

Council Minutes: 12 March 2021 (via Teams)

PRESENT: Rt. Hon. Alistair Burt (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 Alison Mullan (Senate representative); Baroness Neville-Jones (Deputy Pro-Chancellor); Lord Price (lay member); Ms Marcia Reid Fotheringham (lay member); Professor Ella Ritchie (Deputy Pro-Chancellor); Mr Oliver Robinson (Students' Union President); His Hon. Phillip Sycamore (lay member); Mrs Valerie Young (lay member); and Mr Atree Ghosh (Student member).

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr Paul Boustead (Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development) (*for items 9-14*); Mr Tom Buckley (Director of Recruitment, Admissions and International Development) (*for item 8*); Ms Claire Geddes (Committee Secretary); Ms Catherine Harrison (Associate Director of People, Culture and Inclusion) (*for items 9-12*); Mr Simon Jennings (Director of Strategic Planning and Governance); Ms Heather Knight (Director of Students, Education and Academic Services) (*for item 15*); Ms Nicola Owen (Deputy Chief Executive (Operations)); Ms Sabiha Patel (Associate Director (Student Wellbeing and Inclusion)) (*for item 15*); Mrs Sarah Randall-Paley (Director of Finance).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: None.

INTRODUCTION

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Council noted there were no apologies for absence for this meeting.
- 1.2 The Chair advised that Mark Price would be stepping down from Council on 31 March 2021. On behalf of the Council, he expressed great appreciation for Lord Price's service which it was hoped would be formally recognised at an event later in the year.
- 1.3 The Chair welcomed new member Atree Ghosh, as the student member of Council and who would serve until 26 June 2021. Council also noted the re-election of Oliver Robinson as Students' Union President and therefore his continuation as a Council member until the end of June 2022.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 The Vice-Chancellor declared an interest in relation to item 17 as he was serving as the interim Chair of the UA92 Board.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING: 22 JANUARY 2021

PAPER A

3.1 Council approved the minutes of the meeting held on 22 January 2021.

4. MATTERS ARISING

4.1 Council noted that the Vice-Chancellor had led discussions with UPP regarding a contribution to student accommodation goodwill payments, resulting in modest support and an increase in sinking fund activity being offered by UPP.

4.2 Council noted it had approved a third student accommodation goodwill payment offer to students of £400 by correspondence.

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

5.1 The Vice-Chancellor reported on the following:

- (i) relevant aspects of the Government's budget including the establishment of the £12billion Infrastructure Bank. He reported as anticipated, Eden North support had not been announced but the project remained on track, with further discussions with the Department of Business Innovation and Skills scheduled;
- (ii) the publication of the USS Trustees' Section 76.1 Response to the March 2020 valuation and concerns regarding the strength of the scheme's covenant. Members noted the UUK response, the planned technical consultation, potential implications and the likely period of turbulence ahead;
- (iii) plans for the return of in-person practical/laboratory-based teaching from 8 March 2021, the measures being taken to maintain a Covid-secure campus, provide broader student experience activity (as and when the Covid-19 roadmap permitted) and the decision to postpone July 2021 Graduation Ceremonies;
- (iv) recruitment and admissions activity performance to date and the continuing adaptation of conversion activity;
- (v) planning for academic delivery in 2021-22 based on the resumption of face-to-face delivery but retaining the most effective elements of the blended teaching approach, whilst also being prepared for potential periodic disruption necessitating the switching of teaching delivery modes;
- (vi) expected changes to Official Development Assistance (ODA) funding arising from the merger of Department for International Development with the Foreign and Commonwealth Office and the implications for the Global Challenges Response Fund and the University's research and contracts related to this;
- (vii) the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding with the University of Cumbria regarding the establishment of a Barrow Learning Quarter to improve access to HE and employability;

- (viii) the outcome of the local UCU ballot for strike action which had not met the required legal threshold;
- (ix) the University's performance in the QS Subject League Table for World Rankings with ten subjects in the Top 100, including Linguistics ranked at 15th; and
- (x) actions being taken to engage students in the 2021 Census.

Council was supportive of the approach being undertaken to the resumption of in-person teaching in 2021 and the following academic year and noted the ongoing uncertainties around the Government's timeframe for all students to return to in-person provision in the Summer Term.

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

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

- (i) the Students' Union's management of its financial position and plans for recovery over a three-year period and the University's additional financial support for its advice services and activity;
- (ii) the processes being undertaken to change the Students' Union's Articles of Association to enact democratic and governance reform and that the President expected to have a full complement of external trustees in the near future;
- (iii) that a referendum vote of no confidence in the University's Executive was being held.

6.2 Council noted the verbal report for the amendment to the Articles as outlined by the President: the rationale for them, their relation to the external review conducted by CounterCulture and, in particular, the proposed external trustee ratification process through an all-member ratification vote and whether this could be perceived as a disincentive for people to engage with its trustee opportunities. Council discussed the importance of the Students' Union having access to the relevant expertise it required and Council having a fuller understanding of what the Students' Union was seeking to achieve before it was asked to consider and approve the Article changes.

6.3 Council commended the Students' Union for its work to support local schools during the pandemic.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

7. STRATEGIC PLAN 2025: DRAFT PAPER C
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8. EAST ASIA ACTIVITY REPORT **PAPER D**
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9. COUNCIL WORKING GROUP: ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE **PAPER E**
(FINAL REPORT)

- 9.1 The Deputy Pro-Chancellor and Chair of the Sub-Group, Professor Ella Ritchie, provided a précis of the group's activity (its scope, scale and methodology) and its findings. The Chair drew attention to the value participants attributed to the opportunity to discuss culture and speak with Council members, the broad range of perceptions regarding collegiality, the role and importance of sub-cultures, and low levels of awareness around the University's stated values. The Chair noted that there were a number of priorities which the Sub-Group had identified to be addressed.
- 9.2 Council gave initial consideration to the report's draft findings recognising that a further, fuller discussion would be beneficial. Members commented on the following:
- (i) the meaning of culture as distinct from organisational values, and how members regarded cultures to be formed and influenced;
 - (ii) ways in which risks associated with the University's culture and organisational change might be effectively captured within the University's risk register;
 - (iii) the importance of raising the University community's understanding about underlying factors contributing to the Gender Pay Gap as well as how these were being addressed;
 - (iv) how any perceived gap in understanding between the Senate and Council might be reduced through annual joint activity (post the lifting of Covid-19 restrictions);
 - (v) the role of Council Sub-Committees, in particular the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, in giving Council assurance regarding culture and how the Sub-Group work could feed into the Council Effectiveness Review due in 2021-22; and
 - (vi) how staff participation in the work of the Sub-Group could be recognised and information communicated more generally to University staff.
- 9.3 Council noted the draft findings and agreed culture and organisational change issues would need to be appropriately incorporated into its forward schedule of business, as these issues would be important in securing the successful implementation of the strategy. Council agreed that a further discussion would be useful to agree the responses to the recommendations in more detail.

10. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION ANNUAL REPORT 2019/20 PAPER F

- 10.1 The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development introduced the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Annual Report for 2019-20 highlighting that: the report was a public document; progress had been made regarding Race Equality Charter commitments; and work was ongoing to optimise effort around the Athena SWAN (which would benefit the Gender Pay Gap also).
- 10.2 Council discussed the report: the gender categorisation protocols used and the related requirements for statutory reporting of staff data. Members welcomed the work undertaken regarding inclusion, in particular in relation to trans staff, and how future data sets could be presented in a more inclusive way where the University had this flexibility.
- 10.3 Council noted the progress made against the delivery of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Vision 2020 and the EDI agenda more generally in 2019-20 and approved the report for publication.

11. EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION: FORWARD PLAN 2020/21 PAPER G
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12. STATUTORY REPORTING ON GENDER PAY GAP (GPG) 2020 PAPER H
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13. 2020-21 NATIONAL PAY NEGOTIATIONS PAPER I
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14. COUNCIL SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELLBEING ANNUAL REPORT PAPER J

- 14.1 The Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development gave an overview of the report which provided commentary and analysis of performance over the past year (including six months of the Pandemic) and outlined priorities for 2020-21.
- 14.2 Council noted the increased levels of incident reporting (which had been an objective set by CSHaW), the distortive effects Covid-19 had had on data due to factors such as reduced numbers of campus residents and that the focus in 2020-21 was the approach to considerations arising from home working.
- 14.3 Council noted the Annual Safety, Health and Wellbeing Report 2019-20 and, on behalf of Council, the Chair expressed his appreciation for the work to support health and safety by the wider Health and Safety Team during the pandemic.

15. STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH: AN OVERVIEW OF THE UNIVERSITY CONTEXT TO MID-LENT TERM 2020/21 **PAPER K**

- 15.1 The Deputy Chief Executive (Operations) introduced the paper which was intended to provide Council with assurance regarding the University's student mental health and wellbeing support for students, following concerns raised by the Students' Union. She highlighted that the pandemic had seen scrutiny of such support across the higher education sector and that Lancaster had adapted its services too rapidly to reflect the changing student need.
- 15.2 The Director of Students, Education and Academic Services and the Associate Director (Student Wellbeing and Inclusion), drew the Council's attention to the levels of demand and the increased severity and complexity of casework during the pandemic. They also noted the heightened levels of risk, and the management of such through service development, including the introduction of digital therapies provided by third parties.
- 15.3 Council noted the positive step change in provision as well as increased engagement with regional/local NHS services to improve care pathways for students and that there were further opportunities to be explored regarding collaborations with the Third Sector and learning from sector project work funded by the Office for Students.
- 15.4 Council noted the Student Mental Health report and, on behalf of Council, the Chair expressed his appreciation for the work to support student wellbeing by the wider Student Wellbeing Team during the pandemic.

16. ORAL REPORT FROM FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE **ORAL UPDATE**

- 16.1 The Chair of Finance and General Purposes Committee gave an oral report regarding its meeting of 11 March. She highlighted that the Committee had considered a review of the University's investment portfolio through the lens of the Climate Change Declaration, the University's Out-turn Review and the reduced capital programme for 2020-21, the UA92 Sub-Group proposals and the budget setting processes and parameters for 2021-22.
- 16.2 Council noted the report.

17. LANCASTER UNIVERSITY – UNIVERSITY ACADEMY 92 LTD.: UPDATE **PAPER L**
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18. NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT **PAPER M**
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- 19. PETER SCOTT GALLERY CHARITABLE TRUST: TRUSTEE APPOINTMENT** **PAPER N**
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ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

- 20. COUNCIL CHAIR'S ACTIONS** **PAPER O**

20.1 Council noted the Chair's actions taken since the previous meeting including the reappointment of Gary Parker to serve a second term to the Strategic Reward Committee and the Remuneration Committee from 1 March 2021 to 28 February 2024.

- 21. WRITTEN REPORTS OF MEETINGS** **PAPER P**

21.1 Council noted the written reports of the Audit Committee held on 18 January 2021, and the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee held on 28 October 2020.

- 22. FORWARD SCHEDULE OF COUNCIL BUSINESS** **PAPER Q**

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 would be the Away Day held on Thursday 6 May 2021, followed by the formal Council meeting at 9:30 a.m. on Friday 7 May 2021 and, that potentially some of the Away Day activity could be held in July to enable in-person activity.