

**COUNCIL**

**11 May 2021 at 14:00**

**Microsoft Teams**

**MINUTES**

*Sections marked Commercial in Confidence are claimed as exempt from publication under Section 43 of the Freedom of Information Act on the grounds of commercial sensitivity.*

<b>Members:</b>	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

**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:** Mr Adam Child, Academic Registrar (Items 21/041 a) and b)  
Mr Will Davies, Chief People Officer (Item 21/048)  
Ms Lucy Evans (Item 21/041 d)

**A INTRODUCTORY ITEMS**

**21/035 Apologies**

.1 None

**21/036 Declarations of Interest**

.1 None

### 21/037 Minutes

- .1 The minutes of the meetings held on 11 February, 1 and 30 March 2021 were **adopted**. It was **agreed** that the minutes of the meetings held on 11 February, 1 March and 30 March would be published subject to a final review by PG and MC.

**Action: PG to review minutes of 1 March.**

**MC to review minutes of 30 March.**

### 21/038 Matters Arising

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

### 21/039 Chair's Items

- .1 Council **ratified** the following resolutions passed electronically:
- Appointment of the external auditor for 20/21 – approved on 17 February 2021
  - Homes England collaboration and loan arrangements for Blackwell Park – approved on 2 March 2021
  - Final SURE Grant and loan – approved on 11 March 2021
  - Reappointment of Michael Queen as Chair of Council from 1 August 2021 to 31 March 2023 – approved on 18 March 2021
  - Access and participation monitoring return 2019-20 – approved on 9 April 2021
- .2 It was noted that a Homes England representative was now attending BPL Board meetings.
- .3 The Chair took the opportunity to thank members of Council for their support in his reappointment.

### 21/040 Vice-Chancellor's Report and Performance Monitoring

- .1 The VC presented the report.
- .2 It was noted that all students were permitted under government regulations to return to campus from 17 May. Although there were only two weeks of teaching remaining before exams, it was expected that many students would wish to return.
- .3 The OfS has published a new online graduate information resource.
- .4 With respect to the inquest into the death of a student in November 2019, while the coroner's report had not yet been received, the University would consider carefully any recommendations and lessons to be learnt.
- .5 Additional funding for educational institutions to support students' mental health had been announced.
- .6 Council registered thanks to all who had been involved in the REF submission.
- .7 Council noted the Vet School were putting in place arrangements for an additional four weeks of placements for final year Veterinary Medicine students to ensure the programme met the requirements of the RCVS.

**B ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR APPROVAL**

**21/041 Education and Student Experience Business**

**a) Role and Business of Senate**

- .1 Adam Child attended to give a presentation with Osama Khan and David Sampson.
- .2 This item was being brought to Council to provide additional clarity on the role of the Senate in academic Governance. In addition to the normal Senate Report an overall report on Education would come to future Council meetings.  
**Action: RA to add to future agendas.**

**b) Senate Report**

- .1 Council noted the report.

**c) 85 Plan update**

- .1 Osama Khan gave a presentation.
- .2 Results from the Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQs) and the Pulse Survey were noted. It was noted that the Library had performed particularly well in adapting to the pandemic requirements.
- .3 It was noted that the 78% NSS completion rate was the highest for three years and it was hoped would translate into an improved score/ranking. However, it was recognised that it was very difficult to predict performance in the current climate and that the ranking would be decided by how the rest of the sector performed. The results would come out in July.

**d) Student Welfare Report**

- .1 Lucy Evans attended to give a presentation.
- .2 Council registered its thanks and commendation to LE and her team for their support for students. In particular, Council recognised the care, commitment and resilience demonstrated by a small team of staff who were managing students suffering particular challenges.
- .3 It was noted that the University did not contact a student's family in the event of concern about their wellbeing as students are adults and contacting their families in times of stress could cause as many problems as it solves. An 'opt in' system did not deal with issues of changing situations. The University would however continue to keep its approach under review.
- .4 It was noted that residential wardens currently carried out a support and a disciplinary role for students and recognised that this dual role could sometimes cause challenges. The role of wardens was debated and further work is needed on this and will be considered as part of our ongoing support for students.
- .5 LE reported that in general her area had sufficient resources to support student welfare but needed the support and understanding of all areas of the University of the responsibilities

and boundaries of the services we offer.

- .6 It was noted that there had been a 45% increase in academic appeals and as a result more resource may be needed in the SU or OSCAR to deal with this increased workload.
- .7 There was discussion of the issues being reported to Report + Support and the need to encourage its use so that we can address the issues and be proactive in supporting students and staff.
- .8 With respect to support for staff welfare, it was noted that there had been very good take-up of the coaching sessions offered to staff.

#### **21/042 Research Report**

- .1 David Sampson presented the paper.
- .2 It was noted that the REF had now been submitted and was believed to be a marked improvement over REF 2014. In response to a question on how to enhance the University's performance, it was noted that the University had fewer researchers for its size than its peers. In due course, a review of REF 2021 will be carried out, including any lessons learned, and will come to Council. DS would send Council members a copy of the REF Institutional Environment Statement for information.  
**Action: DS**
- .3 It was noted that the University is part of the SETSquared Partnership, an enterprise partnership and collaboration between five research-led UK universities and currently ranked as the global number one university-based business incubator. SETSquared was setting up a scale-up investment fund of c. £100m.
- .4 Council noted the aspiration to make innovation a mainstream academic activity and the developments in this area. Student enterprise was seen as a very important part of this activity and was captured within the new Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) dashboard and in the annual HE-BCI survey return.
- .5 It was noted that PGR enrolments were down, but it was thought to be a whole sector issue.
- .6 It was agreed that it would be useful to ask the Executive Dean of FHMS to present to Council on the Faculty's research and opportunities to develop it further.  
**Action: RA to invite FHMS Executive Dean to present to Council on research.**

#### **21/043 University Strategy**

- .1 Martine Carter presented the paper, that incorporated input from Council's last two awayday sessions. The document would be finessed before being professionally proof read and going through a creative design process. There was also a need to redefine the values with the wider community.
- .2 It was recognised that the University was in a strong position to invest in the Strategy. There was a close connection between the Strategy and the three-year planning process that would ensure that sufficient financial resource was focused on the delivery of the Strategy.
- .3 The following suggestions for improvements were noted:

- Reference the Students' Union role in the delivery of the student experience;
- Mention reputation as a factor in the selection of international partners;
- Review whether enough emphasis was given to making the University a great place to start and grow a career, particularly with respect to non-academic staff.

**Action: MC**

.4 It was noted that the Strategy was a public document and therefore not an appropriate place for 'blue sky thinking' and confidential matters. However, it was recognised that this creative discussion of potential opportunities did need to take place and would engage members of Council.

**Action: ML and MQ to discuss how to take forward.**

.5 Council **approved** the University Strategy, subject to the above comments and thanked MC for her work on the Strategy.

**21/044 Governance**

.1 Michael Queen presented the papers, thanking RA and SL for their work in this area.

**a) Council Effectiveness Review recommendations and action plan**

.1 It was noted that the recommendations that were right for Surrey were being implemented. It was suggested that the wording of the Schedule of Recommendations be reviewed to emphasise the actions that were being taken and the reasons that some recommendations were not being taken forward.

**Action: RA**

.2 Council **approved** the recommendations response and action plan.

**b) Senior Independent Member job description and recruitment process**

.1 Council **approved** the job description and recruitment process.

**c) Appraisal of members process and form**

.1 It was noted that, contrary to what was written in the paper, the intention was for all Council members to be appraised, not just the lay members. The appraisals would also include consideration of committee chairing responsibilities.

**Action: RA to amend.**

.2 With respect to the appraisals summary report, it was noted that would be focused on process and a collation of the training and development needs and interest in joining a sub-committee, rather than including individual comments.

.3 It was noted that the Chief People Officer had been asked to advise on best practice for storage and retention of forms.

.4 Subject to the above amendments, Council **approved** the process and form, noting that the appraisals would take place in the second half of June.

**d) Nominations and Governance Committee Terms of Reference**

.1 Council **approved** the terms of reference.

**21/045 Subcommittee reports**

**a) Student Experience Committee**

.1 Council noted the report from the Committee chair.

**b) Finance Committee**

.1 Council noted the report from the Committee chair.

**c) Executive Board**

.1 Council noted the report from the Committee chair.

**d) Audit and Assurance Committee**

.1 Council noted the report from the Committee chair.

**e) Remuneration Committee**

.1 Council noted the report from the Committee chair.

**f) Nominations Committee**

.1 Council noted the report from the Committee chair.

**21/046 Risk Appetite, Policy and Strategy**

.1 Martine Carter presented the paper.

.2 Council **approved** the Risk Appetite, Policy and Strategy.

**21/047 Honorary Degree recommendations**

.1 Max Lu presented the paper.

.2 Council **approved** the two recommendations

**21/048 UUK Consultation with employers on USS pensions**

.1 Will Davies attended to give a presentation with Phil Grainge.

.2 It was noted that collegiate conversations were taking place with the Trade Unions (TUs).

.3 It was noted that a 1% increase in employer contribution equated to an additional cost of c £1.1m for Surrey.

.4 Around 10% of staff decide not to join the pension scheme, sometimes because they are on a short-term contract or do not intend to stay in the UK in the long term.

- .5 It was noted that, as requested by UUK, the University had sought employee views, although there was a formal USS consultation with employees scheduled later in the year. The questions asked of staff attending one of the pensions workshops had been provided by UUK.
- .6 Given that debt-monitoring metrics would potentially be exceeded, Council strongly suggested that there should be review of the response to the questions regarding the Covenant Support Measures as the current response was felt to not reflect the position Council and Finance Committee had discussed. Council also wanted to ensure comments about the need for a review of USS governance were clear.  
**Action: WD/PG to amend the wording and forward to RN and MQ for comment.**
- .7 Although the universities in the USS scheme effectively owned the fund, they had no power to restructure the USS. Furthermore, an exclusivity agreement with USS meant that the University could not work with other pensions schemes nor make employer contributions to staff's private pension schemes. However, there was consideration of whether there were any alternative options to explore.
- .8 It was noted that the choice of a March 2020 valuation date had been questioned, and that UUK's advisors (Aon) were reviewing alternative valuations.
- .9 Council **approved** the consultation response subject to the aforementioned comments.

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**C ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

**21/049 Health and Safety Report**

Council **noted** the report.

**21/050 Surrey Sports Park Ltd biannual report**

Council **noted** the report.

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**D CLOSING ITEMS**

**21/051 Any Other Business**

- .1 Council asked for all due efforts to be made to reduce the number of pages in the papers for future meetings.

**Action: RA**

- .2 It was noted that the University was increasingly confident that graduations would be run face to face in the summer, with the due precautions in place. Thanks to the Graduation and Events teams were noted.

- .3 It was suggested that as meetings would be in person in the future it would be useful to reintroduce a session where top academics present to Council on their key research objectives.

**Action: RA**

**21/052 Date of next meeting**

28 July 2021

Confidential

**Mr Michael Queen**  
**Chair**