterinary education at Cambridge University has a well deserved international reputation. Ceasing such a course would decrease the University's reputation for international partnerships.

For these reasons I urge the University to reconsider the recommendation of the School of the Biological Sciences that the University should cease veterinary education at Cambridge.

Dr K. WIEMER (St John's College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I would like to provide a slightly different perspective. In addition to being a graduate of the University, I have been a direct neighbour of the West Cambridge site since 2016. I matriculated at St John's College in 1988 and completed a Ph.D. in Materials Science and Metallurgy in 1993. I came to know many vets during my time at university, mainly through rowing in three women's Blue Boats. As others have noted, one of the ways veterinary medicine students are remarkable is for how much they participate to a high level throughout the University. When I rowed it was almost obligatory to have a vet in the crew.

The only personal interest I must declare is that I recently registered my two dogs with the Vet School general practice. Please note that this is a new service for the Vet School that was only recently opened to the public, presumably an additional income stream. This practice is not related to their work for the RSPCA. It is also distinct from the specialised Vet School treatments accessed by referrals to the local vet practices. I was very happy to be able to move my dogs from a large corporate chain a half-hour drive away to an independent local practice within walking distance of my house. It is disappointing to find this service under threat even before my dogs' first annual check and vaccinations. If finances are the issue, it should be noted that this service has not been given a proper chance to generate income.

While on the subject of veterinary practices, I would like to add anecdotal evidence to the comments already made regarding the shortage of UK vets. At the large clinic where my dogs have been seen several times a year since 2020, I would estimate a UK-trained vet saw them in perhaps a quarter of our visits. The shortage is real and considerable.

With respect to the proposed relocation of the Vet School, in the Department of Materials Science and Metallurgy talk of a move from the New Museum site to the West Cambridge site started towards the end of my Ph.D. studies in the early 1990s. The move took place about

twenty years later, presumably after years of planning and budgeting. It seems the cost of the Vet School move is being treated as a one-off immediate expense, which does not seem fair or reasonable, particularly as any relocation is not by their choice. Would this be expected of any other Department?

With respect to the cost of veterinary medicine education, a friend of mine who trained at the Vet School while I was a student pointed out that part of the higher cost of a Cambridge veterinary medicine education now compared to when she studied must be the result of the loss of the University dairy farm and paddocks immediately adjacent to the Vet School. Students now need to be driven to other locations and these need to be maintained at a distance from the School. This change was not the result of any decision taken by the Vet School, but it must bear the increased costs. Was the Vet School compensated for this? It would seem reasonable that part of the cost of the Cavendish III would be making good the loss of a paddock to the Vet School. The same holds for the University maintenance services that use the old farm buildings for storage and as a depot.

As a neighbour of the site I have taken part in quite a few meetings of the 'West Cambridge Community Group' (recently re-branded 'Cambridge West Community Group') that the University holds to engage with neighbours about its building plans for the site. I am on the notified neighbour list to comment on every planning application for the West Cambridge site. This includes the Outline Planning Application (OPA) for the University's forty year plan for the site, which has gone through at least two iterations. The Vet School did not seem to figure on the site in these plans. When I asked about this during meetings with the University, I was assured on more than one occasion that an alternative site for the Vet School had been identified and its future was secure.

To give an idea of the perceived value of West Cambridge site land to the University, consider an application made last autumn by a utility company to build a 5G telecom mast in a highly visible location in the West Cambridge Conservation Area along Madingley Road. Possible locations within the 160-acre West Cambridge site were dismissed by the University because this might compromise 'maximum densification' of the site. One plot was in a car park that is due to remain a car park. The mast and associated cabinets have a footprint of about 30 square meters. That's about five one-thousandths of a percent of the site area.

Another speaker has already covered the history of the Queen's Veterinary School Hospital. It has been quite a few years since I read it, but the Heritage Assessment of the Vet School commissioned by the University found it to be of little merit with no strong argument to retain it. Further, it noted that the building did not fit in with the other buildings on the site. Given that the Vet School pre-dates the diverse collection of newer buildings on the site by over half a century, this seems an illogical statement. In a wider context, the Vet School is the only building that fits with the residential neighbourhood adjacent to the West Cambridge site, many houses of which pre-date it in turn by twenty or more years. The Vet School is a much better neighbour to local residents in terms of scale and light pollution than almost any of the other buildings currently on the West Cambridge site.

In a slightly wider context, East Anglia is one of the key farming regions of the UK and it would be a great shame if the University could no longer play an important role in vital research to support the region. Again, I would like to

give a concrete example of the food security issue raised by others. Late last year 10,000 turkeys were culled at a farm in Norfolk because of avian flu. This is not an isolated event. A few years ago it was ducks and geese that had to be culled. How is it that the required response to a single case of bird flu is to cull the entire flock? This is happening within a couple of hours of the University. As a graduate of Cambridge University I'd be very disappointed and not a little bit ashamed if the University decides to relinquish its ability to do meaningful research in the health of farm animals and in support of local farmers.

At the time of the BSE crisis, I was in a Blue Boat crew with two vet med students. The Vet School was also under threat of closure. Government ministers told the public repeatedly there was no proof that BSE was a concern. It was chilling to learn from the vet students that the reason this statement could be made with complete confidence was because no one had done any research. It was a huge relief when the decision was made to keep the Vet School open. As the years since have proven, another animal/human health crisis is pretty much guaranteed. The Cambridge Vet School with its unique resources and research ability is surely still very much needed.

Please do not treat the education of vets as a business, because that is not reasonable. If the University is indeed a business, why am I as an alumnus routinely asked for donations? Here's a suggestion, given the level of support shown to the Vet School, surely it would make sense to ask for financial support from the alumni and seeing how that goes before recommending to close a world-leading facility.

Mr R. BRUIJN-YARD (Downing College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I speak as President of the Cambridge University Veterinary Society. The Vet School has for many years been one of the leading faculties in the University. Since 1949, students have graduated as part of a thriving community of veterinary professionals who respect the thorough and dynamic approach which Cambridge students bring to clinical practice. Many of our graduates observe respected positions globally, within government, industry, first opinion and referral practice, in research and importantly in education. The respect that Cambridge garners for its approach cannot be understated. And yet, we as an academic community are being asked to leave this potential behind and abandon an institution which has educated Dr Sue Paterson FRCVS, the former president and current vice-president of the RCVS; educated famous veterinary personalities such as the Yorkshire vet, Dr Julian Norton, and whose graduates contribute to almost 10–20% of the European veterinary specialists in any given field (data collated by Dr Nicola Holdstock). We also share strong ties to leading projects in developing nations such as through the Cambridge–Africa organisation headed by Dr Caroline Trotter and supporting Ph.D. students from abroad to research emerging and critically life threatening zoonotic diseases with epidemic and pandemic potential.

The Cambridge veterinary course occupies a unique niche in UK veterinary education through the clear divide between pre-clinical (foundational, anatomical and physiological science) and clinical (diagnostic, medicinal and surgical) teaching. Our One Health approach is also entirely unique, given how we share years 1–3 of the course with medical and natural science students. This includes a mandatory intercalation year, where our projects contribute to fundamental research. Our students are strongly placed to think outside the box when designing studies and solutions to unknown challenges. It is no

surprise that all four of the UK-educated vets working for the UN are Cambridge graduates and our Departmental research remains at the top of the profession.

It isn't just the degree that makes our students special, it's everything that the environment demands. A capacity to commit to and overcome the toughest of challenges whilst balancing a life of musical, sporting or artistic pursuits. An environment which demands collaboration at every level and pushes its students towards global horizons. This is a unique experience which cannot be and is not being replicated at any other institution.

The dismissive and totalitarian approach which the Biology Faculty have adopted by completely blindsiding our Veterinary Department speaks of a university looking for easy solutions to endemic problems of underfunding, poor distribution of resources and significant short-sightedness when it comes to supporting critical intellectual infrastructure. We are some of the hardest working students in the University, consistently matching and out-competing students studying natural sciences, contributing through our projects to fundamental research which has the potential to change millions of people's lives. And yet, it is implicit that we are a sacrifice to balance the books of the Biology Faculty.

By eliminating any educational department at any institution worldwide, you stunt the potential for the growth of scholarship with immediate and irreversible effect but by closing our University's Veterinary Department, you remove the potential next head of WOAHP preventing the spread of COVID, Ebola or the next as yet unknown pandemic, you remove the next student that develops an eradication protocol for bovine TB, you remove the clinician that might save your beloved family pet from a complex endocrine condition because they have had the benefit and thorough education of a Cambridge veterinarian.

Not discounting the impact to our current students' mental wellbeing and the possibility that this news catalyses an exodus of staff members which will impact the continued delivery of our education, our faculty have been through enough. From uncertainty surrounding our accreditation status, to rallying in the strongest display of leadership, cohesion, and empathy that I have observed from any department in Cambridge, to overcoming our first ultimatum from the General Board, they do not deserve to have their existence called into question again. This decision will end potentially hundreds of jobs, and its effect will ripple into the community where many turn to the RSPCA clinic run by our residents, undergraduates and staff for affordable veterinary care in times of financial need. I have witnessed firsthand working at the clinic how grateful our clients are, and it makes me incredibly emotional to think how these people and importantly their animals would survive without.

We must question whether any vote of no confidence passed by a governing body which without the apparent presence of any veterinary professionals should hold any merit in deciding the fate of a 76-year-old world-leading scientific Department. If the vision of Cambridge is to expand scientific scholarship through multi-million-pound new developments such as the Ray Dolby centre, then this approach can only erode confidence in the future of academia at the University as it now becomes acceptable to sacrifice any Department that suffers relatively minor financial challenges. The hypocrisy is astonishing.

Professor Jon Simons and associated faculty envision the SBS as a

global leader in biological discovery, fostering an inclusive, collaborative environment for world-class education and research that pushes knowledge boundaries, delivers diverse programs (animal, human, plant, microbial), and translates innovation into societal benefit, all while supporting staff and students to reach their potential.

It seems that the University vision in this regard sees fit to expand scientific scholarship through multi-million-pound new developments such as the Ray Dolby Centre and expansion of the Addenbrooke's site, whilst finding it acceptable to sacrifice well-established Departments facing relatively minor financial challenges.

The 2024 financial report from the central University highlighted that research-intensive science Departments typically operate at a deficit because UK research grants do not fully cover indirect costs and the cost of laboratory-based sciences is becoming increasingly more expensive. Across the UK, biomedical and biological sciences are expected to recover only ~65–75% of the full economic cost of research with the remaining 25–35% made up by the central University.

Our deficits are not sudden or unexpected, and they are not impossible to recoup. They reflect the investment required to improve our hospital and teaching facilities which in recent years have incorporated a fully digitally integrated patient record system and invested hundreds of thousands to modify our University farm to improve animal welfare and staff safety. These investments have been made with the foresight of Professor Mark Holmes (HoD), to meet the necessity for modernising systems which have progressed to outdatedness, likely constrained by the kind of financial pressure from the SBS we now face. This includes constant improvement to student wellbeing which is felt every day.

We demand that the University reflect profoundly on the implications of this decision and perhaps take a moment of introspection to consider what kind of academic culture they wish to foster before we align ourselves with institutions that prioritise profit and endowments over a diversity of outstanding and liberal courses. We ask that the CSBS stand by previous reassurances that the Department will not be removed from its current position without alternative planning, that the standard of our education will not diminish, and pay heed to University-level statements that have previously confirmed the long-term security of our course to the RCVS. Many of us have sacrificed an enormous amount to become a Cambridge Veterinarian and we do not deserve to be let down by powers outside our control.

The impact to our current student's mental wellbeing during the past year of instability has been immeasurable. The timing of each repeated grave prognosis for the school has placed us in a state of heightened anxiety at particularly challenging times. Examinations, results and admissions have all been overlooked. I particularly feel for our students in first year who placed their faith in our department and the ingenuity of Cambridge to come up with solutions to challenges of accreditation and financial viability to ensure their education would be secure. The School of the Biological Sciences undermines this security and ignores the sacrifices and irreversible decisions both financial and emotional that such students have made to achieve their position. It is also in direct contradiction with previous assurances made by the General Board and senior University leadership earlier this year.

I applied to Cambridge because academic excellence and a thorough, liberal education were implicit. I chose Cambridge because I saw the potential to pursue all of the talents gifted to me, all the activities that make me whole. To remove this avenue of education deprives young veterinary minds of the very choice I made and from the opportunity for one of the most unique educational experiences in the world. It would be a preventable tragedy.

Mr A. KALETZKY (Churchill College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am a member of the Cambridge UCU (University and College Union) branch executive. I retired from being a Research Associate in DAMTP and the Scott Polar and am an alumnus of Churchill College. I am most concerned by and oppose the proposed closure of the Veterinary School.

The Veterinary School appears to be being closed for non-academic reasons, contrary to the University's mission as an exempt charity under the Office for Students. The main reason is reportedly to reuse the School's present land and buildings for a private-public research enterprise and startup incubator hub on the West Cambridge site, with the Vet School, as part of the School of the Biological Sciences, being expected to foot the ~£56m cost of a new site, buildings and relocation. This is quite illegitimate.

Obviously the UCU is greatly concerned by the proposed closure and its adverse effects on its members and members of other unions. This is particularly so as the accrediting authority's negative comments of two or three years ago have been largely addressed and rectified and as that authority and the University itself have stated, progress continues. In view of this, closing the Veterinary School is contradictory, atavistic and unwise.

There are so many scientific, academic, educational and public benefit reasons to retain the Veterinary School that I shall not speak of them but refer you to <https://savethevetschool.co.uk>, and specifically to the contributions of Sumption (former UN Chief Veterinarian) and Nathues (President, European Board of Veterinary Specialisation).

Ms I. M. M. BORZYM (Faculty of Mathematics and St Catharine's College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I have been a Fellow at St Catharine's since 1999. I have no personal connection with the Vet School or with Biological Sciences, I am a mathematician. I have listened carefully to everything that has been said today and, as I see things, we have three options:

One is to close the School. I think that would be a terrible mistake. Many people have already spoken today and pointed out that the Vet School is unique. Unique in the depth of the training that it provides, in the diversity of that training, in the quality of the students that it attracts and – like one of those peapods with a spring – those people go out into the world, they go out into industry, they go out into academia, they teach others. They do useful work in many, many different fields, so right from the start we should not be closing the Vet School.

The second option is to fight for continuation, but keep the structure broadly as it is, and I can acknowledge that the costs are high. The costs of education are always high, but that is not a reason to close the Vet School. There are strategies.

The Maths Department has over the last ten years or so found ways of earning money. The Judge Institute has found ways of earning money which did not compromise their core function of teaching and research. I think the Vet School could do the same. That is option three and what we should be doing.

I won't cover again the things that have already been said – the quality of the research, the impact on animal welfare, on conservation, on ecology, on the political agenda – because actually these things all have an impact on the kinds of commercial interests and government deals that can be made. I won't say much more, but just to remind everybody that the University does have a social agenda, it does have a social function. I hadn't realised how long the association with the RSPCA had been in existence. That was actually interesting to hear. That is an area where I think the Vet School could usefully expand their activities, particularly when it comes to providing provision, as has been mentioned by I think four other people earlier, provision for veterinary science as part of the training of the vets within the School for the general public. It would not be such a bad idea for the Cambridge Vet School to lead on, to put it crudely, blowing out of the water, the asset managers who are taking over veterinary science at the local level in this country. It damages veterinary science, it damages animal welfare, and it has huge social impact for those people who can no longer afford to look after their pets.

I firmly believe that a strategy can be found. I firmly believe that it would be a mistake to allow financial considerations to rule decisions. The decision should be made on educational, training and research grounds. Having made that decision – to save the Vet School – I am sure and confident that financial solutions can be found, that new strategies can be brought in. The loss of the site to make a research hub is too short termist. This is a long-term strategy to keep Cambridge as a university at the top of the pile, and the Vet School is a part of that. It is integral to that.

Dr G. R. WILKES (Jesus College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellors, I am a Fellow and an Admissions Tutor at Jesus College currently concerned with veterinary medicine. Indeed, I'm taking a break from reading Vet pool files to speak just now, having spent some of my December interviewing some of the extraordinary veterinary candidates that we have, who are all flabbergasted that there could be any kind of threat to their school which come solely from financial matters. This has been a heartening Discussion in many ways to listen to out of the corner of my ear while reading and reviewing pool files. I wanted to close the Discussion as much as possible by pointing out that not one person today has actually spoken in favour of closing the Vet School. Indeed, in my conversations over the last month with colleagues through several Colleges and Departments, nobody seems to think that this is a good idea who does not have a direct financial interest in the matter. None of the representatives of the School of the Biological Sciences have come to this meeting to speak in favour of what they have agreed, apparently unanimously. Noone is willing to put any kind of public acknowledgement of what they did in that room. If nobody is willing to stand up and say that this is a good idea – that this is a vital thing for the University – except the people who stand financially to benefit from it, then that is as big a testament as all of the other very eloquently made reasons put today for not doing this. It is simply a terrible idea.

Professor G. A. WILLIAMS (Girton College), read by the Junior Proctor:

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, these remarks respond to the communication of the decision by the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences to recommend closure of Cambridge's Vet.M.B. programme. As yet, no persuasive evidence has been shared about the reasons for the recommendation. No matter what the reasons may be, the uncollegial and chaotic manner and timing of the communication caused unnecessary confusion, anger and stress to members of our Colleges (students, Fellows and staff) and had a damaging impact on workloads at a crucial time in the admissions cycle; and the manner and timing of the recommendation decision may unnecessarily have exposed Cambridge's Colleges to unforeseen risks and costs.

There are many concerns that could be aired about the process. These remarks note, in particular:

- The School of the Biological Sciences had ample opportunity earlier in the application cycle to inform Colleges (and the Vet School) that it was minded to discontinue the Vet.M.B. programme whatever the outcome of the RCVS accreditation process. Instead, Colleges were never disabused of a belief that recruitment and admissions should continue as usual, subject only to the outcome of the accreditation review. Indeed, as recently as Friday, 5 December, the Senior Tutors Committee was reassured about the positive effect of the accreditation outcome on the future of veterinary education at Cambridge. Notably, this reassurance occurred two days after the General Board meeting and one day after the SBS Council met; after interviews had begun in some Colleges; and as they were about to start across collegiate Cambridge. This failure to give adequate warning has had several damaging consequences, chief among them being:
 - Exacerbation of risks that 'unfair commercial practices' may have occurred during the recruitment and admissions process, in the sense that Colleges, acting in good faith on the information known to them, may have made representations (or omitted representations) about the Vet.M.B. programme that (potential) applicants relied on, and for which Colleges may be liable.
 - That even now, after the end of the interview process, and with the offer-making process looming, Colleges are unable to give applicants reliable information about the consequences of the communication for the future of the Vet.M.B. course and the student experience at the University of Cambridge.
 - Colleges do not have the requisite information to organise our approach to Vet.M.B. applicants in the imminent offer/pooling process and have not had time to plan a robust response.
 - Risks of ripple effects such as eroding confidence within the secondary education sector in the reliability and competence of the University of Cambridge's recruitment and admissions processes and damaging the essential relationships of trust that are essential to the flourishing of collegiate Cambridge.

- Announcing the recommendation to academic staff of the Vet School just weeks after their hard work on RCVS accreditation was recognised and affirmed and as they were about to embark on applicant interviews is searingly cruel. It is hard to see where the concern for their wellbeing was addressed.
- The circulation of communications on 10 December was chaotic and much of the content of messages to staff, students and applicants was inconsistent and unhelpful. For example, it is not sensible to:
 - Begin messages to applicants and students with procedural detail about Cambridge University decision-making that overwhelms readers before they reach the meat of the communication, which is that there likely is no future for the course to which they have applied or on which they are registered.
 - List applicant ‘choices’ in response to bombshell information without offering them any support or guidance in thinking through those choices.
 - Offer applicants a course change option (subject to College approval) without alerting Colleges in advance that such requests might materialise and giving Colleges time to organise coherent responses to such requests.
 - Communicate such a message part way through the interview season after some candidates had been interviewed.
 - Omit Admissions Tutors from the circulation of information when the timing and manner of the communication affected their work more seriously than any other staff outside the members of the Vet School.
 - Circulate information about the recommendation to current students without copying in the Senior Tutors of their Colleges or advising them of its content, especially when the message urges students ‘to seek support from your tutor...’ [and] ‘be in touch with welfare support in your College’.
 - Provide no information to Colleges, applicants or students about the University’s Student Protection Plan required under the HERA 2017 and the Office for Students Conditions of Registration when a course is discontinued. Does the University’s plan have cost implications for Colleges (for example, to support intermitters and resitters or to respond to student complaints about the student experience)? Has the University made provision to indemnify Colleges in the event of such complaints?
 - Leave Admissions Tutors, Senior Tutors and Colleges to wrestle with questions about offer-making and the winter pool with no guidance. On 6 January Colleges were told of a plan to issue ‘intention to offer’ letters to Vet.M.B. applicants when applicants to all other subjects will receive standard offer letters. This plan simply does not address the critical problems for Colleges and the course that the process has created.

The governance and communication of the recommendation decision has been deeply disappointing. It is important that the costs and risks to Colleges of its consequences be contained, and it is essential that whatever happens next be collaboratively and proactively managed to provide maximal support to all affected members of collegiate Cambridge.

Dr S. L. D. FALK (Deputy Proctor and Girton College), read by the Senior Pro-Proctor:

Deputy Vice Chancellor, as Admissions Tutor I spent the morning of Wednesday, 10 December interviewing a succession of bright, motivated young people who had applied to study Veterinary Medicine at Girton. Yet at 3.45 p.m. that same afternoon, I received a message from the University’s Office of External Affairs and Communications, announcing that the School of the Biological Sciences was recommending closure of the Vet.M.B. course.

Alongside that shocking announcement came the text of a statement to be sent immediately to applicants. Following a rather confusing explanation – how many 17-year-olds will understand the status of the General Board? – applicants were given four options:

- Carry on with your Cambridge Veterinary Medicine application
- Request a course change at Cambridge (subject to approval by the College currently assessing your application)
- Substitute your Cambridge choice at UCAS for another
- Withdraw your Cambridge application and do not substitute this choice at UCAS.’

Admissions Tutors had been given no prior warning of this. It was less than two weeks after the University sent Vet applicants an encouraging update about the ‘good progress’ recognised by the RCVS’s recent accreditation visit, and informed them of our high hopes of full accreditation in October 2026. The secrecy was such that Admissions Tutors were not even aware that the closure of the School was under discussion.

In terms of admissions, the timing could not be worse: guaranteed to upset applicants and likely cause many to withdraw their applications. We have been given no reason for the timing – nor indeed for the recommendation. If the concerns are financial, encouraging applicants to withdraw is hardly conducive to alleviating them.

Communicating with applicants at this stage, and in this way, was not necessary. The announcement made it seem like the closure of the Vet.M.B. course was a simple matter of a rubber stamp by the General Board. In reality, a lengthy – and open – governance process is required.

Such confused and misleading communication continues. Admissions Tutors have now been informed that successful applicants will not be sent offer letters on Wednesday, 28 January, but rather letters informing them of our intention to make them an offer. Given that there is no suggestion that any closure would affect 2026 entry, once again this seems unnecessary, and only likely to increase applicant withdrawals.

Still further confusion has been sown by a message sent to Colleges last Friday (9 January), asking us to decide by tomorrow (Wednesday, 14 January) whether – given the rather cursory legal and financial assurances provided by the University – we still wish to make offers for 2026 entry.

Meaningful College consultation on this timescale is impossible, but taken together with the communication to applicants, it creates a climate of risk and uncertainty. With Colleges and applicants making critical decisions in such a climate, the unviability of the Vet.M.B. course could become a self-fulfilling prophecy.

I could speak further from my position as a pastoral Tutor, supporting current Vet students who have been plunged into insecurity. Who will teach them in their final years, if, as they quite reasonably suppose, their most energetic and able lecturers will be looking for more secure jobs elsewhere right now?

If the – now postponed – General Board meeting accepts the recommendation of the School of the Biological Sciences, that must surely only be provisional. A momentous decision of this kind, involving the expunction of thirteen full pages of Ordinances (and countless scattered references), requires thorough and sensitive consultation. If the conclusion of that consultation is to proceed with closure, this must be put to the Regent House.

In the meantime, the ill-considered communications, which seem almost designed to pre-empt proper governance process, must immediately cease.

Dr D. R. E. ABAYASEKARA (Fitzwilliam College), read by the Junior Pro-Professor:

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences was asked by the General Board to consider options for the delivery of financially sustainable clinical veterinary education and to report their recommendation to the General Board. As the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences has no power to enact their recommendation, I would like to ask: *why was their recommendation to close the veterinary course to new admissions from 2027 communicated by the Head of the School of the Biological Sciences, Professor Simons, to all stakeholders and the wider public on 10 December 2025, before the outcome of decisions by the relevant and authorised decision making bodies was known?*

This communication by the Head of the School of the Biological Sciences carried significant reputational and operational risk to the University and indeed to the Colleges, including Fitzwilliam College. Was the reputational risk associated with the wider communication to stakeholders of a recommendation by the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences, that might later be rejected by the relevant decision-making body, considered? Was the risk that the 2026 admissions round for Veterinary Medicine would be significantly impacted by the timing of this announcement also taken into account? Was the possible negative impact of this announcement on the welfare of our students who were away from College and distant to College support systems considered? Certainly it appears no prior warning was communicated to Colleges of this profound announcement to permit preparation of relevant support mechanisms. Was the financial risk that there could be reduced teaching related income associated with decreased numbers of veterinary students in the 2026 intake as a result of this communication being sent out to applicants also evaluated? Were the Colleges consulted on the risks associated with communicating this decision to applicants, as this financial risk also affects College income streams? In addition, it is regrettable that in communicating the recommendation, it seems that no consideration was given to candidates holding a place for deferred entry in 2026. These individuals were placed in a situation where they effectively had no choice other than to pursue their original path, despite the much-changed circumstances of the veterinary course in Cambridge!

Professor J. S. SIMONS (Department of Psychology and Emmanuel College), read by the Junior Proctor:

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I have been in post as Head of the School of the Biological Sciences since February 2025, following a period as Acting Head of School from October 2024. I chaired the meeting of the School Council in December 2025 at which the recommendation to cease Veterinary education at Cambridge was made.

I would like to begin by acknowledging the significant concern this recommendation has caused among Vet School staff and students, colleagues in other Departments who contribute to the course, and many other people, organisations and supporters of the University. I sincerely regret that it has not been possible to identify a viable alternative solution to the profound challenges facing the Vet School.

I am going to set out some of the longstanding problems the Vet School has faced, as well as the University's attempts to consider and tackle them. These are, in my opinion, intractable operational problems and not a reflection of staff working in the Vet School or in other Departments that contribute to veterinary medicine teaching. The Vet Med course is highly ranked by a number of external surveys, and performs strongly in Cambridge's return for the National Student Survey. Nevertheless, the course's longstanding problems have been the subject of much scrutiny and several reviews in the University, and ultimately led to the School Council considering various options for the future of the course.

Over the past decade, the Vet School has encountered significant challenges relating to the quality of educational provision and the financial sustainability of its veterinary hospital. In November 2024, the professional accreditator, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, awarded the course 'conditional accreditation' rather than its previous 'full accreditation', identifying a considerable number of longstanding deficiencies across the accreditation standards that needed to be addressed. While good progress has been made in addressing the issues raised by the RCVS thanks to considerable work by staff in the Vet School and in the School of the Biological Sciences, and the University has assured all current students and 2026 applicants of the quality of its course, maintaining high-quality clinical training long into the future will be severely challenging.

Another important factor is the financial viability of the hospital, which has been losing over £1m a year for some time, and currently has a significant and unsustainable accumulated trading deficit. Veterinary education across the sector is facing severe financial challenges. Other providers have addressed this by increasing student numbers, with most courses now having upwards of 150 students, and one provider recruiting approximately 300. Cambridge is unable to increase the number of veterinary students from around 65 per year because of the finite number of places available across its Colleges. Business plans proposed by the Vet School over recent years to address the longstanding hospital financial deficit, based primarily on increased staff and clinical caseloads, have not succeeded. A review commissioned by the General Board concluded in 2024 that the business plans were not achievable.

In 2025, the General Board recognised the need for strategic choices to be made in relation to the commercial viability of the hospital and requested that the School of the Biological Sciences lead in this process in collaboration with the Department and other stakeholders. We established a governance structure and allocated additional staff and resources to support the Department in the work needed to

regain RCVS accreditation and to develop a sustainable business model for the delivery of clinical training.

A working group that I chaired, which included four senior Vet School staff and other colleagues, worked closely together to develop a structured appraisal of options for the future of clinical services delivery. This work drew on external expertise in veterinary medicine education and clinical services delivery, as well as detailed financial analyses. The options assessed ranged from significant cost savings, the commercial restructuring of the hospital, various external partnership models, through to stopping clinical services and veterinary education at Cambridge. Each option was evaluated against consistent criteria, including educational standards, feasibility, regulatory impact, capital implications, operational deliverability, and long term financial viability. The options appraisal was considered by the School Council at its meeting in December 2025.

The School Council had an in-depth and structured discussion of all the options, weighing them up carefully against the School's strategic vision and plan, their implications for teaching and research, financial impact, and various implementation issues and the risks. As each option was discussed, concerns were raised regarding their potential impact on student experience, educational excellence, the likely financial implications, the material impact of the changes and the extent to which there was a realistic expectation of achieving the significant change involved. The School Council took the view that there was no viable long-term solution that would address the challenges identified in the delivery of clinical training. As such, and given the growing financial losses, the School Council made the recommendation that closing the course was the only responsible way forward.

The School Council's recommendation will now be considered by the University's General Board, and the Vet School will have the opportunity to put forward its response for consideration.

I recognise that this period of uncertainty is a very difficult time for staff and students, and greatly appreciate the support that is being provided in Departments and Colleges around the University.

Following requests from those attending, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, exceptionally, allowed a Joint Statement by certain Heads of Departments and Institutions in the School of the Biological Sciences to be read out and entered into the published record, as follows:

Professor E. A. MISKA (Biochemistry), Professor S. RUSSELL (Genetics), Professor B. D. SIMONS (Gurdon Institute), Professor A. E. WILLIS (MRC Toxicology), Professor H. LAMAN (Pathology), Professor L. S. ITZHAKI (Pharmacology), Professor S. J. BRAY (Physiology, Development and Neuroscience), Professor J. W. DALLEY (Psychology), Professor S. H. JÖNSSON (Sainsbury Laboratory), and Professor R. M. KILNER (Zoology), read by the Junior Proctor:

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, we are writing as Heads of Department/Institutions in the School of the Biological Sciences who took part in the December Council meeting to consider the future of Veterinary education at Cambridge. This was the culmination of years of analysis of the financial, operational and educational challenges faced by the Vet School, which have grown more acute recently in the face of changes in Veterinary practice, rising expectations from accrediting bodies and greatly escalating costs.

Professor Jon Simons has provided a detailed statement in his remarks outlining the background to our discussions and the recommendation we made. We fully concur with the summary presented by Professor Simons and we would like to emphasise that the discussions were based on detailed evaluations of several different future scenarios for the Vet School.

We would like to emphasise that a major focus of the discussions was a careful consideration of the educational implications and sustainability of the different options before us. Clinical teaching was carried out in different ways in the different options and several included partnership with external organisations.

Having weighed up all of the information provided to us, and discussed at length the educational implications, research implications, operational impact, financial impact, and risks of each option (including at national level), we were in agreement that no long-term solution could be identified that combines financial viability, research and teaching excellence and practical implementation either within the University or through external partnerships.

We do not consider the ceasing of Veterinary education in Cambridge to be a desirable outcome in any way and did not make this recommendation lightly. Nevertheless, our deliberations led us to concluding that closing the Veterinary course is the only responsible way forward.

Responses to remarks heard in the Discussion were made as follows:

Dr S. J. COWLEY (Faculty of Mathematics and Emmanuel College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I'm a member of the Board of Scrutiny but I'm speaking in a personal capacity. In a previous Discussion, I commented on the arrangements for Discussions. I do think that it's a bit of a shame that the Head of the School of the Biological Sciences, and no Head of Department within the School of the Biological Sciences other than Veterinary Sciences, could attend this Discussion. Also what we have just heard from the Head of the School and Heads of other Departments could have been read out at the beginning of the Discussion and therefore informed the rest of the Discussion. This seems to me to be evidence of the chaotic way that the University is now being run.

The second point I wish to make is that I disagree with the idea of the University being run by cost centres consisting of Schools. The University is a charity and the University has a responsibility to all Departments. For years Departments have cross-subsidised other Departments. I think we have heard eloquent arguments as to why it is necessary to cross-subsidise the Veterinary School.

I fear that this is all being driven by Enhanced Financial Transparency (EFT). When I was on the Council I repeatedly asked that somebody work out how to do cross-subsidy within EFT. Now as a member of the Board of Scrutiny, I still do not know the answer to that – although the impression I have is that it has just been decided that everything is being devolved down to the Schools and it will be the Schools' problem to ensure that everything breaks even. If that really is the case, I have a suggestion for the Vet School: if you wish to stay alive, you want to get a transfer out of the School of the Biological Sciences and I strongly recommend you approach the School of Technology. They have lots of money and they can subsidise you.

Professor M. A. HOLMES (Head of the Department of Veterinary Medicine, and Churchill College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I think it's really important to appreciate that within the comments Professor Simons made, he mentioned the process of making an in-depth analysis of our finances over many years that is largely untrue. We did not make those losses until a plan approved by the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences was implemented, before I became Head of Department about four or five years ago, before Covid. Up to that point, the Vet School was financially entirely solvent, and although over the years there have certainly been cycles when the School of the Biological Sciences has been insolvent, it is not a perennial and unsolvable problem. It is just an excuse at this time to justify the closure of the veterinary course in order to preserve funds that are needed for the redevelopment of the estate on the Downing site.

The following remarks were received by the Proctors and are published in order of receipt:

Professor R. A. FLOTO (Department of Medicine):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, many in the Department of Medicine are surprised and deeply concerned by the recent recommendation of the School of the Biological Sciences to close the Veterinary Medicine Course at the University of Cambridge.

Veterinary Medicine is increasingly at the vanguard of global efforts to tackle the emergence of new pandemic viruses and bacteria, combat the spread of antimicrobial resistance, and reveal fundamental mechanisms of disease through comparative biology.

Following last month's statement by Rishi Sunak at the COVID inquiry, we are reminded that the threat of future pandemics is ever-present. To consider removing the One Health educational and research expertise needed to defend against such a threat from Cambridge is short-sighted.

The collaborative research opportunities available between the Veterinary and Medical Departments are an invaluable source of expertise and new scientific knowledge for the UK and beyond. The co-education of the Cambridge Medical and Veterinary students in the first three years of their degrees is of vital importance in laying the foundation of knowledge across our shared community.

In addition to important roles in national and international research infrastructure, the loss of the Veterinary Course at Cambridge will undermine the University's reputation for research excellence, dissuade potential funding bodies, and remove the vital link to clinical veterinary research which provide vital and transformative care for animals across the UK.

Out of the top ten universities globally, only Cambridge has a Vet School. We are therefore uniquely positioned to lead the world in these endeavours and to train the veterinary researchers, policy makers, and leaders of the future. Why would we choose to lose this point of difference?

Dr C. E. LATHAM (Robinson College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am a veterinary surgeon who graduated from the University of Cambridge in 1981.

Having had a close association with veterinary education in Cambridge at both college and departmental level over many years as part of my wider professional career, I can fully attest to the exceptionally high quality of the Vet School's graduates. The unique nature of the Cambridge course, based on a rigorous understanding of underlying scientific principles and opportunities for research, equips its students not only to be excellent clinicians, but also with the skills required to contribute more widely, especially given the ever increasing need for a One Health approach to combat many of the most serious issues facing mankind globally.

Regardless of what may have motivated the recent recommendation from the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences, it would be entirely wrong for a university with the prestige and resources of Cambridge to decide it can no longer support the education of future veterinarians who will be fundamental to the protection of animal and human health and wellbeing, both nationally and internationally.

Whilst the cheapest and most risk-free approach to any educational course, especially one as complex as veterinary medicine, would undoubtedly be simply to close it down, surely the University of Cambridge should be capable of demonstrating the acumen, vision and willingness to find a much more positive solution to the challenges of running a sustainable clinical course. Failure to do so would deprive the country of much-needed, highly trained veterinary professionals and be detrimental to society in general. Moreover it would result in considerable reputational damage to this University and tarnish its commitment to biomedical excellence.

Professor D. M. BROOM (Emeritus Professor of Animal Welfare and St Catharine's College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, for Veterinary Medicine degrees in 2025 Cambridge is rated 1st in the UK by The Complete University Guide, 1st by Go Study In, 3rd by *The Guardian*, 3rd by *The Times* and 15th in the world (6th in Europe) by QS World University Rankings. It is important for Cambridge and for the world to preserve high-quality education and research.

Dr P. S. FORDYCE (Department of Veterinary Medicine):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, thank you for allowing me to address my concerns about the recommendation from the School of the Biological Sciences to the General Board that the University should cease veterinary education at Cambridge University. I believe such a decision would cause reputational damage to the wider University for three reasons.

The first concern relates to the issue of 'procedural unfairness' identified in the Topic of concern regarding the decision-making process by the School of the Biological Sciences to recommend veterinary education cease at the University. In accepting the recommendation without reviewing the procedures followed by the School of the Biological Sciences, I believe the University risks reputational damage. Procedural fairness is a legal and ethical cornerstone of English judicial review; failure to demonstrate procedural fairness in the decision-making process could open the University to a charge of a failure of natural justice.

Secondly: most students seeking a degree in veterinary education at Cambridge do so because the degree is accredited by the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, conferring membership of that college, and consequently the right to practice as a veterinary surgeon. The Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons has the independent right to withdraw the accreditation of the degree course if it does not comply with their standards.

A consequence of closing entry to the degree in 2032 could result in withdrawal of accreditation by the RCVS before 2032 if the RCVS is not content that its standards are maintained during that period. Consequently, students enrolled for the degree may not be able to register with the RCVS. Should this situation occur because of the actions of the University, it would be a significant breach of trust with students enrolled on the course, with potential legal and regulatory consequences for the University, and associated reputational damage.

Finally: The University has a justified reputation for ‘charitable community engagement’ with the wider community it lives amongst. For seventy years the Department of Veterinary Medicine has had a symbiotic relationship with the local branch of the RSPCA. This relationship has provided the University with a clinical teaching environment at a fraction of the cost should the University have had to provide it. In return, because the Department has provided its veterinary services on a ‘not for profit’ basis, and because of the fundraising activities of the RSPCA, financially challenged animal owners in Cambridge who would struggle to afford private veterinary fees have been able to access veterinary treatment for their animals. Closure of the veterinary course would almost certainly cause closure of the Cambridge RSPCA clinic.

Such a closure would have a significant impact on the health of the animals the clinic treats, and the mental welfare of their owners. The adverse consequence of such a closure an animal health and human welfare might be perceived as callous by the wider community of Cambridge locally, and by the media generally, resulting in reputational damage for the University.

For these reasons, I would be grateful if the University would reconsider the recommendation of the School of the Biological Sciences that the University should cease veterinary education, taking into consideration the issue of procedural fairness in any future advice to the General Board, and the wider reputational consequences for the University of such a closure.

Dr M. A. RUEHL (Faculty of Modern and Medieval Languages and Linguistics):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, thank you for allowing me to address my concerns about the recommendation from the School of the Biological Sciences to the General Board that the University should cease veterinary education at Cambridge University. I believe that such a decision would cause reputational damage to the wider University.

My first concern is that the University of Cambridge states in its civic and community engagement press, that it is, I quote:

proud to be part of the local community. We are working with people and organisations across the city and region to build strong relationships, develop skills, create jobs, support local growth and share our resources. We are committed to playing a more active civic role – being more visible, more responsive to local needs, and focussed where we can make a real difference through collaboration.

This ethos is exemplified excellently by the partnership, started in 1953, between RSPCA Cambridge & District branch and the University of Cambridge Queen’s Veterinary Hospital. This collaboration has enabled a low-cost veterinary clinic to be provided for the last 70 years for financially disadvantaged people with their pets in Cambridge and surroundings, covering 1,000 square miles. The clients pay about a third of the price they would at a private veterinary practice. This is sustainable because the Clinic is used as a teaching facility for students, with the RSPCA providing financial support. In 2025 the Clinic provided just under 4,000 veterinary treatments. All appointments are fully booked and the need is increasing, reflecting continuing financial hardship. Without the Clinic, which would have to close if the Veterinary School closed, the most disadvantaged people and their pets in Cambridgeshire would suffer disproportionately. Being unable to afford veterinary care would undoubtedly have a negative impact on both the mental health of the owners and the welfare of their animals. It is well documented that having a companion animal improves wellbeing. Closure of the veterinary Clinic is in direct opposition to the University’s stated aim and could damage its reputation for Civic and community engagement.

My second concern relates to the issue of general principle regarding reasonable processes within the University regarding the recommendation by the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences to the General Board that the University should cease veterinary education at Cambridge.

My third concern is that besides producing much-needed, high calibre veterinary surgeons for UK careers, both practising and in research, veterinary education at Cambridge University has a well deserved international reputation. Ceasing such a course could also damage the University’s standing for international partnerships.

For these reasons I would be grateful if the University would reconsider the recommendation of the School of the Biological Sciences that the University should cease veterinary education at Cambridge.

Ms N. R. ALLISON (Fitzwilliam College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am very concerned about what is going to happen to the Queen’s Veterinary School Hospital. As someone who used to have a dog with IVDD, I feel that it is extremely important for vet hospitals like this to stay open, so that owners don’t have to travel long distances to access the best care for their pets who may have health issues that need to be treated outside of a first-opinion practice.

Professor G. R. EVANS (Emeritus Professor of Medieval Theology and Intellectual History):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Cambridge’s Vet School came first in the *Guardian*’s league table of veterinary schools in 2025–6, scoring 100 out of 100. It is one of only six such provisions available in an English university, with Oxford not offering a rival veterinary course of its own. Yet this is not the first time its future has been called into question. A previous Topic of concern Discussion was held in March 2025 after it had received a negative accreditation review from the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons. The RCVS ‘indicated’ that there would be the ‘further review in September 2025’ whose outcome is now at issue. The Council of the School of the Biological Sciences now calls for abolition of the course.

The General Board's role in the supervision of the School concerns the Tripos and any postgraduate degrees. In March it approved the continuation of recruitment to the Veterinary Sciences Tripos in 2026. The School Council has voted by a margin of 11 votes to none – with two abstentions – to recommend that the University cease to offer veterinary education at Cambridge. This recommendation is to be subject to further discussion by the General Board and other 'University decision-making bodies' before a final decision is made. The present Discussion forms part of that 'further discussion', but only because it was called by 93 members of the Regent House as a 'Topic of concern'. It has helpfully been scheduled for today, to allow remarks to be considered at the General Board's next meeting.

The General Board's Annual Report is not for Discussion until next week but is already published online in the *Reporter*, giving the story so far. The Board has 'considered the initial findings of the Veterinary School Review Group' which had 'been commissioned to establish a sustainable way forward for the School'. That proved important. In November, the RCVS changed the registration status of the Department from 'full' to 'conditional', and the Board has received regular updates 'on work being undertaken'. Supportive 'measures' were 'put in place' under 'the oversight of the School of the Biological Sciences'.¹ On 23 December the Presidents of Veterinary Societies and Associations signed a letter to the University's Chancellor to make the case for the preservation of the Veterinary School, arguing that:

the decision of the Council of the School of Biological Sciences was premature, flawed and short-sighted, ignoring the immeasurable public good provided by the school and the various viable options to address clinical teaching.²

The Chancellor has limited powers (Statute A I 3–5) but considerable influence, not least in commanding press interest should he express a concern.

This leaves the Vet School's future an open question, potentially to be closed by the General Board deciding to end the course. That decision lies with the General Board only in the case of the Tripos and postgraduate degrees in veterinary science. In other respects the RCVS is the principal regulator of the School as a charitable trust (CamVet)³ under the Charities Act of 2011. In the case of the professional veterinary qualification the School offers the governing legislation is not the University but the Veterinary Surgeons Act (1966). This established the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons (RCVS) and defines who may practise veterinary surgery and the gain the professional registration required. The RCVS also sets the standards of conduct for veterinary surgeons, with penalties for practice without the statutory qualification. The RCVS therefore oversees the professional education offered by the Vet School and decisions about the course in this respect lie with that body.

The *Statutes and Ordinances* have a good deal to say about the Tripos and graduate courses in Veterinary Science. Statute A III 1 covers courses for matriculated students leading to Bachelors' degrees. However, the relevant provisions for examinations are 'Regulations'.⁴ Changes to Regulations do not require Regent House approval by Grace but surely liberties should not be taken without a Grace in the case of a radical change such as the proposed closure of the Vet School? Only the call for a 'Topic of concern' Discussion has brought the proposal before the Regent House today. The list of signatories suggests that a 50-member Grace could be called for without much difficulty.

The University lacks a procedure governing the closure of externally accredited or recognised courses. This is a constitutional gap which seems to merit a Report clarifying the appropriate governance arrangements where an 'accreditor' seeks to set conditions for the award of a degree.

There is a second point on which a Grace may automatically be required. Under Statute F II 3:

Approval by Grace of the Regent House shall be required for the erection of a new University building or for the demolition or substantial alteration of an existing University building.

What is to happen to the Hospital, assuming it is a 'University building' and not the property of the RCVS? Won't a Grace be needed for change to its use? Such Graces may be put without a Report, but in these circumstances that would seem inappropriate.

¹ *Reporter*, 6808, 2025–26, p. 183 at p. 184.

² <https://www.bva.co.uk/media/6782/fao-lord-smith-of-finsbury.pdf>.

³ <https://camvet.vet.cam.ac.uk/>.

⁴ See *Statutes and Ordinances*, p. 257, p. 256–61, p. 263, p. 406, p. 409 and p. 428–31, with full details of examinations in Veterinary Science on p. 561–72. Veterinary Science is included among the subjects for examination leading to the degree of M.Phil. by thesis (p. 497).

Dr D. R. H. JONES (Christ's College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, before specifically addressing the proposal to close the Vet School, I would like to set out some background information. I apologise for the fact that this is somewhat lengthy, but I think it gives some context for today's topic.

A Discussion was held on 17 June 2025 to consider the Report of the Council, dated 4 June 2025, recommending the budget and allocations from the Chest for 2025–26. The Report of that Discussion was published in *Reporter*, 6790, 2024–25, p. 687. I give below some extracts from my contribution to that Discussion.

FTE [full-time equivalent] data for academic and non-academic staff at Cambridge and Oxford are plotted against time between the academic years 2018–19 and 2023–24. Also plotted are the mean data for the Russell Group. In all three cases, there is an increase in non-academic staff over the period. The percentage increases for Cambridge, Oxford, and the Russell Group are 20%, 19% and 20%. ...

The percentage increase in academic staff in the Russell Group is 12%. This lags behind the increase in non-academic staff (20%). At Oxford, the situation is worse: 5% compared to 19%. At Cambridge, academic staff numbers have actually *decreased* by 4%. ...

Turning to the non-academic staff numbers at Cambridge, on p. 623 these are plotted against time from 2015–16 to 2023–24. Reading down from the top, lines are given for the Unified Administrative Service (UAS), Clinical Medicine, Biological Sciences, Technology, Physical Sciences, and so on. From 2018–19 to 2023–24, the increases are respectively 37%, 19%, 19%, 25%, 18%. The rate of growth of UAS posts far exceeds that of posts in the Schools. ...

Within the UAS ... The grand total is around 1,800. ...

To summarise, in the last five years, Council has presided over a massive expansion in UAS posts (487, 362 in the last two years alone) alongside a decrease in academic posts of about 250. I do not understand why Council has allowed this. They may be too close to the centre, or they may have given the centre too much autonomy. Whatever the reason, this has to stop. Council must exert direct control over the UAS: freeze staff numbers; ruthlessly weed out non-essential activities; rationalise and optimise performance; and in the medium term, work to reduce staff numbers. The savings from this exercise should be used to restore the staff ratio to 50/50. If Exeter, Glasgow, Imperial, King's College, Queen Mary and UCL can do it, then so must we.

The Council responded to the Discussion in *Reporter*, 6791, 2024–25, p. 694, Notice in response to Discussion remarks. In response to my remarks, the Council wrote as follows:

Both the Council and the Finance Committee are scrutinising very closely the trends in non-academic staff growth summarised by Dr Jones. That scrutiny encompasses the entire University, but with a particular focus on the central professional services. The UAS response to the immediate requirement to reduce operating expenditure by 5% has included a vacant period of six months for each post that becomes vacant, pending a fuller review of the opportunities to achieve sustainable, ongoing reductions in expenditure without jeopardising the University functions acknowledged by Dr Jones.

The UAS has been required to take a funding cut of 5%, which is the same as that imposed on the Schools. There will then be a 'fuller review of the opportunities to achieve sustainable, ongoing reductions in expenditure without jeopardising the University functions.' These are empty words. Nowhere does the Council address the very serious strategic points I made above, including:

- (a) The massive expansion in UAS posts (487, 362 in the last two years alone).
- (b) The decrease in academic posts of about 250.
- (c) The disparity between the Russell Group (academic staff up 12%) and Cambridge (academic staff down by 4%).

In this context, the Annual Report of the Audit Committee for the financial year 2024–25 makes interesting reading (*Reporter*, 6809, 2025–26, p. 198). Paragraph 6.4, 'Value for money', includes the following:

The 2024–25 report focused on major University-wide transformation programmes, which are expected to deliver efficiencies through redesigned processes and improved systems ... critical to achieving VfM. Success will depend on collaboration across central administrative services and academic units, as well as addressing cultural challenges associated with new ways of working. The Committee also acknowledged the significant effort required to implement these changes and the importance of maintaining momentum.

Classic committee speak for 'there is inertia, and this is going to be a slow process'. This is just not good enough. As I said before, the Council must exert direct control over the UAS: freeze staff numbers; ruthlessly weed out non-essential activities; rationalise and optimise performance; and in the medium term, work to reduce staff numbers. The savings from this exercise should be used to restore the staff ratio to 50/50. If Exeter, Glasgow, Imperial, King's College, Queen Mary and UCL can do it, then so must we.

In this context, it is completely unacceptable to consider closing down a major teaching and research Department (in this case the Vet School). It continues a dangerous trajectory where the prime purpose of the University (teaching, learning and research) is increasingly subjugated to the central administration. This has to stop, and it has to be reversed – now. The Council needs to 'get a grip'; and it needs to be mindful of its core responsibilities as charitable Trustees.

Professor D. J. MASKELL (Wolfson College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am contributing to this Discussion as someone who spent six years as an undergraduate and postgraduate student then, after spending time elsewhere, 22 years as a Professor at this University. During those 22 years I was Head of the Department of Veterinary Medicine, despite not being a veterinary surgeon, Head of the School of the Biological Sciences and Senior Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources). I left in 2018 to become Vice-Chancellor of the University of Melbourne. I retired from that post just over a year ago.

Having a strong veterinary profession is essential for the health and well-being of human beings worldwide, and having an outstanding university like Cambridge involved in the education and training of veterinary surgeons is something to be highly valued and nurtured, not threatened.

I suggest therefore that maximum effort should be expended to ensure that the University of Cambridge Department of Veterinary Medicine (commonly called the Veterinary School) continues to educate new generations of veterinary surgeons, continues to produce outstanding research, pertinent to non-human animals certainly, but also important for human health, and continues to provide outstanding service to the society of which the University is part.

This suggestion is not made on a whim but takes fully into account a consideration of what the University says it exists to do. The 'Mission and Core Values' of the University, as given on its website (see <https://www.cam.ac.uk/about-the-university/how-the-university-and-colleges-work/mission-and-core-values>) states the following:

The mission of the University of Cambridge is to contribute to society through the pursuit of education, learning, and research at the highest international levels of excellence.

It then goes on to list what is meant by this overarching statement and includes a further list of things pertaining to 'the University's relationship with society'. I will not take up time and space reproducing those lists here, but I would suggest that colleagues might well take a few minutes to read them and give consideration to the extent to which the Department of Veterinary Medicine contributes to the fulfilment of the Mission of the University. Many Departments in the University do a fantastic job of living up to these ideals, but to be blunt I can think of no Department in the University that hits so many of these aspirations better than the Department of Veterinary Medicine.

The recommendation to stop teaching veterinary medicine, and effectively to close the Veterinary School, makes little sense in terms of the University's mission and academic activities.

The main issue with the Department appears to be that the Queen's Veterinary School Hospital is making a loss on its trading account, and that the General Board has asked the Council of the School to consider various options for the sustainable delivery of clinical services. That is a reasonable request, although as an aside I would imagine that a number of other Departments in the University are also in deficit.

Income received does not cover the cost of teaching in many parts of the University and similarly falls short of the amount spent on research largely because of the inadequate overhead rates applied by Government and other funders. The University of course, and quite rightly, willingly fills those gaps to keep the show on the road. There is no reason to single out the Vet School for particular scrutiny in this regard.

The loss made by the clinical services element over recent years should primarily be seen as a cost of teaching that one might argue should be supported by the University to ensure that it continues to fulfil its Mission to society. Since the world seems to like percentages so much, I would point out that the reported deficit of approximately £1m–£1.5m per annum in recent years is approximately 0.04% of the University's total income of around £2,600m. I am not trivialising this loss, and steps must be taken to improve this position, but, really, should a whole teaching programme of such value to society be closed down for such a relatively small amount of money in the context of the University's overall position? Stopping the teaching of certain subjects should be the very last resort in a University that is truly driven primarily by academic strategy. Financial considerations should not be the driver and should only come into play if the financial situation is truly catastrophic with no hope of rectification. I contend that that is certainly not the case here.

My colleagues in the Department tell me that a lot of work has been done to reduce this loss already. They also tell me that measures taken are beginning to bear fruit, so much so that so far this financial year they are now actually breaking even. I have no reason to believe that they are not telling me the truth, though I am equally clear that there is always room for error. It would be good to know therefore how the numbers are being calculated by the University and by the Department such that there is such a discrepant view. I know only too well from my time as Pro-Vice-Chancellor that inclusion or otherwise of certain elements of the cost or expenditure base (space charges for example) can, obviously, have dramatic effects on the outcomes of these calculations. It seems to me that the members of the General Board have a duty to look into these figures very closely to get the most up-to-date picture from the perspective of the Department as well as the view from the central University. It would be truly awful if the Department were to be closed just as it has done what has been asked of it and brought the clinical services account into something approaching break-even.

I am aware that the School of the Biological Sciences has done a detailed options appraisal into alternative models for delivery of clinical services (and I remind you that this really means delivery of practical clinical teaching), but that no alternative has emerged as suitable. This is a great pity and rather surprising. Other veterinary departments in the UK have certainly managed to come up with innovative alternatives. Surely Cambridge of all places should be able to come up with something innovative, perhaps even radical, that would not just work, but which might become a gold standard for how to do this. Let us all think a lot harder about how to invest in veterinary education at Cambridge to bring about any change that might be necessary to secure its financial future, rather than taking the irreversible, some would say easy, option of closing it down.

The Department of Veterinary Medicine at Cambridge provides something unique for the veterinary profession, veterinary science in particular, and, crucially, society in general. The education that our students receive is unique amongst UK veterinary schools and provides them upon graduation with something quite different to offer society.

I think this difference is something the UK and veterinary medicine need badly. It would be madness for this University to close down an area of its work that delivers so much to the UK and contributes so strongly to the stated Mission of the University, and to so many elements of the University's necessary commitment to society.

Dr E. J. DOBSON (Department of Veterinary Medicine):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the Queen's Veterinary School Hospital has maintained a partnership with the Cambridge RSPCA branch for over fifty years, delivering low-cost veterinary services to financially disadvantaged pet owners across Cambridgeshire, as well as comprehensive care for unowned animals under the responsibility of the Cambridge RSPCA. This collaboration provides an essential lifeline for thousands of animals who would otherwise struggle to access veterinary care. At the same time, it offers veterinary students invaluable, hands-on experience in delivering contextualised care, enabling them to enter the profession with the confidence, competence, and real-world understanding they deserve.

The closure of the Veterinary School, and consequently the cessation of this service, would leave many animals unable to obtain necessary veterinary treatment, place significant additional strain on local veterinary practices, and severely damage the reputation of the University.

We strongly urge that this long-standing and impactful partnership be fully considered in discussions about the societal consequences of closing the Veterinary School, beyond the loss of educational provision alone. This historic relationship has played a critical role in maximising animal welfare across the region and is far too significant to go unacknowledged or unexamined.

Mr A. E. J. ROSS (Wolfson College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am a first-year graduate entry student currently enrolled in the Cambridge Veterinary Medicine programme, and I strongly oppose the proposed closure of the veterinary school. This year, four mature students are studying on the course, each holding prior degrees in the sciences. Having recognised the profound importance of veterinary medicine to society, we have all made the life-changing decision to leave established careers and commit to years of further study at Cambridge. With maturity and varied professional experiences, we have come to understand the countless ways in which the veterinary profession benefits society, ranging from advancing One Health principles essential for global public health, to ensuring food security, preventing zoonotic diseases, and treating companion animals who are often considered family members.

Universities across the UK, and especially Cambridge, with its collegiate structure, benefit enormously from a diverse and well-rounded student body, to which mature students make a vital contribution. Veterinary medicine has always attracted large numbers of mature applicants, each bringing knowledge and perspectives that enrich the university's learning environment. This year, the graduate entry cohort brings experience in drug development R&D, synthetic chemistry, ecology, and other scientific disciplines. We were all drawn to Cambridge because of its scientific excellence. The integrated teaching of veterinary medicine at Cambridge with the departments of natural science and medicine is precisely why we chose this university: we are scientists at heart, and we wish to apply our training in a lifelong service to the veterinary profession.

An essential way in which Cambridge maintains its international reputation for scientific excellence is through the Department of Veterinary Medicine. As a world-leading institution in scientific education, Cambridge should be proud of its veterinary school, not dismantling it. The UK is already facing a severe shortage of veterinarians, and the University should be prepared to meet this challenge by continuing to produce world-leading veterinary graduates, something it has successfully done for more than 70 years.

Our experience of veterinary medicine at Cambridge since starting the course in October has been first-class, therefore receiving news of the recommendation to close the veterinary school, in December, after we had left for the vacation, was particularly surprising and upsetting. Given the quality of the education students receive here, it has been a challenge for us to rationalise and understand this recommendation. When asked about the recommendation by our peers, we have few answers. I therefore urge the University to reconsider this proposal and to recognise the vital role that veterinary education at Cambridge plays in addressing both national and global challenges. Closing this programme not only derails the career aspirations of committed mature students but also weakens the UK's ability to meet the growing demand for veterinary expertise.

Ms L. E. FROST (Fitzwilliam College, Lucy Cavendish College and Wolfson College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I speak as a College Director of Studies in veterinary medicine, as an alumna of this University, and as someone who has employed Cambridge veterinary graduates in clinical practice.

I wish to raise concerns around the way in which the recommendation concerning the future of the Veterinary Medicine course was communicated in December by the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences. As you may have heard from colleagues already (or will so in due course) on differing aspects, I am focusing of the human impact of the above.

Firstly, I am deeply concerned about the welfare of our current students. The release of this recommendation occurred while many students were away from college, outside their usual pastoral and tutorial support networks, and in some cases undertaking extra mural studies (EMS) placements which may be away from home. The information was released to all simultaneously, with no opportunity for colleges to anticipate the announcement or to put support mechanisms in place for students who we know to be vulnerable.

For students undertaking clinical EMS placements over the Christmas period, the consequences of this announcement were particularly troubling. These students were embedded in professional workplaces at the very moment that public uncertainty about the future of their veterinary school was created. In some cases, they found themselves implicitly required to account for, or defend, a situation entirely beyond their control. This placed them at reputational risk, created unnecessary stress, and undermined their professional confidence at a formative stage of their training, all while they were distant from their colleges and usual sources of academic and pastoral support.

I also wish to raise concern for those students approaching graduation. Many of the new graduate schemes for veterinary practice in the UK open to applications in January. Those students close to the end of training are now facing applications for jobs at a time of great uncertainty.

There is inevitably going to be anxiety about employability, professional standing, and the long-term value of their qualification. These are students about to enter a demanding profession, and they deserve confidence, not doubt, about the education they have received.

I also wish to place on record my experiences as a former clinical director of a veterinary practice, before moving into a teaching role. During my years as a general practitioner, I found the calibre of Cambridge veterinary graduates I employed to be exceptionally high. They bring not only strong scientific foundations, but advanced problem-solving skills, intellectual adaptability, and professional judgement of a very high order. These qualities speak directly to the strength of the Cambridge model of veterinary education and to its reputation beyond the University.

My concern, therefore, is both about the substance of any future decision (covered by colleagues), and around the way in which recommendations of such gravity are communicated, the extent to which student welfare, professional reputation, and long-term educational trust are actively protected in that process.

I ask the University to reflect carefully on how we uphold our responsibilities to students not only as learners, but as humans at a vital transition in their lives and identities when matters of this magnitude are under consideration.

Professor P. WADHAMS (Clare Hall and Emeritus Professor of Ocean Physics):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am most concerned by and oppose the proposed closure of the Veterinary School.

The Veterinary School appears to be about to be closed for non-academic reasons, contrary to the University's mission as an exempt charity under the Office for Students. The main reason is reportedly to reuse the School's present land and buildings for a private-public research enterprise and startup incubator hub on the West Cambridge site, with the School, as part of the School of the Biological Sciences, being expected to foot the ~£56million cost of new site, buildings and relocation. This is totally illegitimate.

There are so many scientific, academic, educational and public benefit reasons to retain the Veterinary School that I shall not speak of them but refer you to <https://savethevetschool.co.uk>.

Professor C. SUMMERS (Chair of the Faculty Board of Veterinary Medicine, Department of Medicine and Selwyn College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I do not support the proposed recommendation to discontinue veterinary medicine at Cambridge. Whilst I agree that change has been and remains required to ensure that veterinary education and research at Cambridge are able to meet the challenges of the coming years, the Vet School is not alone in this regard, and the decision to discontinue veterinary medicine at Cambridge is, in my view, a strategic error.

The Vet School is a nationally and internationally important asset, central to the University of Cambridge's mission as a public good, the United Kingdom's economy, and global public health initiatives. Parliamentarians, the Royal College of Veterinary Surgeons, the British Veterinary Society, and others have repeatedly highlighted the veterinary profession's workforce crisis and its impact on animal welfare, public health, and food production in the UK and beyond.

The world continues to recover from a pandemic caused by SARS-COV-2, a novel emerging zoonotic pathogen, and the threat of further such outbreaks remains. We also continue to live in the shadow of increasing antimicrobial resistance. Human, animal and environmental health are inextricably linked, and the University of Cambridge's contribution to tackling these threats will be damaged by the removal of clinical vets. The impact will be no less than that arising were the University to decide it no longer wished to continue clinical medicine.

I note from the email sent to all members of Vet School staff by the Head of the School of the Biological Sciences on 10 December 2025 that 'The School of the Biological Sciences will continue to be a home to world-class research and teaching in the fundamental biology underpinning areas such as disease dynamics, infection and immunity, and systems pathology.' I respectfully suggest that the impact of such research will be diminished by the absence of the capacity to translate them into practice afforded by collaboration with clinicians with insight into the context in which the challenges being addressed arise, and the solutions proposed will need to be deployed. Fundamental biology does not improve human, animal, or environmental health without translation.

I ask that the General Board and others exhaust every avenue to avoid the reputational, economic, and scientific harm that will result from the closure of veterinary education at Cambridge. Whilst the School of the Biological Sciences may feel they have already done this, I respectfully disagree.

Specifically, I propose that more time is required for the University to work with the Vet School to develop strategically sound and economically robust business plans for the delivery of clinical services and veterinary education – while there are challenges, there are certainly opportunities given the pressing need for veterinary services in the UK. The closure of veterinary education at the University of Cambridge will be irreversible and is not a decision that should be taken without considering all the ramifications and alternatives.

Professor R. C. FITZGERALD (former Chair of the Faculty Board of Veterinary Medicine, Department of Oncology and Trinity College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I wholeheartedly support the remarks made by Professor Summers, above.

Ms M. P. CASARINI-WADHAMS (Jesus College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am most concerned by and oppose the proposed closure of the Veterinary School.

The Veterinary School appears to be being closed for non-academic reasons, contrary to the University's mission as an exempt charity under the Office for Students. The main reason is reportedly to reuse the School's present land and buildings for a private-public research enterprise and startup incubator hub on the West Cambridge site, with the School, as part of the School of the Biological Sciences, being expected to foot the ~£56million cost of new site, buildings and relocation. This is totally illegitimate.

There are so many scientific, academic, educational and public benefit reasons to retain the Veterinary School that I shall not speak of them but refer you to <https://savethevetschool.co.uk>.

Ms A. CASHMORE (Homerton College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, having gathered thoughts from across the years of Homerton vets, here are just some of the concerns raised regarding the proposed termination of the vet course. Though these focus on practicalities, the emotional impact of the news from the SBS cannot be overstated. The most recent review by the RCVS had given hope for the course's future. The people I have spoken to are now feeling not just disillusioned, but betrayed.

Respect for the Cambridge veterinary course amongst the veterinary profession:

- Discussions with colleagues in the profession whilst on placements at other vet schools have reflected how greatly respected Cambridge veterinary graduates are. This is not only due to the depth of study of scientific principles in the pre-clinical years, but also the clinical rotations in a hospital covering all domestic species. The new UK vet schools usually lack a designated hospital and instead outsource rotations through arrangements with local practices. Many in the profession have noted how this is producing less competent new graduates in comparison to those from vet schools with a designated hospital/practice for directed and specialised learning. If the Cambridge vet course was to be lost, the profession would be deprived of a key source of vets.

Duty of the University of Cambridge to the communities of the city and beyond:

- There are many individuals in the area dependent on the veterinary services provided by practices associated with the Vet School, such as the companion animal care from the first opinion team, care for the animals of those in financial hardship through the RSPCA clinic, specialised referral caseloads for clients in Cambridgeshire and neighbouring counties, and equine and farm animal services for those in nearby rural areas.
- The Veterinary Hospital and Department provide employment for so many dedicated professionals. To lose this wealth of talent would deprive East Anglia of an academic hub for veterinary education.

One Health:

- With new infectious diseases emerging, collaboration between vets, medics and other scientists is more important than ever. Research from members of the Department is a crucial contribution to our understanding of this ever-evolving threat. Loss of the Department would be a blow to the UK's defence against disease.
- The integration of medical and veterinary education in the pre-clinical years is unique to Cambridge and provides an opportunity for students to learn from one another, across disciplines.

Some questions:

If the Vet School has to outsource placements, how will you ensure Cambridge students are given fair opportunities compared to students at vet schools with well-established connections to practices? Should the decision be made to close the Vet School, how will you mitigate the effects of losing teaching staff before all current students have graduated?

Dr R. M. H. SNOW (St Catharine's College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I graduated from Cambridge Veterinary School and St Catharine's College in 2016, after six of the fullest, most intellectually challenging and rewarding years of my life. I have worked full-time in clinical practice ever since. I wish to express my whole-hearted support for the veterinary course and my deep concern regarding the proposal to close it.

My remarks are divided into three parts. Firstly, my serious concerns regarding the lack of transparency over the reasons for the proposed closure. Secondly, the tremendous value of Cambridge Vet School to both the University and the wider community. Finally, how this matter will reflect on the values and reputation of the University as a whole.

Beginning with the *lack of transparency*: the justification I received in December from the Council of the School of the Biological Sciences via Alumni Relations was severely lacking in detail. I was further disturbed to realise that friends and former instructors still based at the Vet School were as much in the dark as I was. I was concerned to hear widespread talk of this being cover for a 'land grab'; to be honest, these rumours are not a surprise, as even when I was a student there was talk of other University bodies trying to evict the Vet School in future.

The University owes it to students, staff, alumni and, above all, to its own reputation and integrity to be fully transparent about the reasons for a potential closure. A few points to note:

1. If the reason is purely the financial viability of clinical services at the Vet School: other vet schools in the UK have found financially viable ways to operate. Stakeholders should receive full justifications as to why none of these models could be adapted or adopted by Cambridge.
2. If there is a land factor: the Department of Veterinary Medicine has never asked to be relocated. If relocation is desired or required of them by other bodies in the University, the Department of Veterinary Medicine should not suffer (let alone have the veterinary course closed) as a result of this.
3. If there are academic concerns: my understanding is that many of the Royal College's accreditation concerns stemmed from administrative rather than academic issues. Vet School staff have been working incredibly hard to rectify all issues, as recognised by the most recent RCVS inspection. Personally, having supervised and taught scores of vet students from a variety of UK, Australian and other veterinary schools in my current job, I have zero concerns about the academic quality of the Cambridge course.

Moving on to the second part of my remarks: I wish to emphasise that the *Cambridge Veterinary School is an absolute credit to the University*.

The school itself builds bridges between town and gown by providing clinical services to local branches of the RSPCA and the Blue Cross, as well as to local livestock owners who would otherwise struggle to find farm vets in the area.

Due to the practical nature of veterinary work, graduates almost automatically go on to make tangible impacts in society, whether at a local, national or international level. Vets in government prevent and manage disease outbreaks; vets in university and industry laboratories ensure animal welfare and accurate science; livestock and abattoir vets ensure meat, eggs and dairy products are safe to eat; companion animal vets care for the animals many consider as family.

My personal story is that since 2020 I have worked as a wildlife vet for a non-profit organisation in Hong Kong, a major hub in the illegal wildlife trade. My duties are wide-ranging and I would not manage nearly so well without the rigorous training I received at Cambridge. Many of the species I care for are endangered and under-researched; I have no veterinary literature to refer to. Instead, I rely on the skills Cambridge taught me: I go back to first principles, problem-solving to figure out disease processes, and I sift through zoological and other relevant scientific papers.

My duties also include advising on biosecurity and zoonotic disease; helping to plan wildlife reintroductions; and reviewing scientists' research proposals from animal welfare and scientific perspectives. It was Cambridge where I learnt to pivot between managing animal and human health considerations at both individual and population levels. It was Cambridge where I learnt what makes good science.

My work is collaborative and my team works closely with a few other organisations in Hong Kong. It does not surprise me that two of our partners count Cambridge vets among their senior leadership. This is just a taste of the impact Cambridge Vet School has had over generations at an international level. I will leave it to my fellow alumni to share the sizeable impact the Vet School has had locally and nationally; Cambridge may be the UK's smallest vet school but it punches well above its weight.

If you are involved in decisions over the Vet School's future, I urge you to read through at least some of the thousands of submissions on the Vet School's website <https://savethevetschool.co.uk>.

Last but not least, I want to address the legacy of a potential decision to close the veterinary course.

This decision is not just about closing the Vet School, but about what the University itself represents. Cambridge, above other universities, champions the intrinsic value of academic pursuit and enlightenment, and has done so for the past 800 years. A decision to shut down a school sends the message that some fields of study are less worthy, or that some departments are 'more equal than others', or that other interests are more important to the University than protecting and supporting academic pursuit. For me personally, it would forever destroy my pride in the University that once felt like home, and my sense of belonging in its community of alumni.

Mr J. PYMAN (Emmanuel College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am a fourth-year Veterinary student and a Cambridge representative to the Association of Veterinary Students. I'm making these remarks as an individual. The opportunity to study Veterinary Medicine at Cambridge is exceptional, with collegiate support, an interdisciplinary approach, and a strong grounding in scientific understanding. The potential loss of this number one ranked course would deny future generations of students the unparalleled opportunities which the course and colleges can offer, and which I have been very lucky to experience during my time here. In the context of threats to One Health, the course and department are an asset to the University and a vital contributor to global public health. Removing the Veterinary course would deprive the University of a key component of its holistic contributions to the fields of biological sciences and health. The statements on the Save the Vet School campaign website serve as a testament to the impact of the department, and as a signal of the concerning outcomes were it to close.

Ms A. C. WHITMORE SNOW (Christ's College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I wish to express my strongest support for the continued operation of the Cambridge Vet School. I am a Cambridge graduate and also the mother of a Cambridge vet and have seen at first hand the excellent work being done by Cambridge vets in a range of fields here in Hong Kong.

Globally, we need more first-class veterinarians not fewer for the following reasons among others:

1. Veterinary medicine stands at a unique interface between human medicine, public health, zoology and ecology. The subject brings a vital practical element to major challenges facing us all. For example, as a Hong Kong-based resident and parent, I have seen at first hand the dangers to the human population of rapidly emerging zoonoses, starting with SARS in 2003, followed by numerous scares relating to avian flu, and then most recently COVID.
2. Biodiversity is rapidly diminishing across the world but notably in SE Asia. Conservation work draws on numerous disciplines, but it is the veterinarians who can work on the ground to keep endangered species alive.

Additionally, Cambridge's international reputation and competitiveness versus other leading universities will suffer. It's hard to imagine Harvard or Yale closing a faculty for short-term financial gain. This is surely not the purpose of a great university?

Professor N. W. EVANS (Institute of Astronomy):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am Professor of Astrophysics at the Institute of Astronomy and leader of the 21 Group (<https://21percent.org>).

The closure of Cambridge's Veterinary School will have nationwide consequences, risking shortages of veterinarians across clinical, agricultural, and research sectors. This will place additional pressure on remaining training programs and raise costs for employers and animal owners. Yet Cambridge University appears to have conducted no assessment of these national impacts.

By contrast, when Cardiff University attempted to close its nursing courses in 2025, public outcry and intervention by Senedd politicians – concerned about the national nurse supply – forced a reversal. Cambridge now risks a similar backlash, with potential reputational damage and serious public relations challenges.

While the Vet School may have reported losses in recent years, these are dwarfed by the rapidly growing expenditure of central administration. The 2025 End of Year Accounts show a barely believable 44% year-on-year rise in administrative spending – an increase of at least £120 million.

Cambridge does not face a funding crisis; it faces a priorities crisis.

Teaching and research are being quietly squeezed, while bureaucracy flourishes. The academic mission is treated as a cost to be controlled rather than a purpose to be served, and the handling of the Vet School exemplifies this.

What is happening to the Vet School is contrary to the stated core mission of the University. Its closure should be opposed very vigorously.

Mr A. J. CURRIE (Magdalene College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the loss of the Cambridge Veterinary degree would be a tragedy for the University, the veterinary profession and the wider public. The decision-making regarding the closure seems to have been made on the weakest of evidence and without consideration for the recent profitability of the Queen's Veterinary School Hospital. As academics we are trained to clearly evaluate evidence and reach logical conclusions; this decision seems entirely contrary to such an approach.

Ms S. A. C. PESKETT (Selwyn College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am a current fourth-year Veterinary student at Selwyn College; as such, I declare both a personal and professional interest in the School Council's (CSBS) recommendation to close the Vet School.

Everyone who has already spoken has been more eloquent than I could be about the impact of this decision on students and staff, the QVSH and Public Health, so I wish to draw attention to some other concerns.

The intercalation in third year offers Vet students a chance to explore further research interests and contribute to projects which may be published and contribute to the University's research base, as well as contributing to One Health. The recommendation from the CSBS, if implemented, will thus have an impact on research produced and teaching delivered from other departments. As an example, some of the zoology modules I took in my third year were comprised mostly (or even almost entirely) of fellow vets – without us, those courses would not be financially viable to run.

In addition, I believe the CSBS has not considered the impact on the wider community. The Vet School is uniquely placed to serve the community of animals and their people in Cambridge. Huge numbers of animals (and their people) have benefited and will continue to benefit from the advanced and often world-leading care at the Queen's Veterinary School Hospital.

On top of that, without the Vet School, the RSPCA Cambridge clinic will not be able to operate. It is run entirely by Vet School staff and students, and some volunteers in the local community, and provides essential low-cost preventative and first-line care to thousands of members of the local community who might otherwise struggle to afford it. Shutting down the Vet School would destroy this vital service, and cause devastating hardship to people less financially secure than the University academics indirectly determining their pets' futures.

Cambridge has one of the highest wealth gaps of any city in the UK, as well as a long history of disconnect and resentment between 'town and gown' and this recommendation, if implemented, will clearly not make the University look good.

Professor A. E. WILLIAMS (Department of Veterinary Medicine and Wolfson College):

Deputy Vice-Chancellor, I am a member of the Department of Veterinary Medicine, a Fellow of Wolfson College, and the (external) Director of Studies for Clinical Veterinary Medicine and Gonville and Caius College.

Some of the statements made by Professor Simons [p. 293] would benefit from closer inspection and scrutiny, and I wish to illustrate this through three examples:

1. The first of these – the financial position of the Queen’s Veterinary School Hospital in recent years – has just been addressed by Professor Mark Holmes and I would only add that central University services played a significant role in the events leading up to cancellation of the Vet School’s plans to install a MRI machine and the consequent need to hire a MRI at a very considerable expense for a few years – a major contributor to the recent downturn in hospital financial position, since rectified.
2. The excellent quality of the veterinary curriculum, as delivered, is not in doubt, indeed the RCVS visitations have commended both the pre-clinical phase of the veterinary programme and the new clinical curriculum that was introduced from Michaelmas 2021. Where the Vet School has had more difficulty is in the new teaching management academic team adjusting to the new accreditation reporting format introduced by the RCVS ... a format with which other veterinary schools have also raised issues. Indeed, last year, the Cambridge Veterinary School received a very favourable visitation from another accrediting body – the European Association of Establishments for Veterinary Education (EAEVE), which uses an accreditation visitation format similar to the one the RCVS used to employ.
3. The statement inferring that the Vet School could not increase student cohort size omits to mention the option of accepting graduate student applications from abroad; these students could apply to the Cambridge Graduate Colleges that accept veterinary students, such as Wolfson and St Edmunds (and Lucy Cavendish), without impacting the balance of student intake at standard entry age colleges alluded to in Professor Simons’ statement. In March 2019, the Vet School received a ‘Consultation Visitation’ by the American Veterinary Medical Association which gave a very favourable report; again, the curriculum was deemed to comply with (or exceed) their accreditation standards. If the Cambridge Veterinary School applied for and was awarded AVMA Accreditation status then an intake of, for example, 10 overseas students could be sustained with minimal adjustments to the current teaching timetables, including that of the final year rotations. This would, in a sustainable manner, improve the Vet School’s teaching-related income and overall position.

There are other examples that I could give, and would be happy to do so and discuss, but for reasons of time and length of this meeting will limit myself to the above as I believe they illustrate my assertion that some of the details appear not to have been given sufficient consideration.

COLLEGE NOTICES**Elections****Clare Hall**

Elected into a Research Fellowship under Title C with effect from 1 October 2025:

- Ashling Giblin, B.Sc., *Galway*, Ph.D., *UCL*
 Brian Carrick, B.S., *Michigan*, Ph.D., *Wisconsin*
 Francesca Rossi, B.S., M.Sc., Ph.D., *Sapienza*
 Luis Fernando Bernardi Junqueira, M.Phil., *Fudan*,
 Ph.D., *UCL*
 Anna Knutsson, M.Phil., *EM*, Ph.D., *EUI*
 Marc Czarnuszewicz, B.A., *Oxford*,
 M.Litt., Ph.D., *St Andrews*
 Chloe Austerberry, Pg.Dip., *West London*,
 M.Res., Ph.D., *UCL*
 Aneeza Pervez, Pg.Dip., *Nottingham*, Ph.D., *UCL*

Elected into a Professorial Fellowship under Title B with effect from 18 June 2025:

- Benjamin Allanach, B.Sc., *Sheffield*,
 Ph.D., *Southampton*

Vacancies

Corpus Christi College: Visiting Professorships and Visiting Fellowships (non-stipendiary); tenure: one term (either Michaelmas Term or Lent Term in the 2026–27 academic year); closing date: 20 February 2026 at 12 noon; further details: <https://www.corpus.cam.ac.uk/about/opportunities/visiting-professorships-and-visiting-fellowships>

Hughes Hall: Research Fellow and Research By-Fellow Competition 2026 (non-stipendiary, any subject); tenure: from 1 October 2026 for three years (renewable for a further two years); closing date: 15 March 2026; further details: <https://www.hughes.cam.ac.uk/about/vacancies/>

Sidney Sussex College: Senior Tutor; closing date: 22 February 2026; further details: <https://www.sid.cam.ac.uk/node/33611> and <https://www.berwickpartners.co.uk/95138>

Memorial Service**Michael Kuczynski**

A celebration of the life of Michael Kuczynski, Emeritus Fellow of Pembroke College and onetime Director of Studies of Hughes Hall (*Reporter*, 6799, 2025–26, p. 47), will be held on Saturday, 7 March 2026 at 2 p.m. at Great St Mary's, the University Church, followed by a reception at Pembroke College. All who remember Michael are warmly invited. For those unable to attend, the service will be livestreamed. Those planning to attend are asked to notify the College at mgkmemorialsvp@pem.cam.ac.uk or on 01223 338120.

SOCIETIES, ETC.**Cambridge Antiquarian Society**

The Society's next talk, entitled 'Medieval remains from Sizewell C: Exploring the landscape of Leiston Abbey', will be given by Dr Abby Antrabus (Cotswold Archaeology) on Monday, 2 February 2026 at 6 p.m. at the Law Faculty, Sidgwick Site, CB3 9DZ; free to attend; booking not required; further details: <https://www.camantsoc.org/meetings-and-events/>; enquiries: Ian Mason, Secretary (email: secretary@camantsoc.org)

Cambridge Philosophical Society**G. I. Taylor Lecture**

'Cars, aeroplanes, and quantum physics: Why complexity makes life simpler for the vibration engineer', by Professor Robin Langley, FREng, will take place on Monday, 2 February 2026 from 6 p.m. to 7 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/professor-robin-langley>

EXTERNAL NOTICES**Oxford Notices**

Faculty of History and St Catherine's College: Rhodes Professorship of American History; closing date: 9 March 2026 at 12 noon; further details: <https://www.recruit.ox.ac.uk>, vacancy ID: 184166

Jesus College: Career Development Fellowship in Classics and Philosophy; tenure: three years from 1 October 2026 or as soon as possible thereafter (not renewable); salary: £39,424; closing date: 27 February 2026 at 12 noon; further details: <https://www.jesus.ox.ac.uk/about-jesus-college/our-community/vacancies/career-development-fellowship-cdf-in-classics-and-philosophy/>