

Council Minutes: 22 January 2021 (via Teams)

PRESENT: Professor Ella Ritchie (Deputy Pro-Chancellor in the Chair); Professor Andy Schofield (Vice-Chancellor); Mr David Barron (lay member); Professor Steve Bradley (Deputy Vice-Chancellor); Ms Hanah Burgess (lay member); Mr Anthony Carey (lay member); Professor Sir Ian Diamond (lay member); Mrs Bobby Georghiou (lay member); Professor Simon Guy (Senate representative); Mr Ian Johnson (lay member); Professor Kevin Jones (Senate representative); Ms Bethan Morgan (student representative); Ms Alison Mullan (Senate representative); Baroness Neville-Jones (Deputy Pro-Chancellor); Lord Price (lay member); Ms Marcia Reid Fotheringham (lay member); Mr Oliver Robinson (Students' Union President); His Hon. Phillip Sycamore (lay member); Mrs Valerie Young (lay member).

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Paul Boustead (Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development) (*for items 9-11*); Ms Claire Geddes (Committee Secretary); Professor Louise Heathwaite (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)) (*for item 17*); Mr Simon Jennings (Director of Strategic Planning and Governance); Ms Nicola Owen (Deputy Chief Executive (Operations)); Mrs Sarah Randall-Paley (Director of Finance); Mr Nick Fragel (Director of Philanthropy, Alumni and Supporter Engagement) (*for item 16*).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Pro-Chancellor, Rt Hon Alistair Burt

INTRODUCTION

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Council noted apologies for absence.
- 1.2 The Chair updated Council on the good recovery of the Pro-Chancellor from his operation and shared a message to Council from him.
- 1.3 Council offered its congratulations to His Hon. Phillip Sycamore, who had been awarded a CBE in the Queen's New Year's Honours List.
- 1.4 Council offered its thanks and congratulations to Ms Bee Morgan, who would be stepping down from Council after 5 February 2021 to take up an internship in the Civil Service. It was confirmed that Mr Atree Ghosh would be the new student Council representative appointed by the Students' Union until the end on 26 June 2021.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 No declarations of interest were made.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING: 20 NOVEMBER 2020

PAPER A

3.1 Council approved the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2020.

4. MATTERS ARISING

4.1 Council noted that the Deputy Pro-Chancellor had responded to the Trade Unions regarding the Council Sub-Group on organisational culture.

4.2 Council noted the publication of reports approved at its previous meeting namely the: Research Integrity Report; Updated Council Statement of Primary Responsibilities; Modern Slavery Act Statement; and the revised Estates Terms of Reference.

5. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S UPDATE AND QUESTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE

5.1 The Vice-Chancellor reported on the following:

- (i) the Government's publication of its interim conclusions regarding post-18 education and funding, and that UK undergraduate fees continued to be frozen for another year;
- (ii) the outcomes of the Pearce Review of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) including the change in grading structure and cycle and that a consultation would be forthcoming. Council noted that it was expected the new TEF model would be adopted for first review outcomes in September 2022;
- (iii) the publication of the Government's report on Post Qualification Applications and the potential options for change under consideration;
- (iv) the Government's further education white paper 'Skills for Jobs' and its proposed post-16 education reforms to better meet the needs of employers and the potential partnership working opportunities this created for the University;
- (v) the University's continued response to the pandemic and related government guidance including: lateral flow testing provision for staff and students; the progress of the HIC Vaccine Centre; the evolving staggered return arrangements for students; and the fact that campus remained open and available to those who needed it. Council noted the low number of positive cases in both staff and students and no evidence of transmission between the two;
- (vi) the impacts of the extended third lockdown on both staff and the student body and the measures being taken to support student mental health and ensure awareness of hardship support. He highlighted the audit of teaching provision being undertaken against the University's commitments to students to ensure any causes of concern were identified and addressed in the period after 8 March, and that this action had pre-dated but subsequently aligned with a request from the Office for Students to universities to consider such action;

- (vii) the staff response to the Voluntary Severance Scheme and the potential recurrent and in-year costs savings where offers were being made;
- (viii) that UA92 had received confirmation of its own independent registration status with the Office for Students;
- (ix) the review being undertaken by the Office for Students of the National Student Survey (NSS);
- (x) the continued unwillingness of UPP to contribute to costs relating to student accommodation goodwill payments and negotiations with the company to date; and
- (xi) his intentions to externally advertise the role of Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) though internal candidates would be welcomed. In addition, due to the scale and importance of both the Education and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion portfolios, the EDI portfolio (which the Deputy Vice-Chancellor had been covering) would be retained within the Deputy Vice-Chancellor's portfolio.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

6. PRESIDENT, LANCASTER UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION: REPORT PAPER C

6.1 The President of the Students' Union reported on the following:

- (i) proposed key changes to the Students' Union's Articles which he anticipated would be considered for approval by Council at its March meeting and the positive impact he expected this to have on the Students' Union's NSS score;
- (ii) the Students' Union's support for those students participating in the rent strike and pre-emptive measures taken by the Students' Union in providing one week's rent rebate to its own tenants;
- (iii) his full support for the Vice-Chancellor in negotiations with UPP;
- (iv) Union officers' concerns regarding student mental health provision, and interest in an out-of-hours mental health service; and
- (v) the continuing challenges being faced by the Students' Union in the face of the pandemic, including work being undertaken to try and ensure that Union elections were contested with a diverse set of candidates.

6.2 The Deputy Chief Executive (Operations) was invited to respond regarding student mental health provision, and she drew Council's attention to adaptation of services during the pandemic and ongoing consideration of how the services could better meet students' needs, routes to ensure increased numbers of students with severe needs could rapidly access NHS specialist support, favourable waiting times for less severe therapeutic services as compared to the NHS and the ongoing dialogue with the NHS about the interface with and support for the University's students with the most severe health needs. Ms Owen went on to confirm that a paper on student mental health and wellbeing provision would come through to Council in due course.

6.3 The Chair thanked the President for his report and noted the President's concern that his reports be of use to the Council. Council noted the value of the student representatives' contributions to its discussions.

- 7. LANCASTER UNIVERSITY: BREXIT UPDATE: PRESENTATION** **PAPER C**
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- 8. DRAFT STRATEGY 2025 AND VALUES** **PAPER D**
Restricted and Confidential
- 9. COUNCIL WORKING GROUP: ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE (INITIAL REPORT)**
- 9.1 The Deputy Pro-Chancellor, Professor Ritchie, outlined the work which had been undertaken on Council's behalf to understand the culture of the University. She drew members' attention to drivers for the work including the Chairs of Council (CUC) Higher Education Governance Code and the development of the new strategic plan and values.
- 9.2 Council considered how it could assure itself that values were being lived within the institution and noted the work undertaken to date, to map CUC Code values and proposed University values to inform its activity. She outlined further work to follow including discussions with a broad range of stakeholders and further data collection.
- 9.3 Council noted the oral report and the expectation of ongoing work in this area after the Sub-Group's final report.
- 10. REDUNDANCY COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20** **PAPER E**
- 10.1 The Chair of the Redundancy Committee, Mrs V Young, provided an overview of the Redundancy Committee Annual Report including the reduced number of cases compared to the previous year, which was, in part, due to the impacts of the University's current policy of reducing the number fixed term contracts where possible (favouring indefinite contracts).
- 10.2 Council approved the Redundancy Committee Annual Report 2019/20.
- 11. AUDIT COMMITTEE ORAL REPORT: MEETING OF 18 JANUARY 2021**
Restricted and Confidential
- 12. ORAL REPORT FROM FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: MEETING OF 22 JANUARY 2021**
- 12.1 The Chair of Finance and General Purposes Committee, Mrs V Young, gave an oral update confirming that the Committee had approved the Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) Return (activity-based costing system) to be submitted to the Office for Students.
- 12.2 Members discussed the significance of the TRAC report in evidencing that teaching of home students and research activity cost more to deliver than the income derived from it. By contrast international student fee income produced a small surplus. This position which was mirrored across the UK sector made clear the extent to which international fee income was critical to funding across the UK higher education sector.

- 12.2 Council noted the oral report.
- 13. FINANCIAL FORECAST INFORMATION FOR 2021 FINANCIAL AND STUDENT NUMBER DATA: RETURN TO THE OFFICE FOR STUDENTS** **PAPER F**
- 13.1 The Director of Finance gave a brief overview of the Financial Forecast information to be submitted as part of the regulatory return to the OfS. Ms Randall-Paley went on to confirm that a further version of the forecasts for internal planning and discussion would come forward in due course as part of the budget cycle.
- 13.2 Council approved the data and commentary in the appendices for the University's required Annual Financial Return to the OfS.
- 14. FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 31 JULY 2020 FINAL UPDATE** **PAPER G**
Restricted and Commercial in Confidence
- 15. FUNDRAISING AND ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT REPORTS** **PAPER H**
Restricted and Commercial in Confidence
- 16. UPDATE FOR COUNCIL: LANCASTER UNIVERSITY PREPARATIONS FOR REF 2021** **PAPER I**
- 16.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) introduced the paper detailing the University's final preparations for its REF2021 submission in March 2021. Professor Heathwaite highlighted the Units of Assessment to be submitted, those University academics participating in review panels and the strategic approach taken to improving outputs, impacts and quality ratings since the REF2014 submission.
- 16.2 Council considered the scenarios presented and the progress which they indicated had been and noted the financial significance of the REF outcome to research income and the University's reputation more broadly.
- 17. RISK APPETITE EXERCISE POSTPONEMENT** **PAPER J**
- 17.1 The Director of Strategic Planning and Governance introduced the proposal to delay the risk appetite exercise until later in 2021 after the completion of the strategy and the current uncertainties created by pandemic had subsided which the Audit Committee had been in support of.
- 17.2 Council noted the rationale and were in agreement with a postponement of the exercise.
- 18. RISK REGISTER REVIEW** **PAPER K**
- 18.1 The Director of Strategic Planning and Governance introduced the quarterly review of the Risk Register undertaken by the Executive in December 2020 and which had been received by the Audit Committee on 18 January 2021. Mr Jennings went on to draw attention to the proposed changes including to the risk rating around ANOC, as well as the broadening of Risk 10 to take account of major University initiatives.

- 18.2 Members received a precis of senior management's and Audit Committee's discussions regarding whether the definition of some risk realisation definitions were too sensitive given the University's current operating context and, as a consequence, this was leading to a high number of red-rated risks on the register. Council noted that the University was likely to be operating in a higher risk climate for the foreseeable future. In light of this, Council agreed the University would have to tolerate greater levels of risk and operate in a less comfortable environment.
- 18.3 Council noted the revised register and advised that the risk definitions and thresholds should be recalibrated as recommended by the Audit Committee.

19. REPORT TO UNIVERSITY COUNCIL ON COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS (UK AND OVERSEAS) PAPER L

- 19.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Global (Digital, International, Sustainability and Development) provided an overview of the annual report which was intended to provide Council with assurance regarding the University's global and UK based partnership activities. In particular Professor Guy drew Council's attention to the co-learning that had taken place during the pandemic regarding the ways in which teaching and learning activity could adapt and evolve, leading to enhanced working with partners and opportunities to develop such connections further.
- 19.2 Council noted progress against the University's key performance indicators and the partnership reviews to be undertaken as outlined in the paper.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

20. COUNCIL CHAIR'S ACTIONS PAPER M

- 20.1 Council noted the Chair's actions taken since the previous meeting and the approval of the appointment of Professor Simon Guy as the University's representative and Trustee on the Rigby Education Trust on 18 December 2020.

21. WRITTEN REPORTS OF MEETINGS PAPER N

- 21.1 Council noted the written reports.

22. FORWARD SCHEDULE OF COUNCIL BUSINESS PAPER O

- 22.1 Council noted the proposed forward schedule of business.

23. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 23.1 There was no additional business to report.

24. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

- 24.1 Members noted that the next meeting is scheduled to take place at 9:00 a.m. on Friday 12 March 2021.