
Meeting: COUNCIL

Date and Time: Thursday 14 May 2020 at 9.30am

Venue: Virtual meeting via Zoom

Present:

Pamela Chesters	Chair
Eve Alcock	President, Students' Union
Maria Bond	Appointed member
Tim Ford	Appointed member
Ruth Foreman	Vice-Chair
Christine Gibbons	Appointed member
Professor Barry Gilbertson	Appointed member
Professor Dot Griffiths	Appointed member
Mesar Hameed	Elected by staff not on Academic Assembly
Malcolm Holley	Elected by staff not on Academic Assembly
Tim Hollingsworth	Appointed member
Catherine Mealing-Jones	Appointed member
Charlotte Moar	Appointed member
Dr David Moon	Elected by staff not on Academic Assembly
Ruqia Osman	Education Officer, Students' Union
Kate Robinson	Elected by Senate
John Preston	Treasurer
Professor Danae Stanton Fraser	Elected by Senate
Professor Ian White	Vice-Chancellor and President
Dr Jane White	Chair of Academic Assembly

In attendance:

Professor Jeremy Bradshaw	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International and Doctoral)
Richard Brooks	Director of HR
Corinne Evans	Director of Communications
Professor Peter Lambert	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching)
Professor Jonathan Knight	Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research)
Francesco Masala	Incoming President, Students' Union
Andrew McLaughlin	Chief Executive Officer, Students' Union
Professor Bernie Morley	Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost
Martin Williams	Director of Finance
Annie Willingham	Incoming Education Officer, Students' Union
Dr Cassie Wilson	Vice-President (Student Experience)
Keith Zimmerman	Chief Operating Officer

Secretariat:

Emily Commander	Secretary
Charlotte Murphy	Member of Secretariat

7153 WELCOME AND QUORUM

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting, particularly the incoming President and Education Officer of the Students' Union, Francesco Masala and Annie Willingham.

7154 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

7155 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING

The minutes of the Council meeting of 23 April 2020 (Paper C19/20 – 60) were **approved** as a correct record and will be signed by the Chair.

7156 ACTIONS AND MATTERS ARISING

- 1) 7150 (Schedule additional Finance Committee meetings as necessary): An additional meeting had been scheduled for 22 May, and further meetings will be scheduled if necessary. ***The action was marked as complete.***
- 2) 7150 (Provide Council members with a crib sheet on the University's financial position): A copy of the crib sheet had been circulated with the papers, and an appendix would follow. (C19/20 – 79). ***The action was marked as ongoing.***
- 3) 7150 (Align planning scenarios for re-opening campus with financial scenarios): The Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost confirmed that all of the scenarios for re-opening campus sat beneath each of the financial scenarios. ***The action was marked as complete.***
- 4) 7134 (Update Council on the status of appeals by the reporting party against decisions taken by the disciplinary committee): The Vice-President (Student Experience) provided an update as follows: "A reporting party cannot appeal a decision of the disciplinary committee nor the appeal committee. They are entitled to make a complaint about the handling of the process for example but not the decision itself. This is in line with OIA guidance. We are looking at this aspect of the policies in our own reflections on student discipline but at the moment we are following the guidance". ***The action was marked as complete.***
- 5) 7137 (Investigate training for the chairs of appeals committees): No training specifically directed at chairs was available but it had been decided that chairs would be invited to sit in on a hearing of the Disciplinary Committee. ***The action was marked as complete.***

DoF

7157 FORMAL REPORT FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

The Vice-Chancellor provided an update on the support being given to students and noted that online assessments had begun four days' earlier, with a high participation rate.

The relaxation of the lockdown meant that the University was taking steps to ensure that those who wished to return to campus could do so within appropriate health and safety parameters. Priority over the limited space available would be given to those who needed it most.

Some health and mechanical engineering laboratories had been open throughout the lockdown, with appropriate social-distancing measures in place. A considerable number of laboratory-based doctoral and postgraduate students had expressed a strong desire to return, and work was underway to develop policies to ensure that it was safe for them to do so.

It was likely that the Sports Training Village would open before the end of the month in order for Olympic athletes to train.

It remained difficult to provide assurance to Council about the measures that would be required in the next academic year. However, estimates of the number of undergraduate admissions remained positive; the conversion rate was higher than it had been in the previous year; and there were indications of fewer deferrals and increased pulling-forwards of degree start dates. The University had been piloting new resources and activities to support recruitment: online open days and outreach had been successful to date. Social media was also being used in a much more targeted way.

The Vice-Chancellor noted that large capital projects presented a set of risks and opportunities for the institution.

The Deputy-Vice-Chancellor & Provost was responsible for engagement at a local level, where bus provision had become more of a concern because of social-distancing requirements. The Vice-Chancellor had been asked to participate in the BANES Economy Recovery Board and the WECA Economic Regional Taskforce. Current focus was on the immediate term, but there were positive signs that resources would soon be deployed on more medium-term projects.

Work was underway to plan for the 2020/21 academic year, including thinking about how best to structure the year; and how to provide teaching in an online-only or blended way. The University would need to respond to events as they emerged, and this would require flexibility over the summer vacation.

The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that financial planning assumptions remained broadly the same as when they had been presented to the last meeting of the Finance Committee. The cut in OfS funding for high-cost subjects had been expected but was less severe than anticipated. No new government funding had been forthcoming. The University had therefore redesigned the planning round currently underway to accommodate ongoing uncertainty, and would adopt a phased approach, with budget reviews in September, November and January, when there would be greater clarity on student numbers.

The Director of Finance indicated that the University was looking to make £31 million in savings, about half of which would need to be recurrent savings. The process for embedding savings into the budget, and monitoring would be provided to the next meeting of the Finance Committee.

He provided an outline of the budget timetable, culminating in approval by Council on 23 July 2020.

Council members asked questions and were answered as follows:

- Provision had been made within the plans for temporary increases in costs in relation to coronavirus, for example for the purchase of additional hand sanitizer.
- Elite swimmers were expected to return on 26 May, assuming that legislation permitted this to happen and appropriate measures had been put into place.
- The areas considered for recurrent savings aligned exactly with the themes that had emerged from the *Our University, Our Future* consultation and the strategic direction previously outlined by the Vice-Chancellor.
- The University had a project and programme management capacity and capability that was under-developed in relation to other universities and organisations. In order to navigate a complex and evolving environment, this discipline would be reinforced within the University, which needed to work across its traditional entrenched silos. However, the University was sensitive to the need to ensure any monies spent on external support provided substantial verifiable benefits.
- Further consideration would be given to the equality implications of the lockdown for male and female academics, as early research suggested that it affected them differently, particularly in relation to those with childcare responsibilities. Any inequality could have whole-career implications for those concerned.

PVC(R),
DoHR

Council noted the formal report of the Vice-Chancellor (Paper C19/20 – 61).

7158 VOLUNTARY EXIT SCHEME

The Director of Human Resources introduced the proposed Voluntary Exit Schemes.

Council members asked questions and were answered as follows:

- The schemes stipulated that those taking up the offer should not return to the University within a year, and one of the key criteria for acceptance of proposals was that the financial benefit would have to be felt over a five-year period.
- A cross-departmental panel approach to signing off on decisions had been adopted to mitigate adverse global consequences of local decisions.
- Council had been asked to approve the principle of the schemes because they represented a significant change in approach by the University. The details would be subject to negotiation and handled on an operational basis within the Vice-Chancellor's delegated authorities.

Council considered C19/20 – 62 containing the Scheme’s report and approved the principle of launching Voluntary Exit Schemes and the delegation of their implementation to the Vice-Chancellor.

7159 CLIMATE ACTION FRAMEWORK

Council considered an update on the Climate Action Framework (paper C19/20 – 63).

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) noted that the paper was the culmination of a considerable piece of work with high levels of engagement, both with University Executive Board, but also across the community.

He explained that the University had decided to set a target date of 2030 for scope 1 and 2 emissions in order to accommodate current uncertainty within the sector, to allow time for collaboration with partners who were aiming for the same date, and to ensure better results.

The Director of Communications noted that the Students’ Union had also indicated its intention to declare a climate emergency: it was proposed that both declarations were made on the same day by means of separate statements.

Council members indicated their strong support for the project.

Council members asked questions and were answered as follows:

- Thought would be given to the opportunities presented by campus re-opening, to ensure it was done in a sustainable way.
- Thought would be given to the role that could be played by alumni in providing education on the climate emergency.
- It was noted that the University was doing more than some organisations on scope 3 emissions and that this could be a focus of communications on the subject.
- It was noted that the experience of the lockdown may offer some lessons on how to do things differently in future.
- The benefits of the consultative and inclusive approach to problem-solving as an institution had been noted.
- It had been difficult to align investment opportunities with delivery against the framework because of their competing timescales and the rapid pace of technological and legislative change in the area, but it was anticipated that there would be more incentives for such investments in the coming years.

The Chair thanked the Chair of Academic Assembly for bringing the issue to Council earlier in the academic year; and recorded thanks to the members of the Climate Action Framework Working Group for all their hard work.

Council:

- Approved the declaration of a Climate Emergency;
- Approved the adoption of the Principles as advised by the Climate Action Framework Working Group; and,

- Approved the commitment to have net zero carbon emissions in Scope 1 and 2 activities and cutting its Scope 3 emissions by 50% by 2030.

7160 ANNUAL ENERGY AND ENVIRONMENT REPORT

Council considered paper C19/20 – 64 detailing the University’s performance in the four measures that Council approved as KPIs for sustainability in November 2015. It noted the annual Energy and Environment Report.

7161 ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

Council considered the annual Health and Safety Report and agreed to ask a question about fire doors being propped open by means of correspondence (C19/20 – 65).

HoSG

7162 AMENDMENTS TO GOVERNING DOCUMENTS

Council approved the following amendments to governing documents (C19-20 – 66):

- draft amendments to University Statutes for submission to the Privy Council for an informal opinion.
- the draft amendment to the University Charter for submission to the Privy Council for an informal opinion and, if appropriate, recommendation to Court.
- draft amendments to University Ordinances for further consideration by Senate and Council.

The Chair noted that, on a related issue, Senate had given its consent for Council to have sight of the report on the Senate Effectiveness Review and would consider any observations offered by Council at its meeting in June.

7163 WAIVER ORDINANCE 14.1

Council approved a recommendation from Senate to waive ordinance 14.12 for the appointment of two orators (C19/20 – 67).

7164 ETHICS COMMITTEE

Council approved an outline proposal for restructuring the way that ethical matters were considered within the University (C19/20 – 68). Membership of the new Committee would be determined by Nominations Committee at its meeting in July 2020 unless there was urgent business before then in which case the matter would be dealt with by correspondence.

HoSG

7165 APPOINTMENT OF PRO-CHANCELLORS

Council approved a recommendation from the Nominations Committee in relation to the appointment of Pro-Chancellors and agreed to recommend the same to Court (C19/20 – 69).

HoSG

7166 STUDENTS' UNION TOP 10

Council considered an update on the Students' Union Top Ten (C19/20 – 70).

The President of the Students' Union made the following points:

- The future of the 3G pitch remained uncertain but progress had been made.
- Buses presented a huge challenge for the 2020/21 academic year.
- The University would need to consider how best to handle the issue of online harassment and discrimination, particularly now that students were living in the online world.
- Pastoral care and personal tutoring had become increasingly important in light of coronavirus.
- The increased focus on the issue of supervision was encouraging.
- It was positive that statistics on discipline would now be considered at Council level.
- Student loneliness was more of an issue after coronavirus. There were plans for a half-day event with the University to consider how best to address this.
- A review of student engagement was underway.
- The Climate Action Framework was a very positive step forward.

Council members asked questions and were answered as follows:

- It had been more difficult to make progress on issues that cut across the individual responsibilities of members of the University Executive Board.
- Thought would be given to establishing a structure for regular reviews with senior management of progress against the issues in the Top Ten.
- In light of coronavirus, it would be worth considering focusing on a single issue, such as loneliness in 2020/21.
- Improvements in personal tutoring would require cultural change, which took time. However, at a recent Senior Tutor Forum, in the context of coronavirus it had been observed that rapid improvement was possible.
- Proposals would go to the University Executive Board in relation to the establishment of a new Student Conduct Unit.

VP(SE)

The Chair noted that Council would consider the best mechanism for assuring itself about the quality of the student experience.

7167 TEACHING AND ASSESSMENT

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) stated that he sought to give Council assurance in four areas:

- The transparency of the decision-making process;
- The maintenance of high academic standards and rigour;
- Recognition of changes in student interests to enable them to fulfil their potential; and
- Compliance with OfS and QAA guidance and regulations.

The switch to online delivery of teaching and assessment was a huge success from a team with little prior experience of this work. Preparations were underway for

the following Semester, with the intention of building upon successes and learning lessons.

Early indications were that online assessments were going well. Over 3,000 students had downloaded the first batch of assessments and attendance was high.

Council members congratulated academic staff for their excellent work in this area.

Council members asked questions and were answered as follows:

- Conversations were ongoing with students about plagiarism and assessments had been adapted as far as possible to minimise risk in this area.
- Access varied considerably and was particularly problematic for some international and disabled students. It would be important for the University to understand these problems and make improvements for the future.
- Staff were keen to have guidance as soon as possible on what would be needed in the new academic year.
- The University was working with the Students' Union to obtain feedback from students and every unit had its own online evaluation.

Council noted an update from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching) on teaching and assessment (C19/20 – 71).

7168 INSTITUTE FOR MATHEMATICAL INNOVATION

Council considered the five-year review of the Institute for Mathematical Innovation.

Council members asked questions and were answered as follows:

- Both the internal and external contexts had evolved over the lifetime of the Institute, and the appointment of a new Director was seen as a moment for redirection and renovations.
- A shorter timescale for regular reviews of the Institute would be considered in future.
- The University intended to rationalise the structure of its institutes and the arrangements put in place for their review, and to ensure that they adhered around a common model. In future they would be the responsibility of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost.

Council endorsed the recommendations contained within the Five-Year Review Report (Appendix 1) (C19/20 – 72).

7169 FINANCE COMMITTEE

Council noted a report from Finance Committee following its meeting on 30 April 2020 (C19/20 – 73).

7170 AUDIT AND RISK ASSURANCE COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Audit and Risk Assurance Committee said that the Committee was satisfied that the University had taken appropriate action in suspending review of the strategic risk register and focusing on the fast-moving, operational coronavirus risk register.

It was noted, in response to questions, that the funding position of doctoral students was currently variable and unclear. The University was working to obtain greater clarity.

Council noted a report from Audit and Risk Assurance Committee following its meeting on 1 April 2020 (C19/20 – 74).

7171 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

The Chair noted that each member of Council would be contacted in relation to their annual appraisal meeting, and that feedback on her own performance should be provided to the Deputy Chair of Council.

Council noted a report from the Nominations Committee following its meeting on 30 April 2020 (C19/20 – 75).

7172 REMUNERATION COMMITTEE

The Chair of the Remuneration Committee noted that the Committee now met four times instead of once per year, and that it held an annual training session.

At the last meeting the Committee had raised concerns about equality and diversity in senior appointments. This was outside its remit, but he hoped that Council would find a way to address these issues through the most appropriate of its committees.

HoSG

The review of the Framework for Senior Pay would be conducted in July and provided to Council for its last meeting of the academic year.

Council noted a report from the Remuneration Committee following its meeting on 25 March 2020 (C19/20 – 76).

7173 COUNCIL APPEALS COMMITTEE

The Deputy Chair of Council noted that a review of the disciplinary process was currently underway.

Council noted a report from the Remuneration Committee following its meeting on 25 March 2020 (C19/20 – 77).

7174 SENATE MINUTES

Council noted the minutes from the meetings of Senate held on 22 April 2020 (C19/20 – 78).

7175 PROGRAMME OF MEETINGS 2019/20

Council noted the programme of meetings of Council for the current academic year:

Wednesday 10 June 2020 at 2pm (additional dial-in meeting)

Thursday 23 July 2020 at 9.30am

It was noted that the July meeting would be preceded by a development session the evening beforehand.

7176 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Chair of Council thanked the senior team for their hard work.

The meeting concluded at 12.10 pm

N.B. Minutes 7157, 7158 and 7165 have been redacted for reasons of confidentiality and commercial sensitivity.