

COUNCIL
26 July 2022 at 2pm
Oak 1 and 2

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.

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	Prof Tim Dunne
	Chief Operating Officer	Mr Andy Chalklin
	President, Students' Union	Ms Ajay Ajimobi
	Member elected by Senate	Prof Esat Alpay
	Member elected by Senate	Prof Karen Bullock
	Member elected by Senate	Dr Daniel Horton
	External member	Mr Elliot Antrobus-Holder
	External member	Prof Julia Buckingham
	External member	Ms Judith Eden
	External member	Mr Charlie Geffen
	External member	Ms Pam Jestico
	External member	Mr Nigel Jones
	External member	Ms Pam Powell

In attendance: Ms Ros Allen, Head of Governance Services
Ms Martine Carter, Vice-President Strategy, Planning & Performance
Ms Diana Dakik, USSU President elect for 2022-23
Mr Phil Grainge, Chief Financial Officer
Ms Sarah Litchfield, University Secretary & Legal Counsel

By invitation: Prof Osama Khan, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Academic (22/89-92)
Ms Lise Richards, Cervus+ (22/099)

A INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

22/082 Preliminaries

- .1 Elliot Antrobus-Holder, Judith Eden and Pam Powell sent apologies.
- .2 Diana Dakik was warmly welcomed to her first Council meeting.

22/083 Declarations of Interest

- .1 None

22/084 Minutes

- .1 The minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2022 were **adopted** and agreed for publication on the website. The minutes of the Awayday held on 26 May were **adopted**, but it was agreed they would not be published due to their confidential nature.

22/085 Matters Arising

- .1 The updated actions log was **noted**. All actions are complete.

22/086 Chair's Items

- .1 There were no Chair's items.

22/087 Vice-Chancellor's Report and Performance Monitoring

- .1 The VC presented the report.
- .2 The VC thanked all those who had attended the graduation ceremonies and was asked to pass on Council's thanks to the team who organised and supported graduation.
- .3 Council formally noted the excellent NSS results and recorded thanks to the Students' Union for their contribution.
- .4 It was noted that the University was ranked 192 in the world on the Rankometer ranking, a composite of the five of the world's most influential university rankings. League table rankings are expected to improve further in 2023, given the very strong performance in the REF and NSS.
- .5 The update on the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) was noted.
- .6 There was discussion of 'Plan B' if the UK cannot continue to be involved in Horizon Europe research funding, noting that government funding is in place for at least the first year of the alternative funding route. The University is ensuring that it has proposals ready to be submitted when the call for bids comes out. It was recognised that projects linked to key government priorities are more likely to get funding.
- .7 It was recognised that Confirmation and Clearing is likely to be challenging this year, with uncertainty around the behaviour of competitors. In particular, the University may see more of the students who have Surrey as an insurance choice, become students here. With expected managed grade deflation, the average tariff score is likely to be lower than the last two years, but the actual quality of students should be comparable.

B ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR APPROVAL

22/088 USSU Annual Report

- .1 Ajay Ajimobi presented the report.
- .2 Council recognised the key achievements for the past year, particularly that the USSU had been rated the seventh best in the UK. Congratulations were recorded to the President and the rest of the sabbatical team.

22/089 Education and student experience report

.1 Osama Khan attended to present the paper. Council noted the report.

22/090 NSS results

.1 Osama Khan attended to give a presentation.

.2 The following points were noted on the NSS results:

- The University is ranked 9th, after specialist and small providers are excluded. It was recognised that it was very difficult to stay in the top ten, given how close the scores were between institutions.
- The Overall Satisfaction question may be removed from the NSS, in which case the University would focus on the key components.
- The University has improved its scores in almost every component. It was suggested that it would be useful to see the Highlights slide data with the non-specialist and small providers excluded.
- Surrey's results benchmarked against the competitor group were reviewed, noting that Surrey has three of the highest scoring areas, including Assessment and Feedback. The improvement to the Assessment and Feedback score is particularly pleasing, given the focus on this area.
- The departmental analysis was noted. A plan is in place to deal with any issues.
- The rankings by subject were noted, although it is recognised that being in the top ten nationally demonstrates differing levels of success, depending on how many other institutions offer the subject area. This was taken into account when planning which subject areas require more support.

.3 The very positive results of the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) were noted. Whilst the response rate is 31.7%, this is a significant increase over the previous two years and puts Surrey in the top 10 nationwide for response rates. However, the University would continue to work hard to encourage all PGT students to participate.

.4 With respect to the Teaching Excellence Framework, the importance of the narrative in the submissions was recognised. Experienced staff are in place to craft this narrative.

.5 The new elements of the 85 Plan were noted. Council registered its thanks to Osama and his team and the academic community for an excellent set of results.

22/091 Degree outcomes statement

.1 Osama Khan presented the paper.

.2 Council noted the reduction in the proportion of 1st class degrees and overall Good Honours which occurred in 2018/19. The University's regulatory response to the Coronavirus pandemic contributed to a small upward movement in the proportion of Good Honours in 2019/20 and 2020/21.

- .3 There was discussion of the ethnicity gap in the proportion of Good Honours, noting that even when an adjustment of entry grades and economic background is made, there is still a statistically significant gap. The target to reduce to 6% by 2024/25 was noted, recognising that some programmes are already at a 0% gap. Whilst Surrey's ethnicity gap is similar to its competitor group, it was noted that universities with diverse communities tend to perform better in this area. It was recognised that Surrey needed to continue to prioritise this area, with a particular focus on increasing the number of black academic staff. It was suggested that there should also be a review of data on disciplinary panels in terms of outcomes by ethnicity.
- .4 With respect to graduate employment, black and white students perform similarly, but there is a 9% gap between Polar 1 and Polar 5 students.
- .5 Council **approved** the 2022 Degree Outcomes Statement for publication on the University's webpages.

22/092 Variations to Access and Participation Plan

- .1 Osama Khan presented the report.
- .2 Council noted the areas of success, concern and risk.
- .3 Council **approved** the Access and Participation Plan variation document and summary to be submitted to the OfS.

22/093 Senate Report

- .1 Tim Dunne presented the report.
- .2 It was noted that there would be an effectiveness review of Senate in 2023.
- .3 The key responsibility of Senate is the academic and student regulations, ensuring that transparent decisions are taken, based on clear papers with all the relevant information. Senate needs to work effectively to ensure that requests for approval are clear.
- .4 There was discussion of the responsible use of research metrics, recognising the challenges of this when exercises such as REF mean that metrics are very much here to stay.
- .5 The plan to increase student engagement was discussed. It was recognised that it is preferable to encourage rather than force attendance at teaching sessions.

22/094 2022/23 University budget and subsequent years financial plan

- .1 Martine Carter and Phil Grainge gave a presentation.
- .2 The following points were noted:
- There was some movement at a detailed level within income and expenditure, though the overall shape of the Carroll plan has remained stable versus the Baxter plan with EBITDA and cash at slightly improved levels. The shape of capital expenditure remains consistent with the previous plan, with a re-profiling of strategic workstreams based on progress to date.

- The overall approach to risk and assumptions has been more aggressive than previously to avoid the opportunity cost of underspending to the budget.
- Net cash generation turns positive in 24/25; whilst year-end cash balances remain robust throughout the Carroll plan period.
- Staff recruitment and retention were cited as risks and mitigating actions had been agreed.
- Inflationary pressures on staffing, capex and utilities were discussed. The largest inflationary pressure within operational costs is anticipated to be utilities, with a c.£4m risk. Actions being taken to mitigate inflationary pressures include departments continuing to work through efficiency opportunities and activity prioritisation choices required to meet their budget allocation. There are also plans being formed to reduce utility demand, and all expenditure plans would be monitored and adjusted in year as required through the quarterly in-year forecast process.
- The dip in take-up of the Professional Training Year is believed to be due to a combination of fewer placements and a lower appetite from students, both largely due to economic uncertainty and the pandemic. However, the strong employment market should start to see more opportunities become available. Some students may also have been put off by the prospect of remote/hybrid working placements.
- Where capacity permitted, additional students would be recruited, particularly PGT February starters.

.3 With respect to the Estate and capital expenditure demands associated with an ageing infrastructure, a capital maintenance allocation is in place for the existing estate with prioritisation reviewed via Operations Committee. The Strategic Opportunities Fund is intended to be available to use for more significant conversion and refurbishment works or the acquisition of more space.

.4 The cash balance projections were noted.

.5 Council recognised the really difficult headwinds facing the University and that the plans may need to be adjusted in-year.

.6 Council **approved** the 2022/23 University budget and noted the subsequent years financial plan.

22/095 Nominations and Governance Committee report

.1 Michael Queen presented the report.

.2 Council **approved** the appointment of Dame Ann Limb as a Pro-Chancellor and the reappointment of Dr Jim Glover and Dame Linda Dobbs for a further term.

22/096 Review of Governing documents

.1 Sarah Litchfield presented the paper.

.2 Council were **supportive** of a proposal to amend the nine year overall cap for members as it applies to existing members who were appointed Chair.

- .3 Council **approved** the proposal for Secretariat to conduct a full review of the governing documents.

22/097 Chair of Council appointment

- .1 Charlie Geffen left the meeting for discussion of this item. Robert Napier presented the paper.
- .2 Council noted the process and that Nominations and Governance Committee recommended the appointment of Charlie Geffen as the next Chair of Council. It was recognised that he is an outstanding candidate and there was unanimous support for his appointment.
- .3 Council **approved** the appointment of Charlie Geffen as Chair of Council.
- .4 Michael Queen reported that, given an internal candidate had been appointed who did not need such an extended hand-over period, he would step down at the end of December to allow the new Chair to start from the beginning of 2023.

22/098 Quinquennial review of USSU – actions update

- .1 It was agreed to postpone discussion of this item to the next meeting.
Action: RA

22/099 Scheme of Delegation

- .1 Lise Richards presented the paper.
- .2 The following points were noted:
- The Scheme of Delegation is a key governing document, and the current version is proving to be sector leading. The University needs to ensure that the good aspects of the current document are not lost with the redraft.
 - There needs to be clarification of accountability versus responsibility in relation to the roles of the executive team and the committees.
 - Given the new Policy Framework and updating of existing policies into procedures, the timing of a new Scheme of Delegation was opportune.
- .3 It was suggested that the updated draft Scheme of Delegation should be tested to ensure that likely scenarios are captured to ensure that it would provide the necessary framework for key decisions.
- .4 Subject to the comments above, Council was supportive of the direction of travel.

22/100 Update on Commercial Development Opportunities

- .1 Andy Chalklin presented the paper.
- .2 The following points were noted on governance:
- The formation of the governance framework is led by Sarah Litchfield.

- Full control of subsidiaries would be provided to the University as a shareholder or through Directors from Council and the Executive team.
- It was suggested that it would be useful to provide a toolkit for the Executive member of staff sitting on subsidiary boards to make clear the controls and responsibilities.
- Where terms such as 'significant' are used, there needs to be clear definition of what is considered significant.
- A Council member on the working group would be beneficial. All were invited to feed back any comments to AC or SL.

.3 The following points were noted on the physical assets:

- The assessment of physical assets is being led by Phil Grainge, supported by the Director of Estates & Facilities, key Estates colleagues and the Research Park CEO.
- The potential sale or lease values of each asset are being assessed and should be viewed alongside their value to the University and the timeline to release funds. It was recognised that some benefits were intangible, but they would be part of considerations that would be evaluated in greater detail in due course.
- At this stage, all options should be considered. Partial sales and/or the sale of leaseholds would be considered, so that the asset would not be entirely lost. Where appropriate, links to the University would be maintained.
- Independent consultants are being used to provide advice around Accommodation opportunities and the Research Park.

.4 The following points were noted on professional expertise:

- The assessment of professional expertise options is led by Will Davies supported by the existing strategic Designing for Success project team.
- The establishment of Cervus+ had been very positive and there is interest from the market in using their services, although no work outside the University would be taken on at this stage.
- It was recognised that the coming months could be challenging in terms of industrial relations in HE, so no steps should be taken to add to the challenge. Consultation and strong communications were key.

22/101 Ordinances amendments

.1 Council **approved** the amendments to the Ordinances as outlined in the paper.

22/102 Finance Committee report

.1 Council noted the report.

22/103 Audit and Assurance Committee report and Terms of Reference

.1 Nigel Jones presented the report.

.2 There was discussion of the higher risk score for health and safety, which was due to concerns in Wellbeing. There was a debate as to whether the root cause is workload and staffing and it was noted that the staffing gaps are being backfilled. The Audit and Assurance Committee have

asked for a paper on the matter, due in the next few weeks. Sarah Litchfield reported that she had commissioned a QC opinion on Duty of Care. Separately, an independent report into the recent death of a member of staff on campus had been instigated and would be fully discussed alongside a lessons learned report and which is likely to influence thinking on wellbeing.

.3 Council **approved** the amendments to the Terms of Reference as outlined in the paper.

22/104 Emeritus Professor nominations

.1 Max Lu presented the paper.

.2 Council **approved** the appointments as outlined in the paper.

C ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

22/104 Retention of non-contracting authority status under PCR

Council **noted** the report.

22/105 Health and Safety report

Council **noted** the report.

22/106 Executive Board report

Council **noted** the report.

22/107 University submission for the Human Resources Excellence in Research Award

Council **noted** the report.

22/108 Blackwell Park Ltd annual report

Council **noted** the report.

22/109 Freedom of Speech annual report

Council **noted** the report.

D CLOSING ITEMS

22/110 Any Other Business

.1 Noting that it was Ajay Ajimobi's last Council meeting, the Chair took the option to express the formal thanks of Council and best wishes for the future.

.2 Council received an interesting and informative update on External Engagement, including the University's activities in China.

22/111 Date of next meeting

5 October 2022

Mr Michael Queen, Chair