

COUNCIL
23 May 2023 at 9.30am
12a and 12b TB00
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 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
	Member elected by Senate	Prof Karen Bullock
	Member elected by Senate	Prof Daniel Horton
	External member	Mr Elliot Antrobus-Holder
	External member	Prof Julia Buckingham
	External member	Ms Judith Eden
	External member	Ms Pam Jestico
	External member	Mr Nigel Jones
	External member	Ms Pam Powell
	External member	Sir Philip Rutnam

In attendance: Mr Nigel Alcock, Interim Chief Financial Officer
Ms Ros Allen, Head of Governance Services (secretary)
Ms Martine Carter, Vice-President Strategy, Planning & Performance
Ms Sarah Litchfield, University Secretary & Legal Counsel

By invitation: Mr Matt Purcell, Director of Health and Safety, Cervus+ (23/046)
Prof Osama Khan, PVC Academic (23/050 and 51)

A INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

23/040 Preliminaries

- .1 There were apologies from Elliot Antrobus-Holder. It was noted that he was stepping down from Council.
- .2 Nigel Alcock was welcomed to his first meeting.

23/041 Declarations of Interest

- .1 None

23/042 Minutes

- .1 Council **approved** the minutes of the Council meeting held on 29 March 2023 for publication.

23/043 Matters Arising

- .1 The updated actions log was **noted**.
- .2 It was agreed to request an update on China and sensitive jurisdictions for the July meeting.
Action: RA

23/044 Chair's Items

- .1 None

23/045 Vice-Chancellor's Report and Performance Monitoring

- .1 The VC presented the report.
- .2 Council noted a number of updates:
 - A Universities UK (UUK) working group on the financial sustainability of HE has been established.
 - The University has improved to 46th in the world in the THE Impact rankings.
 - Four candidates were interviewed for the PVC R&I role. The preferred candidate has informally accepted.
 - The OfS has reported that two thirds of QAA reports are not up to standard. QAA is no longer reporting on the quality of UK HE.

B ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR APPROVAL

23/046 Health and Safety Annual Report

- .1 Matt Purcell attended to present the Annual Report, the first from Cervus+. It includes Faculty compliance reports and annual reports from Surrey Sports Park, the Students' Union, Occupational Health and Cervus+. Surrey Research Park produced a separate report this year but will report from within the University in future.
- .2 With regard to Key Performance Indicators, there will be increasing focus on leading indicators such as training. The University is now below the RIDDOR rate for the sector. It was noted that the University was good at reporting near misses, particularly in high-risk areas, and looks at trends and comparative data.
- .3 Culturally the University needs to develop behavioural safety and Cervus+ will be doing some work to target further improvements over the next 18 months. Independent risk assessment peer review issues are being addressed by Faculties with respect to high-risk areas and an appraisal system is being developed.
- .4 An update on the three main elements of the Fire risk assessments programme was noted:
 - The Fire Risk Assessments of the estate are complete, as are the Priority 1 actions.
 - The fire door survey is complete and highlighted that some doors will need to be replaced in due course as part of the regular cycle of refurbishment.

- The fire compartmentation survey is complete and will be progressed, as with fire doors, on a risk prioritisation.

.5 MP reported that he had no key concerns currently. Audits for 2023-24 will be agreed at the June Compliance (Health, Safety and Wellbeing) Committee meeting.

23/047 Finance/Planning Update (COMMERCIALY SENSITIVE) - REDACTED

23/048 Research and Innovation Report

.1 Tim Dunne gave a verbal update.

.2 There was discussion of the Research Excellence Framework (REF) with the following points noted:

- It is assumed that REF 2028 will be similar to REF 2021 and include scores for environment, impact and output. Research culture is a national focus and may be a focus for REF 2028 as part of environment. Also, there is a possibility of a single environment statement for the institution rather than one for every unit of assessment.
- The VC and Provost wrote a blog recently to remind staff about the REF 2021 performance, one year after the results were published. Surrey was ranked 33 nationally in REF 2021 and was seen as one of the three fastest moving universities.
- The University performed very strongly in output (19th), reasonably in environment and poorly in impact. There is a need to focus on improving impact, recognising that the key issue may be to better promote its performance in this area.
- REDACTED

.3 The R&I Independent Review Panel will meet in mid-June. Its recommendations will go to Executive Board and an implementation plan will be produced.

23/049 Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression

.1 Tim Dunne gave a presentation.

.2 A summary of the requirements of the HE Freedom of Speech Act was noted. Universities UK is seeking legal advice on a new Code and establishing an advisory group. The Act requires the University and the Students' Union (SU) to take joint responsibility for ensuring compliance with the requirements of the Act, raising potential challenges as they are separate legal entities.

.3 There was discussion of whether academic freedom should apply just to academic staff, all staff or to all academic practices. There was also a question of whether Postgraduate Research students should be considered to have the same status as academic staff for the purposes of academic freedom.

.4 The newly approved Senate Sub-Committee on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression will review any concern that is referred to them either from individual staff, students, or academic managers; this Sub-Committee is advisory to the Vice-Chancellor who will decide whether or not to accept their recommendations and take appropriate action.

- .5 There need to be very clear principles and guidance, which should be part of the induction process for staff and students. The SU will ensure there is clarity for students and guidance available. Both the University and the SU need to ensure compliance with the Charity Act and be aware of reputational issues. There is also a financial factor as there could be a significant security cost for controversial speakers. It was noted that the University lets out space on campus to many external organisations so does not have full control.
- .6 There was discussion of the interaction of the Act with Prevent requirements. It was recognised that Prevent is not just concerned with unlawful speech, but an assessment of the risk of extremism. Some organisations may be looking at how to exploit this Act to promote extremism.
- .7 Council supported the Executive Board strategy to become legislation ready, including amendments to Charter and Statutes, a position statement, a new Code of Practice and the establishment of the new Senate Subcommittee on Academic Freedom and Freedom of Expression.

23/050 Education and Student Experience Update

- .1 Osama Khan attended to present the paper.
- .2 Council noted an update on student surveys:
- The National Student Survey (NSS) has now closed, with a high response rate for Surrey, which tends to indicate higher scores. However, it is hard to predict Surrey's ranking as it depends on how the rest of the sector perform.
 - The Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) 38% response rate is the highest for Surrey to date and is particularly strong when compared to the sector average which is below 25%.
 - The Module Evaluation Questionnaire (MEQ) scores have improved in Semester 2 compared to the previous year and to Semester 1.
 - Improvements in the SU run Pulse Survey scores may indicate improvement in NSS scores.
- .3 REDACTED

23/051 Employability and Careers Annual Report

- .1 Osama Khan attended to present the paper, drawing out the highlights of the year.
- .2 It was noted that fewer students are taking the Professional Training Year (PTY), probably as a result of the pandemic and cost of living pressures. However, there is a greater interest from current first year students, so take-up should start to return to pre-pandemic levels. The University is offering opportunities for short term summer placements, focused towards those students who are less likely to do a full PTY because of financial or other issues.
- .3 The University performs well for graduate employment, with a rate of over 87%. The reduced take up of the PTY is likely to have a negative impact on graduate employment but will not start to impact the results until 2026/27. The graduate employment data can be broken down by type of student to enable focused messages to be used in student recruitment overseas.

- .4 The Employability and Careers team have a number of initiatives targeting closing the graduate employment gap for groups such as ethnic minorities, care leavers, estranged students and HE underrepresented groups.
- .5 The service is offering more group sessions to enable support and guidance to be offered to more students.
- .6 There was wider discussion about issues of student engagement, which had dropped nationwide due to the pandemic and cost of living. Discussion covered issues including student accommodation utilisation and timetabling.

23/052 Scheme of Delegation minor amendments

- .1 Sarah Litchfield presented the paper.
- .2 Council **approved** the amendment to the Scheme of Delegation to recognise that the final authority for approval of the Student Protection Plan is Council.

23/053 Appointment of Glyn Barker as Director of Innovate Surrey Ltd

- .1 Charlie Geffen presented the paper.
- .2 It was noted that Tim Oliver was also proposed as a Director of Innovate Surrey Ltd
- .3 Council **approved** the appointment of Glyn Barker and Tim Oliver as Directors of Innovate Surrey Ltd, and that Glyn Barker would also chair the Board.

23/054 Honorary Degrees

- .1 The VC presented the paper.
- .2 Council **approved** the three nominations for honorary degrees, as listed in the paper.

23/055 Items for future meetings

- .1 It was noted that Philanthropy and Surrey Research Park would be coming to upcoming Council meetings.

C ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

23/056 Committee Reports

- .1 Audit and Assurance Committee
Council **noted** the report.
- .2 Executive Board
Council **noted** the report.
- .3 Finance Committee
Council **noted** the report.
- .4 Remuneration Committee

Council **noted** the report.

.5 Senate
Council **noted** the report.

.6 Student Experience Committee Report
Council **noted** the report.

23/057 Information Pack for Reference

.1 Council noted the pack.

D CLOSING ITEMS

23/058 Any Other Business

.1 Council **agreed** to receive the weekly public affairs briefings and the Surrey Highlights emails.

23/059 Date of next meetings

27 July 2023

Mr Charlie Geffen, Chair