

**COUNCIL**  
**29 March 2023 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.*

<b>Members:</b>	Chair – External member	Mr Charlie Geffen
	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 Diana Dakik
	Member elected by Senate	Prof Esat Alpay (Teams)
	Member elected by Senate	Prof Karen Bullock (Teams)
	Member elected by Senate	Dr Daniel Horton
	External member	Mr Elliot Antrobus-Holder
	External member	Prof Julia Buckingham
	External member	Ms Judith Eden (Teams)
	External member	Ms Pam Jestico
	External member	Mr Nigel Jones
	External member	Ms Pam Powell
	External member	Sir Philip Rutnam

**In attendance:** Ms Ros Allen, Head of Governance Services (Teams)  
Ms Martine Carter, Vice-President Strategy, Planning & Performance  
Mr Phil Grainge, Chief Financial Officer (Teams)  
Ms Sarah Litchfield, University Secretary & Legal Counsel  
Ms Kelley Padley, Secretariat Coordinator (minutes)

**By invitation:** Ms Kerry Matthews, Chief Student Officer (23/030)  
Prof Osama Khan, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Academic (23/032)

**A INTRODUCTORY ITEMS**

**23/021 Preliminaries**

- .1 There were apologies from Rachel Hubbard, Diana Dakik and Elliot Antrobus-Holder.
- .2 Kelley Padley was observing the meeting as part of her induction into the Governance, Risk and Assurance department and taking the minutes in Ros Allen's absence.

**23/022 Declarations of Interest**

- .1 None.

**23/023 Minutes**

- .1 Council **approved** the minutes of the Council meeting held on 8 February 2023 for publication.

**23/024 Matters Arising**

- .1 The updated actions log was **noted**.
- .2 It was noted that all the actions were complete, for a later meeting or covered on the agenda.

**23/025 Chair's Items**

- .1 Council noted the following:
- Approval of second terms for Pam Jestico, Nigel Jones and Robert Napier by Convene resolution on 20 February 2023

**23/026 Vice-Chancellor's Report and Performance Monitoring**

- .1 The VC presented the report.
- .2 The Board discussed the biennial University of Surrey Economic Impact Report which had been distributed to key stakeholders on the 29 March 2023 noting both the range, and significance, of the contributions the University had made to the local community and beyond.
- .3 The recently launched UK Science and Technology Framework, a new cross-government strategy to make the UK a 'science and technology superpower' by 2030 was discussed. The Board noted that the £250 million investment in five identified technology missions (namely AI, quantum technologies, engineering biology, semiconductors and future telecoms) resonated well with Surrey's research strengths. The ambitious pace for implementing the policy was noted.
- .4 There was discussion regarding the University's new medical school and members of the Board fed-back on recent sector events where the opportunity for innovation in the approach to teaching medicine by providers was emphasised. For instance, the use of virtual reality and AI in teaching medicine. The VC confirmed that these were areas that were already being explored and the potential to position Surrey as the first AI-centric University in the UK could also be explored. The increasing support for Medical Doctor Degree Apprenticeships evident at sector events was also noted.
- .5 The following points were noted with respect to people at Surrey:
- .5.1 The appointment process for the PVC Research and Innovation was ongoing. Whilst a preferred candidate had been identified following the last round, they had not accepted the position. The University had been assured that a new pool of appropriate candidates had been established therefore another shortlisting and recruitment process would be underway shortly.
- .5.2 Nigel Alcock had been appointed as interim Chief Financial Officer and would take up the position in mid-April.
- .5.3 Professor Osama Khan, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Academic, had been appointed as Chair to the AdvanceHE EDI Strategic Advisory Group with immediate effect.
- .6 The following points were discussed with respect to student recruitment:
- .6.1 The UCAS application deadline for 2023 had now passed. The University had improved its processing time (time taken between receipt of application and making a decision) and

consequently the number of UG offers made in comparison to the same point last year was up by 21% whereas actual number of applications received was up by 6%. However, this may simply reflect a timing difference and level out through the remaining period of the cycle.

- .6.2 Applications to level 3 (Foundation year) had exceeded the set applications target with both the numbers of offers made and the firm accepts also exceeding target. Given the uncertainty over continued Government funding to HE providers for level 3 study, the University would remain cautious in relying upon increased numbers in this channel to meet overall targets.
- .6.3 Although it was still early in the PGT recruitment cycle for September entry, it was notable that applications were 28% up year on year. The increase in applications was almost entirely from overseas applicants. The attrition rate from offer to enrolment for overseas PGT students was discussed. It was noted that successful international applicants who paid the deposit to secure their firm accept were still subject to further attrition and that the reasons for this late drop-out is often related to the market / country the candidates have applied from. An International Recruitment Task Group had been convened to explore the underlying reasons for attrition so that appropriate mitigations could be put in place.

### **23/027 Strategy Update**

- .1 Martine Carter presented the report.
- .2 The University is currently in the analysis phase of its strategy development. The discussion paper provided the Board with a summary of the current mission group structure, the history of which groups and networks Surrey had been a part of, and some of the challenges experienced. Council members were invited to share their views as to the strategic opportunities and issues that might arise from forming a new Mission Group distinct from those that exist already (including the Russell Group).
- .3 It was noted that Surrey is not currently a member of a Mission Group but that it does have a peer group of providers that it associates itself with (including the University of Bath, St. Andrews University). The Board reflected on the fact the University of Surrey's brand is not as strong as either Bath or St Andrews. Whilst the Board noted the strong brands were, to some extent, associated with the circumstances of each peer (i.e. St Andrews has royal connections and established USA donors; Bath is situated in an area with a high percentage of independent schools), they also noted that both institutions had performed consistently well in the league tables over a period of time. The importance of Surrey sustaining its position over a period of time in order to impact on brand was acknowledged.
- .4 The Board discussed the strength of the Russell Group brand noting that the number of students progressing to Russell Group universities is seen as an indicator of a school's success. The Board reflected that the Russell Group brand was also recognised internationally. Discussion was held regarding the strategy that some providers had adopted of positioning themselves on the 'coat tails' of the Russell Group. The viability of challenging the Russell Group brand as a disruptor was discussed and the need to create real points of difference, not only in what is offered but in the way that it is offered and delivered.
- .5 It was acknowledged that there are several established Mission Groups. Should Surrey wish to form a new Mission Group the articulation of how the universities in that group differ from the existing groups would need to be clear. The benefits of articulating what you do not want to be were also put forward.

- .6 The two key areas (or towers) in which Surrey already dominate and out-perform peers, Environment and Electrical Engineering, were discussed and thought given as to other potential academic disciplines at Surrey that could also be invested in to develop new towers.

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

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**23/028 Academic Freedom**

- .1 Tim Dunne gave a presentation to the Board.
- .2 The draft Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill had, over the past two years, travelled through both the House of Commons and House of Lords and was now in the final stages of consideration. Some of the more far-reaching implications of the Bill were highlighted.
- .3 Under the terms of the Bill, the Government wants universities to take their responsibility to protect academic freedom more seriously. The presentation posed thought-provoking questions as to how Surrey would respond if faced with certain scenarios that tested freedom of speech and academic freedom (for instance, a call to 'no platform' a speaker). It was acknowledged that Surrey's current Code of Practice is not adequate for the purpose of exercising the duty of protecting free speech.
- .4 The University was in the process of positioning itself in relation to the exercise of its responsibility to protect academic freedom and noted that, should the Bill not be approved, the University would continue with the vital task of producing its principled framework for informing future issues and challenges to academic freedom.
- .5 The Board discussed whether universities should be enabling their communities to learn how to 'disagree well' and affording students the opportunity to be challenged by different voices in a debate. The tendency to err on the side of caution was however also acknowledged.
- .6 The Board applauded the initiative and direction of travel. They advised that careful consideration would need to be given to the tangential policies and procedures that may be affected. The need to ensure appropriate support and guidance was extended to the USSU was also highlighted. Whilst USSU are a separate legal entity, they are of course intertwined with the University and with the student experience.
- .7 The Board noted the next steps and were advised that the Council would be required to receive and approve any resulting updated Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech.

**23/029 Finance Update – REDACTED AS COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE**

**23/030 Annual Report on Wellbeing Services**

- .1 Kerry Matthews presented the report.
- .2 It was noted that demand for wellbeing services across the sector continues to grow and that Surrey's Centre for Wellbeing had seen an 11% increase in demand for appointments year on year. The Centre had been successful in managing student demand with waiting times for a Counselling appointment ranging between 6-10 days which was within the sector average.

- .3 Further to a full and comprehensive review of the University's wellbeing service, there will be a change in focus in terms of service delivery for the Wellbeing team. Currently the team are focused on supporting students who are already in a high state of requiring support and the new strategic plan shifts the service to being focused on early and positive preventative engagement. This shift is in line with sector guidance and best practice and ultimately allows the University to support a wider student community in achieving their success.
- .4 The Board noted that the complexity, and nature, of some of the cases arising has a significant impact on staff. A new initiative 'Supporting Staff to Support Students' has been instigated in recognition of this. Work is also underway to clearly delineate the roles of different points of contact and to ensure that students are referred to the staff who have the appropriate training to engage in conversations about specific circumstances and mental health conditions.
- .5 The interactions, dialogue and collaboration between the University and NHS provision was explored. The CSO confirmed that whilst much work had taken place over the past 18 months to significantly improve the relationship with the Group Practice, the potential to introduce dedicated NHS on campus could be explored.
- .6 The significant increase in students declaring a disability was noted, with pressure for the Disability and Neurodiversity team to support increasing numbers of students with Specific Learning Difficulties (SpLD) such as dyslexia, dyspraxia and ADHD. The CSO advised the Board that students were facing long delays, of up to two years, for a formal diagnosis of ADHD on the NHS. Students are unable to secure Disability Student Allowance (DSA) without the formal diagnosis and consequently the University were faced with instigating individual support plans. The Disability Service Review was underway with the University exploring the potential benefits of moving from one-to-one sessions to group sessions.
- .7 Prior to the commencement of the next academic year consideration was being given as to how the University should best obtain and use emergency, next of kin contacts for students.
- .8 The Board noted that two ex-students from the same programme had committed suicide in February. The CSO confirmed that a Silver Group had been convened. Any findings or identified potential lessons to be learnt would be reported and incorporated into the Wellbeing Action Plan.

### **23/031 Risk Management**

- .1 Sarah Litchfield and Andy Chalklin presented the report after an introduction from Nigel Jones.
- .2 The process undertaken for confirming risk scores was explained to the Board:
  - Directors input the risk score (impact and likelihood);
  - appropriate sub-committees of Executive Board receive, question and confirm the score or require further action to reduce risk;
  - Executive Board has oversight of risk management (scores that cannot be brought within appetite are explicitly flagged).
- .3 The University was currently on a journey towards the more appropriate scoring of risks. It was acknowledged that individual departments were potentially over-scoring the risks and failing to take a more holistic view of risk in the context of the entirety of the University's business.

Therefore, part of the role of the sub-committees now was to assist in clarifying appropriate scoring.

- .4 It was noted that the sub-committees of Executive Board were receiving their Risk Registers at each meeting ensuring proactive oversight was in place. For instance, an additional meeting of the Compliance (Health, Safety and Wellbeing) Committee had been convened to look at three out of appetite risks: Confined Spaces, Fire Risk, Legionella Management. A further meeting had been scheduled to look again at Legionella Management.

### **23/032 Education and Student Experience Update**

- .1 Osama Khan presented the report.
- .2 The key headlines from the report were reported to the Board. It was noted that the NSS response rates are approximately in keeping with the same point in time last year. The semester 1 pass rate results flagged the potential for a negative impact on 2022/23 continuation and completion rates and the report confirmed that work to improve pass rate results for semester 2 and to prepare students that had failed semester 1 modules for the Late Summer Assessment (LSA) period is ongoing.
- .3 OK expanded on the SOUL (Surrey Open University Learning) programme progress, noting the four strands planned as outlined in the report. Discussions were currently underway across the University's academic community to identify which strands would complement the disciplines and offers of each Faculty (and the Schools within each Faculty). The Board noted that some of the planned initiatives under SOUL would aid the University in meeting the requirements of Lifelong Learning and Lifelong Loan Entitlement (LLE).
- .4 PP and OK introduced the Surrey Maths School, a new state-funded specialist 16-19 Maths School, to Council. The University, working in partnership with Learning Partners Academy Trust, had submitted the application to the Department for Education in 2018/19 and the School was scheduled to welcome its first cohort in September 2024. Members of Council were asked to consider how they could support the Maths School by either raising its profile, providing any appropriate career or industry links and considering potential student sponsorship avenues. The aims and benefits of the partnership were noted.
- .5 Students at the Maths School will take A level Maths, A level Further Maths and opt for two other A levels from the following: Chemistry, Physics, Economics and Computer Science. The Board queried why Biology A level was not included as an option and felt it would be a valuable complementary A level for students taking Maths.  
**Action: OK to liaise with colleagues at the Maths School regarding potential to offer A level Biology**

### **23/033 Research and Innovation Report**

- .1 Tim Dunne gave a presentation to the Board.
- .2 The key headlines from the report were reported to the Board and their attention drawn to the process in place for the R&I Phase 2 Review. An Independent Review panel had been convened during June consisting of seven external colleagues who will formulate recommendations for Executive Board and help to inform the University's future choices on how we can become

sector-leading in our support for academic research and innovation. The Board noted the panel consisted of UK and Australian expertise and advised some consideration could be given as to whether representation from outside of this area could be beneficial.

**Action: TD to consider the balance of the Independent Review panel membership**

**23/034 Nominations and Governance Committee Report**

- .1 Charlie Geffen presented the report.
- .2 The Board **approved** the three-year cycle for Council Effectiveness Reviews. The Board **approved** the new approach and form for Council member feedback (previously known as appraisals).

**23/035 Half awayday planning and items for future meetings**

- .1 Charlie Geffen presented the item.
- .2 The chair noted that there was a half awayday planned to spend further time on some of the strategic issues arising including online education and commercial development opportunities. Whilst the new strategy development work will crystallise further in time, it was hoped there would be space at this event to consider longer term strategic thinking as well.

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**C ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

**23/036 Committee Reports**

- .1 Health and Safety Report  
Council **noted** the report.
- .2 Executive Board Report  
Council **noted** the report.
- .3 Finance Committee Report  
Council **noted** the report.
- .4 Student Experience Committee Report  
Council **noted** the report.

**23/037 Information Pack for Reference**

- .1 Council noted the pack.

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**D CLOSING ITEMS**

**23/038 Any Other Business**

- .1 The Chair thanked Phil Grainge, Chief Financial Officer, for his contribution to the University and the Board wished him well for the future.

**23/039 Date of next meetings and Key Events**

23 May 2023 (meeting in morning and strategy session in afternoon)

**Mr Charlie Geffen, Chair**