

COUNCIL

11 February 2021 at 14:00

Microsoft Teams

MINUTES

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Members:	Chair – External member	Mr Michael Queen
	Joint Vice-Chair – External member	Mr Vib Baxi
	Joint Vice-Chair - External member	Ms Rachel Hubbard
	Treasurer - External member	Mr Robert Napier
	President & Vice-Chancellor	Prof Max Lu
	Provost & Executive Vice-President	Vacant
	Vice-Provost, Education	Prof Osama Khan
	Vice-Provost, Research & Innovation	Prof David Sampson
	Chief Operating Officer	Mr Andy Chalklin
	Vice President, External Engagement	Mr Patrick Degg
	President, Students' Union	Ms Lizzie Rodulson
	Member elected by Senate	Prof Esat Alpay
	Member elected by Senate	Prof Amelia Hadfield
	External member	Mr Elliot Antrobus-Holder
	External member	Ms Judith Eden
	External member	Mr Charlie Geffen
	External member	Dr Mike Goodfellow
	External member	Ms Pam Jestico
	External member	Mr Nigel Jones
	External member	Mr Peter Maskell
	External member	Ms Pam Powell
	External member	Ms Jan Sawkins

In attendance: Ms Ros Allen, Head of Governance Services
Ms Martine Carter, Vice-President - Strategy, Planning & Performance
Mr Phil Grainge, Chief Financial Officer
Ms Sarah Litchfield, University Secretary & Legal Counsel

By invitation: Ms Helen Baird, SUMS consultant (Item 21/012)
Mr Martin Conway, SUMS (Item 21/012)
Mr Matt Purcell, Director of Health and Safety (Item 21/010)
Ms Jeanette Strachan, SUMS (Item 21/012)

A INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

21/001 Apologies

.1 Esat Alpay, David Sampson and Jan Sawkins sent apologies

21/002 Declarations of Interest

.1 None

21/003 Minutes

.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 26 November 2020 were **adopted** and **agreed** for publication.

21/003 Matters Arising

.1 The updated actions log was **noted**.

21/004 Chair's Items

.1 Council **ratified** the following resolutions passed electronically:

- Approval of the application for a SURE loan, on 17 December
- Approval of the appointment of Nick Standen as a co-opted member of Finance Committee, on 8 February.

21/005 Vice-Chancellor's Report

.1 The VC presented the report.

.2 It was noted that there were around 2,500 students currently on campus, with c. 80 students isolating. Covid cases were decreasing, but the University was remaining vigilant. Subject to government regulations, the University intended to bring all students back to campus by 8 March. Further government funding had been provided, enabling the student Hardship Fund to be increased.

.3 The University intended to continue to offer some form of hybrid education from September 2021, to retain the elements that enhanced delivery and were appreciated by students. Additionally, there may still need to be some form of social distancing in September, so elements of hybrid education may be required.

.4 Research bids and awards were significantly down on last year, mainly due to staff needing to focus on hybrid education. It was anticipated that the gap would be narrowed over the summer.

.5 It was noted that the USSU President had jointly authored a report on Freedom of Speech in UK universities that was very interesting reading.

Action: RA to circulate the report.

B ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR APPROVAL

21/006 Student Experience

1. Osama Khan gave a presentation on progress on the 85 Plan.

.2 Council were pleased to note the improving and positive scores in MEQs and the Pulse Survey, particularly when compared to the national picture. However, it was recognised that there were still areas of concern and some way to go. In particular, according to MEQ scores, student satisfaction declined between Level 4 (first year) and Level 6 (final year), perhaps

partly as a reflection of increasing difficulty of content.

- .3 The following additional points were noted:
 - .3.1 The Pulse Survey was run by the Students' Union, with every student being asked to complete the survey once during the academic year. Whilst other universities used the Pulse Survey, comparative data would not be available until the end of the academic year. However, the National ONS Student Covid Survey had similar questions and timing so was a reasonable comparator.
 - .3.2 The Pulse Survey to date showed a high level of satisfaction with safety on campus and academic courses, but a lower satisfaction with value for money of the course, potentially due to the reduced social offering due to the pandemic.
 - .3.3 It was suggested that FEPS MEQ scores may be lower than the other Faculties partly due to the difficulty of the subjects or particular issues with hybrid learning on FEPS programmes.
- .4 Patrick Degg presented on progress on the 85 Communications Plan.
- .5 Vib Baxi presented the report on the Student Experience Committee. Council noted the very informative and useful report.

21/007 Student numbers

- .1 Martine Carter presented the paper.
- .2 With respect to PG entry in February 2021, it was noted that given the number of online registrations, it was now expected that the University would be only c. 50 short of plan.
- .3 The gap in UG applications for September 2021 had further decreased to -3%, with a similar quality profile to last year. The largest ever cohort of UGs were graduating this year, so the student population would see a significant decrease in September.
- .4 PGT applications for 2021 remained c. 26% below last year, almost entirely due to reduced applications from China. However, given the low conversion rate for applications from China, there was not undue concern at this stage.
- .5 It was noted that, alongside the development of a new International Strategy, a new International Scholarship scheme was being developed that would incorporate the European Union following the change of fee status of EU citizens.

21/008 Annual Financial Return

- .1 Phil Grainge presented the annual return.
- .2 Council **approved** the return to the OfS.

21/009 Strategy refresh update

- .1 Martine Carter presented the update.
- .2 The following additional points were noted with respect to the academic reviews:
 - .2.1 Dealing with under-resourcing in some departments was the top priority.
 - .2.2 Some departments were not achieving their full potential and would receive further support to ensure they made an appropriate contribution.

- .3 It was noted that while the new Resource Allocation Model would auto-generate much more of the budget, this would be subject to an overall review by the Finance Team.
- .4 There was support for the proposals to use part of the SURE loan to focus on research excellence and government priorities, particularly to support research institutes in interdisciplinary areas.
- .5 It was recognised that, in order to free up resource to invest in and grow areas of excellence, there was a need to disinvest in unviable areas, and focus on developing a more effective and efficient professional support service.
- .6 MC was asked to give Council early sight of the draft Strategy paper if possible.

21/010 Annual Health and Safety Report

- .1 Matt Purcell attended to present the paper.
- .2 Council noted that Health and Safety would be developing work on assurance, mapping and reporting over the next year.
- .3 It was noted that the report from the Fire Risk assessment audit would come to Audit and Assurance Committee in March.
- .4 It was noted that there would be a need to reinforce key messages on health and safety when most staff returned to campus as there was likely to be an increased risk of accidents after a prolonged period of working from home.
- .5 It was noted that the University had a good relationship with the police who provided helpful information on potential criminal activities in the vicinity of the campus.

21/011 Council Effectiveness Review

- .1 Helen Baird, Martin Conway and Jeanette Strachan attended to give a presentation.
- .2 The report was discussed by the Council and it was noted that the overall conclusion was that the University was well governed.
- .3 It was recognised that there were many good suggestions in the report and the University had already started on some of the changes and so some of the comments were based on historical practice. Council would use the report as a basis to reflect on what it did and either adopt a recommendation or explain why it was not appropriate for the University (in line with the CUC Code's Comply or Explain approach).
- .4 It was agreed that the next steps would be for members to give feedback to Ros Allen on the report, in particular its recommendations. Feedback would be provided to SUMS to enable them to finalise the report by the end of February. An action plan would then be drawn up.

21/012 Governance Review Phase 2

- .1 Sarah Litchfield presented the paper.

- .2 It was noted that Phase 3 may be delayed to July, in light of the Effectiveness Review report.
- .3 It was noted that there was an absolute cap of 9 years on lay membership of Council – whilst those taking up office (such as the Chair) would have the clock reset on their term, they still were subject to this cap. Council Chair’s current term came to an end in July 2021, at which point he would have served 7 years and 4 months on Council. Nominations Committee will discuss and consult as required and make a recommendation to Council on whether to extend the current Chair’s term of office and if so for how long.
- .4 It was suggested that, given its importance, Council should receive a report on sustainability.
- .5 Council **approved** the Terms of Reference of Council and the committees which reported to it, noting that the Audit and Assurance Terms of Reference would come to Council in May.
- .6 Council **approved** the updated Cycle of Business for Council and its reporting committees, subject to consideration of adding Sustainability to the Council business.

21/013 Emeritus professorships

- .1 Max Lu presented the paper.
- .2 It was noted that all eligible retirees were considered for Emeritus Professorships. There were fewer women professors, so there was a smaller pipeline of female candidates although this was improving. It was agreed that it would be useful to circulate the criteria and process for appointing Emeritus Professors.
Action: RA
- .3 Council **approved** the five nominations for Emeritus professorships.

C ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

21/014 TRAC Annual Return

Council **noted** the report.

21/015 Health and Safety Report

Council **noted** the report.

21/016 CMA Task Group annual Report

Council **noted** the report.

21/017 Student Welfare report

Council **noted** the report and asked that it come to the next Council meeting for discussion.

Action: RA

21/018 Subcommittee reports

Council **noted** the reports.

D CLOSING ITEMS

21/019 Any Other Business

- .1 Council noted the three options for Graduations 2021, as described in the EB report to

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Council. All options were for face to face graduation ceremonies; the student body were pleased that the University had not opted for online graduation ceremonies. The options have not yet been communicated to students.

- .2 It was noted that Council approval was required for the appointment of an External Auditor. It was agreed that this would be sought through Convene resolution.

Action: PG

21/020 Date of next meeting

11 May 2021

**Mr Michael Queen
Chair**