

**COUNCIL**  
**Thursday 20 November 2025 from 14.00-18.00**  
**Lakeside Private Dining Room**  
**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
	Treasurer - External member	Mr Nigel Jones
	President & Vice-Chancellor	Prof Stephen Jarvis
	Provost and Senior Vice President	Prof Tim Dunne
	Chief Operating Officer	Mr Will Davies
	President, Students' Union	Mr Matt Aikin
	Member elected by Senate	Dr Femi Adeyemi-Ejeye
	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 Sarah Miles
	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 Annika Bautz, PVC Education (25/160, 161 and 164.2)  
Prof Lisa Collins, PVC Research and Innovation (25/157)  
Ms Sarah Leggett, Director of HR (25/162 and 163)  
Ms Emma Rowsell, Chief Student Officer (25/164.1)

## INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

### 25/151 Preliminaries

- .1 There were apologies from Julia Buckingham and Pam Powell. Sarah Miles was welcomed to her first meeting of Council.
- .2 Noting that it was Tim Dunne's final full Council meeting, the Chair took the opportunity to thank him on behalf of Council for his great contribution.

### 25/152 Declarations of Interest

- .1 None

**25/153 Minutes**

.1 Council **approved** the minutes of the Council meeting held on 7 October 2025 for publication.

**25/154 Matters Arising**

.1 The updated actions log was **noted**. The following updates were noted:

- The Datasection report would come to February Council.
- The five-year research trends would be provided in future performance reports.

**STANDING ITEMS**

**25/155 Chair's items**

.1 The Chair provided a briefing on pre-meeting discussions.

.2 Council ratified the resolutions approved outside of the meeting:

- New bank accounts, approved by Convene resolution on 20 October 2025
- Lenders' agreement, by Convene resolution on 23 October 2025
- For Patrick Degg to act as an Authorised Representative to appoint an Authorised Indian Representative for GIFT City, approved by Chair's approval on 3 November 2025
- To reappoint Charlie Geffen as Chair of Council for a further three-year term, by Convene resolution on 12 November 2025

**25/156 Vice-Chancellor's Report on strategic matters and sector context**

.1 The VC presented the paper.

.2 He drew out several items of particular note:

- A potential cap on tax free pension contributions, for employees and employers is under consideration. Modelling suggests that could impact HE institutions between £1m and £3m p.a. and Surrey would probably see an impact of c. £2m.
- There is likely to be an international student fee levy in the budget next week, with the implementation to be decided.

.3 Council noted the letter from the OfS outlining emerging risks, particularly with regard to third party and off-campus delivery. It requires that if the conditions are not met, existing arrangements should be terminated. It is a matter of some debate in the sector as to whether they are a reasonable set of requirements. The V-C reported that he would be engaging with UUK and other universities about the issues raised. It was noted that there are procedures in place, such as the Whistleblowing Procedure and Report and Support, to enable staff and students to raise concerns, including on academic freedom and freedom of speech, anonymously if they wish.

**25/157 Performance Report for October 2025**

.1 Martine Carter presented the report.

.2 *Student Admissions*

.2.1 REDACTED

.3 *Research Awards*

.3.1 Lisa Collins attended to present.

.3.2 REDACTED

.3.3 The UK Research and Innovation (UKRI) budget declined from £9.4b in 2024 to £8.8b in 2025 but is forecast to increase to £10b by 2029-30.

.3.4 There are risks and opportunities with respect to government priorities. Surrey has mapped areas of excellence to the priorities and are ready to apply for funding as opportunities arise. An external expert is being brought in to assess areas of strength.

**25/158 Infrastructure Investment**

.1 Matthew Knight and Will Davies presented the paper.

.2 Council recognised that the needs to grow income to be able to fully maintain and develop the estate. There is a campus master plan in development looking at future requirements and forming proactive plans. Council asked for information on the backlog requirements and the steady state requirements.

**Action: WD**

.3 There is a well-developed digital plan coming to EB in early December. A project to provide a new data centre on Manor Park has been approved, providing capacity for a large research project (CoSTAR) as well as the growth of the University.

.4 REDACTED

.5 The University's insured value is REDACTED and there is assessment every year to ensure that it is not under insured.

**25/159 Cash release update**

.1 WD and MK presented the paper.

.2 REDACTED

.3 REDACTED

.4 REDACTED

**ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR APPROVAL**

**25/160 AI in Education Framework**

.1 Annika Bautz attended to present the paper.

.2 The framework aims to integrate AI into all of the University's programmes, prioritising skills development and ensuring that all students (including Postgraduate Research students) have access to AI.

- .3 There are four pillars in the framework:
- Providing access to baseline AI tools
  - Integrating discipline specific AI skills into the curriculum.
  - Using AI selectively to add value to teaching and learning, and
  - Protecting core competencies and critical thinking through assessment redesign.
- .4 With respect to sustainability issues, recognising that AI is very power hungry, the planned solar farm would provide clean energy.
- .5 It was noted that the AI tools would be available to staff also and any data input will stay within the University.
- .6 REDACTED
- .7 AB is providing a briefing on Education matters to Council in January, so could provide more information on the AI Framework.

**25/161 National Student Survey (NSS) Strategy**

- .1 Annika Bautz attended to present the paper.
- .2 Council were reminded of Surrey's strong performance in NSS 2025. However, whilst the University improved its score, it went down from 11<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> as others in the sector also improved their scores. It has been calculated that Surrey should aim for 87% satisfaction to be in the top 10.
- .3 Council noted the areas to focus on and the academic areas which performed less strongly.
- Assessment and feedback remain issues. Surrey made progress around consistency, clarity and timeliness. There is a 3-week feedback deadline, which is standard in the sector and would be difficult to significantly reduce due to moderation and extenuating circumstances requirements. Communication of the issues to students is important, to set expectations. Surrey does not currently use AI in marking but could use for formative feedback to students before submitting an assignment.
  - With respect to the Student Voice, Surrey has reduced from 15<sup>th</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup>. There needs to be strong communication of examples of where the University listened to students and made changes as a result, such as reopening the Library 24/7 from 1 December. There is an NSS action plan in the Chief Student Officer's area that will focus more on the student voice.
- .4 To improve the low Module Evaluation Questionnaires (MEQ) response rate of 10-15%, changes are being made to the timing, so that feedback is requested in the middle of the module rather than the end.

**25/162 Staff Survey Results**

- .1 Sarah Leggett attended to present the paper.

- .2 The following points were noted:
  - .2.1 Engagement has remained stable in a challenging year, but we should not be complacent.
  - .2.2 There is a strong sense of commitment and pride.
  - .2.3 Challenges remain in recognition and workload as well as confidence that action will follow the results.  
Professional Services staff responses are generally more positive than academic staff and two of the three Faculties are now below the HE benchmark for their scores.
  - .2.4 The University is prioritising a smaller number of interventions that will have the greatest impact and targeting actions towards the areas where they will make the most difference. They are being discussed at Executive Board (EB) next week.

.3 REDACTED

### **25/163 Remuneration Committee Effectiveness Review**

- .1 CG presented the paper with Sarah Leggett in attendance.
- .2 It was noted Sarah Miles is joining the Committee.
- .3 There is a need to be clearer about what is outstanding performance, with appropriate targets set. There have been five objectives set for the University, with KPIs for the executive team, including stretch targets. They need to be articulated and communicated to the team.
- .4 It was noted that staff appraisal scores are not moderated and normalised to create a bell curve of results. Academic staff are more skewed towards the top end and Professional Services staff scores have a more normal distribution. Academic staff appraisal scores are being reviewed, particularly in the context of academic areas which are performing poorly on external benchmarked metrics.

### **25/164 Statutory Reporting**

- .1 ***Annual Prevent Return***  
Emma Rowsell attended to present the paper. No points of concern were raised by the report. There was discussion of whether the University was welcoming enough to events and external speakers. The default approach is to approve events. There has not been the demand for more contentious speakers. Council **approved** the Prevent Return for submission to the OfS.
- .2 ***Degree Outcome Statement***  
Annika Bautz attended to present the paper. The proportion of 1<sup>st</sup> and 2:1s has declined significantly from 80.9% to 70.7% since 2020. The University is therefore carrying out a piece of work to ensure that students get the degree award that they deserve. A paper will come back to Council with details. Council **approved** the Degree Outcome Statement for publication.
- .3 ***Research Integrity Statement***  
No points of concern were raised by the report. There was one case of research misconduct upheld in full after consideration. Such misconduct would not be a sackable offence unless it

was repeated, but there would be training required and potentially other consequences. Council **approved** the statement.

.4 **Annual Academic Quality Assurance Report**

It was noted that there were no concerns raised at Senate. Council **noted** the report.

.5 **Freedom of Speech Code of Practice**

TD presented the paper with Emma Rowsell in attendance. The Code does not include whistleblowing, but it was **agreed** that there should be reference made to it. REDACTED Council **approved** the Code of Practice.

.6 **Health and Safety Report**

WD presented the paper, noting that it was focused on areas where there were more incidents and risks. It was agreed that the annual reports on Information Governance and Cyber Security would be forwarded to Council as a reminder. Both these areas report to the Compliance Data Committee which escalates issues to EB and, if appropriate, to Audit and Assurance Committee. Council **noted** the report.

**Action: RA to forward annual reports on info gov and cyber security.**

.7 **Internal Auditor Annual Opinion**

WD presented the paper. Council **noted** the report.

.8 **Compliance with the OfS Conditions of Registration Annual Report**

Council **noted** the report. There was discussion of the widening role of the OfS as regulator.

**25/165 Honorary Degrees**

.1 SJ presented the paper.

.2 It was noted that ten nominations came forward in the current round. It had been agreed to run a more transparent process in future. Council were reminded that they were welcome to make nominations.

.3 REDACTED

.4 Council **approved** the five honorary degrees as outlined in the paper. It was noted that the nominations were highly confidential at this stage as the candidates had not been informed and approval was required from the Chancellor.

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**C ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

**25/166 Committee reports**

.1 Council noted the reports from the Executive Board, Finance Committee, Nominations and Governance Committee and Senate.

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**D CLOSING ITEMS**

**25/167 Any Other Business**

.1 None

**25/168**

**Date of next meeting**

5 February 2025

**Mr Charlie Geffen, Chair**