The Arday Independent Review

Terms of Reference – Part Two

A. The Independent Review

1. On 4th September 2026 the University of Cambridge ("the University"), through the University Council ("the Council") established an Independent Review ("the Review") following the death of Professor Jason Arday on 14th August 2026.

2. The Review is being conducted in two parts. Part One is led by Nazir Afzal OBE and was launched on 14th September 2026. In short summary its purpose is to examine the support, interventions and welfare protections available to Professor Arday in the period before his death, and to say whether the University's decisions, actions, communications and systems were reasonable and appropriate given what it knew or ought to have known at the time. Part Two will consider the wider context of Professor Arday's time at the University, including: the recruitment and appointment processes to Professorships (Board of Elector process); induction, mentoring and support arrangements; the University's response to allegations of research misconduct; the support available to academics who are subject to public and media scrutiny; and arrangements for institutional oversight.

3. The Review as a whole is intended to investigate and report on what happened in the case of Professor Arday, but also to examine institutional decision-making and organisational processes; identify lessons for the University; and provide recommendations regarding future practice.

4. Importantly, Part Two of the Review is intended to contribute to healing, trust-building and reconciliation with affected communities and fulfil the University's commitment to openness, learning and change. The Review will be searching, frank and candid.

B. The Chair and the Panel

5. Part Two of the Review will be chaired by an independent external person appointed by the University Council, supported by an independent Panel appointed by the Council.

6. The University's framework document for the Review requires Part Two to be chaired by a person (i) who is external to the University; (ii) who is entirely independent - such as a King's Counsel practising in a relevant specialism; and (iii) who has significant relevant expertise and experience of leading major reviews or investigations.

7. The Chair of Part Two of the Review is Jason Beer KC ("the Chair"). The Chair is responsible for determining Part Two of the Review's lines of inquiry, methodology, requests for information, interviews, findings, conclusions and recommendations. The Chair may be assisted in these tasks by persons appointed by him – including junior counsel and solicitors – for that purpose.

8. The conclusions, findings and recommendations of Part Two of the Review remain those of the Chair. The Chair will determine the weight to be given to any views expressed by Panel members and may record significant areas of agreement or disagreement where appropriate.

9. The composition of the Panel is to (i) ensure credibility, independence and diversity of expertise; and (ii) include expertise relevant to the issues under examination, to include (without limitation) higher education leadership; equality matters (particularly those relating to the protected characteristics of race and disability); the experience of Black academics and relevant academic norms, policies and procedures. Additional panel members can be added upon the request of the Chair at any time during the review process, including with expertise in communications.

10. The Panel for Part Two is as follows:

    a. Professor Rachael Gooberman-Hill
    b. Professor Rachel Brooks
    c. Professor Bertha Ochieng
    d. Ms Margaret Ayers

11. Panel members are appointed in their personal capacities and not as representatives of particular organisations or stakeholder groups.

12. The Panel's role will be to assist the Chair by bringing relevant expertise and lived experience to Part Two of the Review's consideration of evidence, findings and recommendations. The Panel will assist the Chair in developing findings and recommendations. Working under the direction of the Chair, the Panel may:

    (1) Review documents, records and other material obtained by the Review.

    (2) Review summaries or records of interviews conducted on behalf of the Review.

    (3) Prepare analyses, observations and advice for the Chair.

    (4) Participate in roundtable discussions and deliberative sessions convened by the Chair.

    (5) Contribute to the development of findings and recommendations.

    (6) Comment upon drafts of the report.

    (7) Conduct such other necessary supporting work as the Chair may determine.

13. Neither the Council, the General Board, the Vice-Chancellor nor any other University officer may direct the Chair or Panel as to the conduct of Part Two of the Review or the substance of its findings or recommendations.

C. The matters to be investigated and reported upon

The matters to be investigated and reported upon are as follows:

I. Recruitment and appointment of Jason Arday as Professor of the Sociology of Education and the recruitment and appointment of professors[1]

The Review will investigate and report on:

(1) How the need for a Professorial appointment is identified, approved and defined.

(2) How relevant academic requirements, selection criteria and expectations are established and applied.

(3) How responsibilities are allocated between departments, faculties, colleges[2], Boards of Electors and other University bodies or officers.

(4) The processes for obtaining, assessing and verifying information concerning candidates' academic records, qualifications, professional experience and other relevant credentials.

(5) The nature, purpose and adequacy of due diligence undertaken in relation to preferred candidates.

(6) How concerns, inconsistencies or gaps in information are identified, considered, escalated and resolved.

(7) What records are retained of material assessments and decisions.

(8) How consistency, fairness, transparency and appropriate oversight are maintained.

(9) How appointments are announced, including how decisions about public announcements of appointments are made.

[1] Reference to Professors/Professorial staff is to those appointed under Statute D (Chapter XV Elections to Professorships), by the Board of Elector process.

[2] Professor Arday held a fellowship at Jesus College. The College is a separate, independent, legal entity and is not within the University's control, so the review cannot direct it and the Review does not bind it. However, Jesus College has been invited to cooperate and has agreed to be part of the process.

The Review will investigate and report on the appointment procedures as they operated in relation to Professor Arday, including whether the prescribed processes were followed, how responsibilities were discharged, and whether the information and checks required by those processes were appropriately obtained and considered.

The Review will not substitute its own academic assessment of Professor Arday's work or credentials. It may, however, consider whether the University's arrangements provided a sufficiently reliable basis for the exercise of academic judgment.

The Review will consider whether the relevant policies and processes were consistent with applicable legal requirements, principles of academic merit and procedural fairness, and the University's commitments to equality, diversity and inclusion.

Where deficiencies are identified, the Review will recommend how appointment procedures, due diligence, accountability or institutional oversight should be strengthened. And how each of these facts, matters and issues operated in the process leading to the appointment of Professor Arday.

II. Induction, mentoring and support for Professor Arday and for professorial staff

The Review will investigate and report on:

(1) The support available to newly appointed Professors in understanding the University's academic, managerial and governance structures and standards.

(2) The availability and effectiveness of formal and informal mentoring.

(3) How responsibility for an individual Professor's induction and ongoing support is allocated between departments, faculties, colleges and central University bodies.

(4) The availability of appropriate professional, managerial and pastoral support.

(5) The accessibility and adequacy of occupational health, mental health and wellbeing provision.

(6) How support arrangements address disability, neurodiversity and reasonable adjustments.

(7) How concerns about professional performance, expectations or other difficulties are identified and managed.

(8) The support available to Professors experiencing significant professional, reputational or personal challenges.

The Review will examine the extent to which these arrangements were relevant to, and operated effectively in relation to, Professor Arday during his time at Cambridge.

It will consider whether responsibilities for providing support and monitoring its effectiveness were sufficiently clear, and whether gaps arose between departmental, faculty, central University and collegiate structures.

Where appropriate, the Review will examine whether lessons arising from Professor Arday's experience have wider significance for the University's treatment and support of newly appointed Professors.

III. Response to allegations of research and other misconduct and related concerns

The Review will investigate and report on:

(1) The mechanisms through which concerns may be raised, received and recorded.

(2) How concerns are initially assessed and by whom.

(3) The criteria and processes for determining whether a concern requires informal consideration, preliminary assessment, formal investigation or another institutional response.

(4) The allocation of responsibility between departments, faculties, colleges, central University bodies and other relevant officers.

(5) Arrangements for securing relevant evidence, obtaining specialist advice and recording decisions.

(6) The communication of decisions and their reasons to those concerned.

(7) Mechanisms for escalating unresolved or repeated concerns.

(8) The University's arrangements for ensuring procedural fairness, consistency and timely decision-making.

(9) How academic standards, the integrity of research, employment responsibilities, staff welfare, legal obligations and reputational considerations are balanced.

The Review will examine and report on the extent to which these arrangements were relevant to, and operated effectively in relation to, Professor Arday during his time at the University.

This examination may include the basis on which the University determined what procedure or institutional response was appropriate, the allocation of responsibilities, the handling of information, the timing of decisions and the coordination of responses.

Part Two is not an investigation of Professor Arday himself. It will not determine whether allegations concerning his research, qualifications, academic record, honorary appointments or personal history are proven.

The Review will have regard to relevant sector standards and good practice in research integrity and the management of serious academic concerns.

It will remain separate from, and will not interfere with, the University's existing internal review of research misconduct procedures being undertaken by the Research Policy Committee.

IV. Support for academic staff under public and media scrutiny

The Review will investigate and report on:

(1) How responsibility is allocated for coordinating institutional responses.

(2) The availability of communications and public relations advice and support.

(3) Arrangements for identifying and responding to risks to an individual's wellbeing.

(4) How the University assesses risks to its institutional reputation and to the professional and personal reputation of affected individuals.

(5) The circumstances in which the University makes public statements concerning a member of staff.

(6) The processes for approving such statements, including the consideration of their accuracy, fairness, necessity and foreseeable consequences.

(7) The extent to which affected staff are consulted, informed and supported.

(8) How arrangements operate where external scrutiny coincides with internal concerns, reviews or investigations.

(9) How relevant functions, including communications, human resources, legal services, colleges, departments and faculties, coordinate their activities.

Part Two of the Review will consider how these arrangements operate for academic staff.

It will examine how decisions concerning institutional communications and responses are reached, what considerations informed them, and how the University seeks to balance its responsibilities to uphold academic standards, protect freedom of speech and academic freedom, act fairly towards staff, and provide appropriate welfare support.

Its focus will be on the adequacy, coordination and fairness of the University's own arrangements and decisions.

V. Equality, race, disability and inclusion

The Review will investigate and report on how relevant institutional arrangements recognise and respond to:

(1) Race equality and the experiences of Black academics.

(2) Disability, neurodiversity and reasonable adjustments.

(3) The experiences of academics who may encounter particular barriers to accessing support, raising concerns or participating fully in University processes.

Within the scope of paragraph 39 below, Part Two of the Review will consider how these arrangements operated in relation to the scrutiny experienced by Professor Arday and the University's responses during his time at the University.

The Review will examine whether relevant policies are appropriately designed and whether they are understood and applied consistently in practice.

It will consider whether arrangements for recruitment, support, the handling of allegations and responses to external scrutiny adequately address the circumstances and needs of staff with relevant protected characteristics.

The Review may draw upon the experience of academic staff and other members of the University community in understanding how these arrangements operate, including where formal policies and lived experience differ.

Its findings will be directed towards identifying institutional shortcomings, improving practice and strengthening confidence in fair and inclusive processes.

14. In each area, Part Two of the Review will examine both the formal arrangements and their operation in practice. It will consider the allocation of responsibilities, institutional oversight, communication and coordination between different parts of the University, escalation of concerns, and alignment with relevant standards and sector practice.

15. It will examine how these arrangements applied to Professor Arday during his appointment and time at the University, including the decisions taken and the handling of concerns that arose.

16. The Review will identify whether any shortcomings or failures arose from the design of policies, their implementation, unclear or fragmented responsibilities, failures of communication or oversight, or other organisational factors.

17. It will make recommendations for improvements that are sufficiently clear and practical to permit implementation and subsequent assessment.

18. It will not conduct an independent assessment of the scholarly merit or integrity of Professor Arday's published work, nor make a retrospective academic judgement about his personal suitability for appointment. This does not prevent Part Two of the Review from examining the University's responsibilities to assess and verify information relevant to Professorial appointments, including the standards, evidence and procedures applied in Professor Arday's appointment.

19. It will not adjudicate the conduct of journalists, publications, academics or other external commentators. Their activities may nevertheless be relevant to understanding the circumstances in which University decisions were made and the University's response to public scrutiny.

20. Part Two of the Review is not a general disclosure exercise. Material will be obtained and considered for the purposes of Part Two of the Review, subject to applicable legal and confidentiality requirements.

D. The conduct of Part Two of the Review

21. The Chair will determine the methodology necessary to discharge these Terms of Reference.

22. Part Two of the Review may:

    (1) Seek and examine relevant University documents, policies, correspondence, records and other information.

    (2) Invite written evidence from individuals and groups with relevant knowledge or experience.

    (3) Conduct interviews with University officers, academic staff and other witnesses.

    (4) Obtain evidence or advice from relevant external experts.

    (5) Consider comparable practice in other universities and applicable sector standards.

(6) Convene discussions or other engagement exercises where these would assist its examination of systemic issues.

23. The Chair will determine the weight to be given to the material received and whether further enquiries are required.

24. University bodies, staff and officers will be expected to provide reasonable cooperation, subject to their legal powers and responsibilities and applicable requirements concerning privilege, privacy and confidentiality.

25. Where Part Two of the Review proposes to make material adverse findings concerning the conduct or decisions of an identifiable person or body, appropriate opportunity will be given to respond to the substance of those findings before they are finalised.

26. The Review will make reasonable adjustments for participants who need them and will take account of the welfare and circumstances of those providing evidence.

27. Part Two of the Review will handle information received in accordance with applicable data protection law, duties of confidence and other relevant legal obligations.

28. Material provided to Part Two of the Review will be used for its purposes and access will be restricted to those who reasonably require it for the conduct of Part Two of the Review.

29. Part Two of the Review will make appropriate arrangements to protect sensitive information, including personal information and confidential evidence.

30. The University has confirmed that no member of staff will be disadvantaged for providing frank evidence to the Review.

31. Evidence provided in confidence will not be passed to the University for employment purposes. This does not prevent the making of findings or recommendations based on evidence received, subject to appropriate safeguards and applicable law.

32. Part Two of the Review cannot guarantee that information will never be required to be disclosed to a court, the Coroner or another body exercising lawful powers.

33. Further information will be provided to participants about the handling, retention and potential disclosure of information before evidence is obtained from them.

E. Period under examination

34. Part Two of the Review will examine the University's relevant arrangements and practice during the period encompassing Professor Arday's recruitment and appointment and his subsequent time at the University.

35. It may consider earlier policies, practices or decisions where necessary to understand how the relevant arrangements developed or operated.

36. It may also examine subsequent institutional developments where relevant to assessing whether identified failing or shortcomings have been addressed or recommendations remain necessary.

37. Part Two of the Review may examine the experiences of other academic staff, comparable institutional decisions or relevant sector practice where doing so would assist its assessment of the arrangements under review.

F. Interaction with Part One of the Review

38. Part Two may take account of material obtained by and relevant findings from Part One but shall remain independent in its further analysis and conclusions.

39. Part Two of the Review will build upon Part One of Review – it may address events examined in Part One to the extent necessary to understand wider institutional systems and organisational learning.

40. The Part Two Chair will liaise with the Part One Lead, share relevant information as appropriate, and cooperate to ensure that their work is complementary, avoiding duplication or conflict, and that Part Two can build on what Part One establishes rather than starting again. Information may pass between the Parts where relevant and lawful.

41. Subject to applicable legal, privilege, privacy, welfare and confidentiality requirements, the Review will be authorised to seek relevant University records and evidence, and University bodies and officers will provide reasonable co-operation within their respective powers and responsibilities.

G. Relationship with other proceedings and processes

42. The Review is separate from any live disciplinary, misconduct or employment process. The Review will not determine legal liability, conduct disciplinary or employment proceedings, or decide allegations of misconduct against individuals.

43. It will not determine the cause of Professor Arday's death, duplicate the functions of the Coroner, or anticipate conclusions properly belonging to the inquest.

44. Part Two of the Review will not interfere with any such live processes.

H. Outputs and publication

45. The Chair will produce a report to the Council and the General Board setting out findings and recommendations for their consideration.

46. The report will set out:

    (1) The principal matters examined and the methodology employed.

    (2) The Review's findings on the relevant institutional arrangements and their operation.

    (3) Any material failings or shortcomings identified, including their nature and organisational causes.

    (4) Relevant conclusions arising from Professor Arday's interaction with those arrangements and their operation in his case.

    (5) Recommendations for changes to policies, procedures, governance, support or practice.

47. Part Two of the Review will distinguish between recommendations requiring immediate attention and those concerned with longer-term institutional improvement.

48. Recommendations should, wherever practicable, identify the action required, the institutional level at which responsibility should sit, and how implementation might be assessed.

49. Responsibility for considering, prioritising and implementing the recommendations will rest with the Council and General Board, as appropriate.

50. Subject to law, privacy and confidentiality, privilege and the welfare of living people, a summary of the findings and the recommendations of Part Two of the Review and the University's response will be published. The Council is encouraged to publish the report in full, or as close to full as the law permits.

51. Part Two of the Review is expected to report within 6 months of the publication of these Terms of Reference.

52. The Chair will determine the detailed programme of work, having regard to the matters to be examined, the availability of evidence, the need for fair participation and the importance of producing timely recommendations.

53. If the Chair considers that the timetable materially affects the ability to conduct a thorough and fair Review, the Chair may raise that matter with the Council.

I. Amendments

54. The Chair may ask the Council to amend these Terms of Reference where it is necessary for the effective conduct of Part Two of the Review.

55. Any material amendment will be submitted to the Council for consideration and, if approved, made public.

Jason Beer KC
19th October 2026