

Council Minutes: 21 March 2025

PRESENT: Rt. Hon. Alistair Burt (Pro-Chancellor) (in the Chair); Professor Andy Schofield (Vice-Chancellor); Tania Baumann (lay member); Alun Branigan (lay member); Hanah Burgess (lay member); Anthony Carey (lay member); Cerys Evans (Students' Union President) (*online*); Jill Gallard (lay member); Adrian Jonas (lay member); Claire Leitch (Senate representative); Professor Rebecca Lingwood (Deputy Vice-Chancellor); Alison Mullan (Senate representative); Marcia Reid Fotheringham (lay member); Professor Ella Ritchie (Deputy Pro-Chancellor); Professor Jo Rycroft-Malone (Senate representative); Harrison Stewart (student Council member); Maureen Whilby (lay member) (*online*).

IN ATTENDANCE: Professor Peter Atkinson (Executive Dean, Faculty of Science and Technology/Capital Project Sponsor) (*for items 10 and 11*); Claire Geddes (Committee Clerk); Victoria Grey (Interim Director of Strategic Planning and Governance) (*for item 13*); Catherine Harrison (Associate Director of Organisational Development, Reward and Inclusion) (*for item 15*); Malcolm Joyce (Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)) (*for item 10 and 11*); Adèle MacKinlay (Chief People Officer) (*observer*); Nicola Owen (Deputy Chief Executive (Operations) and Secretary); Russ Quigley (Deputy Director of Human Resources) (*for item 9*); Sarah Randall-Paley (Director of Finance).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Rt. Hon. Hazel Blears (lay member).

INTRODUCTION

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Council noted the apologies.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed Jill Gallard to her first meeting as a new Council Lay member and Adèle Mackinlay, as the University's new Chief People Officer who was observing the meeting.
- 1.3 The Chair on behalf of Council expressed thanks to Cerys Evans for her service to Council as she was stepping down from the Students' Union Presidency from 4 April 2025.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING: 24 JANUARY 2025

PAPER A

- 3.1 Council approved the minutes of the Council meeting held on 24 January 2025.

4. MATTERS ARISING

- 4.1 ***Restricted and Commercial in Confidence***

- 4.2 The Deputy Chief Executive (Operations) apprised Council regarding the branch UCU decision to issue a Failure to Agree notification regarding the changes in arrangements for the governance oversight of redundancies. She outlined that the UCU had issued a counter proposal and had formally request that Council considered its decision to disestablish Redundancy Committee and whether it would reinstate Redundancy Committee arrangements during the period for negotiation of the Failure to Agree process.
- 4.3 Council considered its position and the basis on which it had made its decision in terms of managing risk. Whilst noting UCU's request, it also noted that it had delayed implementation for several months following its initial decision in order to enable discussion with the Trade Unions. In light of the basis of the original decision, it determined that it would not reinstate the Committee for the duration of the negotiation of the Failure to Agree process.

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

- 5.1 Council noted a written report from the Executive circulated to Council on 14 March 2025. In addition, the Vice-Chancellor reported on the following.
- (i) The Office for Students' (OfS) recent request for further oversight and assurance regarding universities financial sustainability and the media spotlight institutions relating to this issue and effective governance.
 - (ii) The University's position with regards to the OfS' decision to approve a name change for UCLan to the University of Lancashire in late December 2024. He summarised the rationale for seeking mediation with the OfS to better protect the University's interests and ensure appropriate guardrails were in place around the decision, as opposed to a legal redress.
 - (iii) A complaint by the University and Colleges Union (UCU) to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) concerning University workforce wellbeing. He highlighted UCU's failure to raise any issues formally with the University prior to reporting to the HSE, but that the regulator was satisfied with the University's response and ongoing and proposed actions to respond to workforce stress and no further action or investigation had been required.

- (iv) Updates on international partnership activity with a 5-year extension to the partnership with Sunway University, Malaysia agreed through to 2030 and a variation to the Memorandum of Agreement with TAG relating to LU Ghana. He highlighted the early-stage explorations of opportunities within the Indian market with a short window being opened by the Indian Government for providers to express interest establishing operations.

Council considered the progress report on the development of the partnerships, the impacts of geopolitical impacts on current activity and noted that the business case for a new partnership would be received in due course. Members advised of the substantial regulatory burden associated with operating in India and that they would welcome international strategy being a component of Away Day discussions in May 2025.

- (vi) The University's performance in the recent QS Subject Rankings with Linguistics still 3rd in the World and 9 subjects ranked within the top 100.

- 5.2 Council noted the report and received assurance from the Executive that compliance with new OfS Conditions of Registration would be provided through annual assurance reporting to Council.

6. STUDENTS' UNION PRESIDENT'S REPORT: MARCH 2025

PAPER B

- 6.1 The Students' Union President introduced her final report to members highlighting the Students' Union's recent election activity and sector leading approach to authentic student democracy. She reflected on ways in which the Students' Union and University could improve its partnership working, including through developing a partnership agreement.
- 6.2 Members noted the elected Officers' welfare concerns for students relating to safety on and off campus. Attention was drawn to partnership working with the Director of Students, Education and Academic Services and their team to develop the University's response to sexual misconduct and the Students' Union's representations to the Police and City Council regarding student safety in the city.
- 6.3 Council noted the report and commended the Students' Union on its increased levels of student engagement with its elections.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

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| 7. | OUT-TURN REVIEW 2024-25
<i>Restricted and Commercial in Confidence</i> | PAPER C |
| 8. | LU FUTURE UPDATE
<i>Restricted and Commercial in Confidence</i> | PAPER D |
| 9. | PROCESS PROPOSAL
<i>Restricted and Confidential</i> | PAPER E |
| 10. | RUSKIN CAPITAL PROJECT REVIEW
<i>Restricted and Commercial in Confidence</i> | ORAL UPDATE |
| 11. | RUSKIN MUSEUM AND INSTITUTE | PAPER F |
| 11.1 | The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) presented the case for the establishment of the Ruskin as a University Research Institute (URI). He drew attention to the areas of commonality and distinction with the Lancaster Research institute model, as defined and accepted by Senate and Council in 2015. | |
| 11.2 | Council explored how the Institute could inform the development of the teaching portfolio and maximise external engagement opportunities. Members advised that they would welcome an opportunity to receive a future report on the strategy for the Ruskin Institute and the tangible outcomes which could be achieved through it. | |
| 11.3 | Council <u>received</u> the recommendation from Senate that a University Ruskin Institute be created and <u>approved</u> the establishment of the Ruskin URI notwithstanding the distinctions as specified with the accepted URI operating model. | |
| 12. | SENIOR APPOINTMENTS (VICE-CHANCELLOR APPOINTMENT) | PAPER G |
| 12.1 | The Pro-Chancellor provided a summary of the search process to find and select a new Vice-Chancellor to succeed Professor Andy Schofield. He highlighted the breadth of the search, diversity of the shortlisted candidates and the nature of the final selection activity. | |
| 12.2 | Council noted the rationale for Appointment Committee's recommendation: the candidate's approach, ambition for the University and, their alignment with its values. Members noted, however, that there would be an interregnum between the two substantive appointments and therefore a further proposal was being made regarding an interim appointment. | |
| 12.3 | On the recommendation of the Appointment Committee, Council <u>approved</u> the appointment of Professor Steven Decent as Vice-Chancellor from 1 January 2026. | |
| 12.4 | Council <u>approved</u> Professor Rebecca Lingwood's appointment as the Interim Vice-Chancellor for the period of 1 September 2025 to the 31 December 2025. | |

**13. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs): MID-YEAR REPORT PAPER H
FOR 2024-25**

- 13.1 The Vice-Chancellor introduced the mid-year report providing an update on the University's performance against the agreed KPIs. He gave a précis of the factors effecting KPIs relating to research, KPI 4 (undergraduate entry qualification), and the revised rating for KPI 12 (ANOC 3yr rolling average) to indicate the trajectory.
- 13.2 Members discussed the status of a number of the KPIs and urged the University to consider how greater progress could be made in relation to KPI 9 (equality and diversity). Attention was drawn to the appointment of a Dean for Culture and Inclusion and how this new, expanded role would provide greater senior focus on EDI matters holistically and strategically.
- 13.3 Council noted progress against the University KPIs as outlined in the report.

**14. STREAMLINING COMMITTEE AND GOVERNANCE OVERSIGHT PAPER I
ARRANGEMENTS**

- 14.1 The Deputy Chief Executive (Operations) outlined the proposals for the streamlining for Council sub-committee structures. She highlighted the connection of the proposals to the Senate Effectiveness Review and the wider LU Future programme and summarised the proposed approach to ensure that there was alignment with good governance and regulatory requirements, with an effective level of information and assurance reporting to enable scrutiny.
- 14.2 Council considered the proposals, with members expressing a range of views concerning the utility and purpose of a number of committees including Student Experience and Estates Committees. Members commented on the following.
- (i) The need for due consideration be given to the University's current operating context and the spotlight on governance within the sector, as well as the optics of any changes.
 - (ii) The value of co-opted members in bringing external perspectives and expertise to committees and how this could be maintained.
 - (iii) How the student voice could be heard in both Council and its sub-committee's business.
 - (iv) That care, and due consideration needed to be given to the detail of any proposals ensuring that any changes did not result in unwieldy committees with an inability to focus on the priorities.
 - (v) A wish for greater assurance regarding partnership activity.
 - (vi) Support for proposals to enhance the roles of Deputy Chairs and to develop other mechanisms for lay member assurance on specific issues.

- 14.3 Council approved in principle the further exploration of the proposals noting the timeframes and recommendations in Section 7.

15. GENDER PAY GAP (GPG) REPORT 2024

PAPER J

- 15.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor summarised the Statutory Report on the Gender Pay Gap, drawing attention to the longitudinal trend in incremental reduction in the mean and median gap percentages, as well as policy developments designed to positively affect the gap in the future. An explanation was given as to why the University's median gender hourly pay gap has increased in 2024.
- 15.2 Members discussed the report and the University's performance in closing the gap and highlighted that it would be useful to receive comparator benchmark information. Assurance was given to Council that the University's performance was not out of kilter with comparable institutions with regard to the GPG.
- 15.3 Council noted and approved the publication of the University's Gender Pay Gap Report 2024 on its website by 30 March 2025.

*** ITEMS NOT FOR DISCUSSION UNLESS REQUESTED IN ADVANCE TO THE CHAIR**

16.* NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT

PAPER 1

- 16.1 Council received and approved the recommendations from its Nominations Committee to:
- reappoint Alun Branigan and Adrian Jonas for second terms of office as lay members of Council until 31 July 2028; and
 - the appointment of Adrian Jonas to the Audit Committee to run concurrently with his term as a lay member.
- 16.2 Council ratified the reappointment of Professor Steven Young to Finance and General Purposes Committee for a second term of 3 years (until 31 July 2028), as the Senate-appointed member.

17.* ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT 2023-24

PAPER 2

- 17.1 Council noted the Annual Health and Safety Report.

18.* CHAIR'S ACTION

PAPER 3

- 18.1 Council noted and homologated the Chair's actions taken since the last meeting.

19.* WRITTEN REPORTS OF MEETINGS

PAPER 4

19.1 Council noted the written reports of the following meetings.

- Council Safety, Health and Wellbeing Committee, meeting of 7 March 2025
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, meeting of 4 February 2025
- Estates Committee, meeting of 5 March 2025
- Finance and General Purposes Committee, meeting of 24 January 2025
- Finance and General Purposes Committee, meeting of 5 March 2025
- Senate, by correspondence 6 January 2025
- Senate, meeting of 12 February 2025

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

20. FORWARD SCHEDULE OF COUNCIL BUSINESS

PAPER K

20.1 Council noted the Forward Schedule.

21. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

21.1 There was no further business discussed at the meeting.

22. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

22.1 The next meeting will be the Council Away Day and will be held from 12:00 on Thursday 15 May 2025, and will continue from 09:00 on Friday 16 May 2025 (venue to be confirmed), and will be followed by the formal meeting of Council from 13:00 on Friday 16 May in the Training Suites 1, 2, and 3, POE Building.