COUNCIL
Tuesday 29 July 2025 from 14.00-18.00
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 Charlie Geffen
	Vice-Chair - External member	Ms Rachel Hubbard
	Treasurer - External member	Mr Nigel Jones
	President & Vice-Chancellor (interim)	Prof Tim Dunne
	Chief Operating Officer	Mr Will Davies
	President, Students' Union	Mr Matt Aikin
	Member elected by Senate	Dr Josh Andresen (from 25/097)
	Member elected by Senate	Dr Charo Hodgkins
	Member elected by Senate	Prof Jin Xuan
	External member	Prof Dame Julia Buckingham
	External member	Mr Nick Gatfield
	External member	Ms Pam Jestico
	External member	Ms Pam Powell
	External member	Sir Philip Rutnam
	External member	Dr Helen Turner
	External member	Mr Philip Whitecross
	External member	Dr Linda Wilding

In attendance: Ms Ros Allen, Head of Governance Services (secretary)
Ms Martine Carter, Vice-President Strategic Growth
Mr Patrick Degg, VP Global
Mr Matthew Knight, Chief Financial Officer
Ms Sarah Litchfield, University Secretary & Legal Counsel

By invitation: Prof Tao Chen, Associate VP International (25/107)
Prof Lisa Collins, PVC Research & Innovation (25/100, 104 & 105)
Ms Caroline Fleming, Director of Surrey Innovation District (25/104)
Ms Emma Rowsell, Chief Student Officer (25/110)
Mr Liam White, USSU President 2024-25 (25/111)

INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

25/091 Preliminaries

.1 There were apologies from Will Davies and Helen Turner.

.2 Matt Aikin was welcomed to his first meeting of Council.

25/092 Declarations of Interest

.1 Council were reminded that Julia Buckingham has a conflict of interest with respect to GIFT City.

25/093 Minutes

.1 Council **approved** the minutes of the Council meeting held on 22 May 2025 for publication. Council **approved** the minutes of the Council meetings held on 23 June and 8 July 2025, but not for publication given their confidential nature.

25/094 Matters Arising

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

STANDING ITEMS

25/095 Chair's items

.1 Council **ratified** the Chair's approval of the ISL letter of support from the University, given on 30 May 2025.

.2 The Chair provided a briefing on pre-meeting discussions. The main focus was on how the University could accelerate its progress towards the Strategy. The importance of good governance in decision making was recognised.

.3 The Chair congratulated the executive team and thanked them for their hard work.

25/096 Vice-Chancellor's Report on strategic matters and sector context

.1 The VC gave a presentation.

.2 Council noted an update on the Industrial Strategy, 2025 National Security Strategy, the UK Government's Life Sciences Sector Plan 2035 and the Lifelong Learning Entitlement being introduced from 2027.

.3 Council were pleased to note the strong NSS results and that Surrey had risen 23 places to 262nd in the QS World Rankings.

.4 The VC provided an update on the Surrey Online Learning partnership with 2U, which had not delivered anticipated student numbers to date. Two of the programmes have reasonable numbers, but there is a need to review offerings and programme titles to ensure they appeal to the market. It was noted that c. 50% of prospects were from Guildford, when it had been expected that most would be from overseas. 2U are not seeking new UK partners for online learning. The mitigations and opportunities were noted.

25/097 Strategy Scorecard and Performance Monitoring

.1 Martine Carter presented the report.

.2 Council noted the progress against the strategy.

.2.1 With respect to research income, it was noted that there had been a sector-wide issue of award announcements being delayed. This was partly due to resource issues in the Research Councils and partly due to a delay in the confirmation of their budgets. However national success rates are also in decline.

.2.2 The progress in delivering against the student experience and employability goals was recognised. The main issues still to be addressed are the gaps in student outcomes.

.2.3 The importance of TNE for enabling the strategic growth ambitions was noted. It was noted that there is some tension between increasing student numbers whilst also increasing Research and Innovation activities.

.2.4 The importance of communicating the opportunities to build a career at Surrey to potential staff was recognised. There is a competitive environment for staff recruitment in the sector currently, particularly with respect to strong research staff.

25/098 Management Accounts

.1 Matthew Knight presented the paper.

.2 *REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY CONFIDENTIAL*

.5 Council asked for further information on capex to be provided to the next meeting, showing maintenance and investment expenditure separately.
Action: MK

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR APPROVAL

25/099 University Strategic Plan and Budget 2025/26

.1 Martine Carter and Matthew Knight presented the paper.

.2 *REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY CONFIDENTIAL*

.3 The big transformational levers, such as investment in TNE, were considered. They have not been included in the forecasts at this point.

.4 The contribution levels by School have been assessed. Student growth will not lead to significant staff growth. Rather, increased efficiency will be needed.

.5 *REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY CONFIDENTIAL*

25/100 Academic Talent Investment

.1 TD gave a presentation with Lisa Collins in attendance.

.2 Council noted the vision and the purpose of investing in academic talent.

.3 The potential strategies for growth were presented:
- Using the Research Institutes as accelerators.
- Broadening and deepening with Talent 100.

.4 Council was reminded of the agreed and potential future research institutes. It was noted that there may be an argument for considering a Security Futures Institute given the national security agenda. It was noted that leveraging partnerships with other bodies such as the Royal Surrey County Hospital provides opportunities for research institutes.

.5 Council noted some examples of the talent that Surrey Future Fellows had brought in. The new VC will bring back Talent 100 back to Council in October.
Action: RA to add to agenda.

25/101 *REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY CONFIDENTIAL*

25/102 Blackwell Park

.1 Matthew Knight gave an update.

.2 *REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY CONFIDENTIAL*

25/103 JD Wetherspoons facility and Padel proposal

.1 Matthew Knight presented the paper. The project to bring in a Wetherspoons franchise has been approved by EB. Council approval is required for borrowing of over £1m. There has been consideration of whether the University should fund the works itself rather than borrow the funds. However, it was concluded that borrowing was preferred. It will not have a direct impact on current borrowings and covenants and could be repaid early without penalty. The University will retain ownership of the building. Finance Committee has not yet had a chance to consider the proposal but will do so in August. Council **approved** £1.1m of borrowing for the project, subject to sign-off from Finance Committee.

.2 Nigel Jones, as Chair of the Surrey Sports Park (SSP) Board, presented the proposal to create a Padel facility, run by an external organisation, PadelStars. Given that the land will be leased, it requires approval from Finance Committee. *REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY CONFIDENTIAL* There was some concern that more parking could be needed for this new facility. Council **supported** the proposal, subject to approval from Finance Committee.
Action: NJ to ask for more information to be provided to Finance Committee as requested.

25/104 Fund opportunities

.1 Lisa Collins and Caroline Fleming attended to present the paper.

.2 Council noted an update on the progress of the SETsquared fund. Two working groups have been formed, one to consider commercial matters and the other to consider legal matters. Both groups are now happy with the terms, including the liability and withdrawal processes. The ISL Board has recommend signing of the framework agreement to Council. The other five SETsquared universities have all given their approval.

.3 It was noted that Helen Turner was very supportive but had suggested that the Oversight Committee may need to meet more often.
Action: LC and CF

.4 The University would retain control and is not obliged to accept investment. There would be an additional investment manager to ensure coverage of each university, embedded and working closely with Surrey staff.

.5 Council **approved** the Framework Agreement.

25/105 *REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY CONFIDENTIAL*

25/106 Transnational Education

.1 Patrick Degg and Tim Dunne gave a presentation, with Tao Chen in attendance.

.2 It was noted that Transnational Education (TNE) would be a standing item on the agenda at Council. An academic leadership steering group across all the TNE initiatives had been established.

.3 The University gets many approaches to form partnerships and rejects many of them due to, for example, the relative ranking of the other institution. It would be useful to have more information on the many TNE opportunities and types of partnerships, and we should consider being more proactive in searching out suitable opportunities. The new Director of TNE, Tatiana Rizopoulou would be invited to present on this to Council in the Autumn.
Action: RA

.4 All three current proposals are science and engineering focused. Previously most such TNE ventures were business focused. The University has some small health sciences related TNE in Sri Lanka but will look to develop more.

25/107 China Agricultural University Joint Institute

.1 Tao Chen gave a presentation for information. Formal approval would be sought in due course.

.2 *REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY CONFIDENTIAL*

.3 It was noted that, where possible, such partnerships would also enable Surrey students to complete part of their studies at a partner institution.

.4 Council approval would be sought in due course.

25/108 Jiangsu Industrial Technology Research Institute (JITRI)

.1 Patrick Degg gave a presentation by way of an update.

.2 *REDACTED AS COMMERCIALLY CONFIDENTIAL*

.3 Further updates and, if appropriate, a request for approval, would follow in due course.

25/109 GIFT City

.1 Patrick Degg and Tim Dunne gave a presentation.

.2 Actions taken as a result of Council feedback on GIFT City were noted.

.3 PD provided an update on progress. The submission to the regulator has been made. There has been agreement on the structure of the enterprise to ensure that it would protect the University, be compliant with both Indian law and GIFT City regulations, preserve the tax benefits and allow for financial flexibility. The next step is an expert panel in the middle of August in India attended by senior Surrey staff.

.4 Council will receive an update and consider how and when it will be delivered, in the Autumn.

25/110 Student Protection Plan

.1 Emma Rowsell attended to present the paper.

.2 The plan has been updated to cover the addition of overseas branch campuses. There should be consideration of what would happen if an overseas branch campus partner went out of business.

.3 Council **approved** the Student Protection Plan for submission to the OfS.

25/111 USSU Annual Presentation

.1 Liam White presented the paper.

.2 Council noted the headline achievements over the past year, delivering much of what they set out to do at the start of the academic year.

25/112 Emeritus Staff appointments

.1 Tim Dunne presented the paper.

.2 There was discussion of one of the candidates. There had been extended discussion of her nomination, but it had been agreed that her strong academic record merited the appointment. Academic freedom was also a factor.

.3 Council **approved** the five recommended appointments as outlined in the paper.

25/113 Nominations and Governance Committee report

.1 Charlie Geffen presented the paper.

.2 Council **approved** the amended terms of reference for Finance Committee and Nominations and Governance Committee. The latter has been kept small, but it can be widened if people feel that is necessary.

.3 Council **approved** the appointment of Nick Gatfield to Student Experience Sub Committee, Philip Whitecross to Audit and Assurance Committee and Pam Powell to Honorary Degrees Committee. Helen Turner is moving from the Audit and Assurance Committee to the ISL Board.

.4 Nominations and Governance Committee are meeting a potential new Council member with an HR background in early September with a view to replacing Rachel Hubbard.

25/114 Items for future meetings

.1 Council noted the paper. Suggestions for future Council briefings would be welcomed.

C ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

25/115 Assurance Framework

.1 Council noted the paper.

25/116 University regulatory response to the OfS new E6 condition of registration

.1 Council noted the report.

25/117 Retention of non-contracting authority status under PCR

.1 Council noted the report.

25/118 BPL Annual Report

.1 Council noted the report.

25/119 Information Governance Annual Report

.1 Council noted the report.

25/120 Health & Safety Report

.1 Council noted the report.

25/121 Committee reports

.1 Council noted the reports from Audit and Assurance, Finance, Remuneration and Partnerships and Reputation Committees, Executive Board, and Senate.

25/122 Information Pack for Reference

.1 Council noted the pack.

D CLOSING ITEMS

25/123 Any Other Business

.1 Noting that it was Liam White's final meeting, the Chair took the opportunity to thank him for his contribution and wish him well for the future.

.2 Noting that it was Josh Andresen's last meeting, he was thanked for his contribution. Jin Xuan and Charo Hodgkins are both likely to be staying on Council for another year.

25/124 Date of next meeting

7 October 2025

Mr Charlie Geffen, Chair