

## **Council Minutes: 16 May 2025**

**PRESENT:** Rt. Hon. Alistair Burt (Pro-Chancellor) (in the Chair); Professor Andy Schofield (Vice-Chancellor); Rt. Hon. Hazel Blears (lay member); Alun Branigan (lay member); Hanah Burgess (lay member); Anthony Carey (lay member); 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); Jack Watson (Acting Students' Union President); Maureen Whilby (lay member) (*online*).

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Claire Geddes (Committee Clerk); Nicola Owen (Deputy Chief Executive (Operations) and Sarah Randall-Paley (Director of Finance); Dr Michael Wykes (Director of Strategic Planning and Governance); Adèle Mackinlay (Chief People Officer) (for item 9); Alisdair Gillespie (Academic Dean) (for item 11); Nick Fragel (Director of Philanthropy, Alumni and Supporter Engagement) (for item 13);

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Tania Baumann (lay member).

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES**

- 1.1 Council noted the apologies.
- 1.2 The Chair welcomed and introduced the Acting Students' Union President, Jack Watson, to his first meeting. On behalf of Council, the Pro-Chancellor congratulated the Students' Union (officers, sports teams and staff) on its fourth consecutive Lancaster victory in the Roses Intervarsity sporting tournament against York.
- 1.3 The Chair welcomed the new Director of Strategic Planning and Governance, Michael Wykes, to his first meeting of Council, as a standing attendee.

#### **2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

#### **3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING: 21 MARCH 2025**

**PAPER A**

- 3.1 Council approved the minutes of the Council meeting held on 21 March 2025 after a minor amendment.

#### **4. MATTERS ARISING**

- 4.1 The Chair informed Council about correspondence he had received from the Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) to Council which alleged it had failed to follow the CUC Higher Education Governance Code and prevent racial discrimination.

He outlined the background to the issue reaching back to 2022, drew attention to the letter's request for an independent review of matters and suggested an approach to respond.

- 4.2 Council noted the allegations and background information, and agreed with the Pro-Chancellor's proposed course of action.

#### **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 9 May 2025.

- 5.2 The Vice-Chancellor formally congratulated the Students' Union and its sports teams on its Roses 2025 victory and reported on the following.

- (i) The publication of financial reports and analysis by both the Office for Students (8 May 2025) and WonkHE, on the financial sustainability of the Higher Education Sector. With regard to the former, he emphasised that the regulator was continued to expect bold and difficult decisions to be taken by providers to ensure financial viability.
- (ii) The Government's Immigration White Paper and its potential consequences for both the sector and the University directly. The Vice-Chancellor outlined the implications of, and risks associated with, enhanced UKVI compliance metrics and how these would be managed particularly in relation to UA92.
- (iii) Professor Jim Wild's election as President of the Royal Astronomical Society.

- 5.3 Council noted the report and recorded its congratulations to Professor Wild for his achievement.

- 5.4 Council received and noted an update from the Vice-Chancellor regarding the continued strengthening of the relationship with the current and future leadership of TAG (LU Ghana's delivery partner) and reflections from lay member Adrian Jonas after his recent trip to the campus which had been positive.

## 6. STUDENTS' UNION PRESIDENT'S REPORT: MAY 2025

## PAPER B

6.1 The Acting SU President introduced his report and highlighted the following.

- (i) The Students' Union's appreciation for its previous President, Cerys Evans, and her work which had achieved both local and national impact. Members of Council echoed this appreciation.
- (ii) The efforts of the Students' Union's students and staff in the delivery of a Roses victory at York and the wider benefits and impact of the event on the profile of the University in the local community.

6.3 The Education Officer provided a précis of a high-profile issue regarding the legality of fund-raising activity supposedly linked to one of its affiliated student groups (the Ukrainian Society). He confirmed the actions undertaken to manage, report and investigate the issue, as well as to support the wellbeing of the students concerned. He provided assurance there was no evidence that the funds in question had passed through the Students' Union and the incident appeared to be individuals acting in their own capacity as opposed to as the society itself.

6.4 Council noted the SU President's report and queried whether there were further opportunities to create wider stakeholder engagement from Roses. Members noted the open invitation to attend Roses 2026 in Lancaster (1-3 May 2026).

### ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

## 7. FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE (FGPC) REPORT OF ITS MEETING OF 30 APRIL 2025

## ORAL UPDATE

7.1 The Chair of the Finance and General Purposes Committee, Alun Branigan, reported on the following matters discussed at its meeting of the 30 April 2025.

- (i) Discussion regarding the context for budget setting for 2025-6 including student recruitment numbers, savings targets and a projected below target range adjusted net operating cashflow (ANOC) position.
- (ii) ***Restricted and Commercial in Confidence***
- (iii) The University's first Initial Public Offering (stock exchange launch) of one of its spinout companies, Quantum Base, and the opportunities this sort of activity presented in the future.
- (iv) The proposal to establish a not-for-profit vehicle for the Leipzig campus enable better access to EU research funding opportunities.

(v) ***Restricted and Commercial in Confidence***

**8. LU FUTURE UPDATE ORAL UPDATE**

8.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor provided an overview of the progress with the LU Future programme (supplementing the detailed presentation regarding LU Future principles, methodology and academic and professional services blueprints delivered at the Council Away Day on 15 May 2025). She gave a synopsis of planned next steps including the approach to, and timeframe for, decision-making and communications, and the establishment of a LU Future Delivery Team.

8.2 Council noted the report.

**9. SIGNIFICANT SEVERANCES (APPROVAL OF PROCESS): LU FUTURE PAPER C**  
***Restricted and Commercial in Confidence***

**10. PROCUREMENT OF AUDIT SERVICES: APPOINTMENT OF PAPER D**  
**INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL AUDITORS**

10.1 The Chair of the Audit Committee, Hanah Burgess, summarised for Council the process for the procurement of internal and external audit services. She confirmed that Audit Committee had been satisfied with the process and recommended the appointment of PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP and Deloitte LLP respectively. In the interests of full transparency, she highlighted the price differential between the two prospective external audit providers but affirmed that service quality had been the primary decision-making criteria. She reported that in the Audit Committee's view, during a period of significant external scrutiny of universities' financial sustainability, having confidence in external audit scrutiny was critical.

10.2 Council approved the appointments of Deloitte LLP as External Auditors and PricewaterhouseCoopers LLP as Internal Auditors for a period of three years (plus a two-year extension) from financial year 2025/26.

**11. DEGREE OUTCOMES ANALYSIS 2023/24 PAPER E**

11.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) and the University Academic Dean presented the provisional degree outcomes data for 2023/24 which depicted grade distribution broadly tracking performance in the rest of the sector (although comparative data was awaited).

Attention was draw to a reduction in the University's percentage of First-Class Honours degrees awarded but that awarding gaps remained similar to the previous year. He summarised initiatives to better understand and close a number of awarding gaps.

- 11.2 Members noted that some analyses related to small student datasets and therefore interpretation had to be undertaken with caution and further noted that an intersectional approach needed to be taken to better understand the factors behind the gaps. Further to this, Council noted that UA92 students were also beginning to influence the trends.
- 11.3 Members emphasised the need to thoroughly explore understand the gaps and be able to address them and strongly encouraged the Executive to maximise the opportunity presented through the arrival of the new Dean for Culture and Inclusion who would lead the work in this area.
- 11.4 Council received and approved the Degree Outcomes Statement for publication in line with UKSCQA guidelines on the recommendation of Senate, noting that it may be subject to minor changes.

## **12. DEPUTY PRO-CHANCELLOR APPOINTMENT**

**PAPER F**

- 12.1 The Pro-Chancellor provided a summary of the internal search process undertaken to select a second Deputy Pro-Chancellor on the basis of the Council's view of the optimal profile of skills and experience needed to fulfil the role in the University's current and likely operating context.
- 12.2 Council ratified the appointment of Mr Alun Branigan as a Deputy Pro-Chancellor of the University for an initial term of 3 years from 16 May 2025 until 15 May 2028.

## **13. ANNUAL FUNDRAISING AND ALUMNI ENGAGEMENT REPORT**

**PAPER G**

- 13.1 The Director of Philanthropy, Alumni and Supporter Engagement introduced the Annual Fundraising and Alumni Engagement Report drawing attention to the intended focus on strategic fundraising via 6-8 projects over 2025-27 and the securing of major gifts. He highlighted the importance of work with international alumni networks and golden graduates (alumni less than 10years after graduation) and the positive impact of Council lay members' engagement on fundraising efforts.
- 13.2 Council noted that there had been one complaint regarding its fundraising activity and this had been resolved effectively.
- 13.3 Council confirmed its acceptance of the Annual Fundraising and Alumni Engagement Report and its satisfaction with the assurance it provided regarding the University's fundraising and related supporter engagement activity.

**14. COUNCIL SUB-COMMITTEE ARRANGEMENTS 2025/26 PAPER H**

- 14.1 The Deputy Chief Executive (Operations) outlined the context for proposals for a lighter touch approach to the review and revision of sub-committee structures for implementation in 2025-26. She highlighted the foreseeable changing context related to a number of committees' business, the necessity to ensure a separation between the roles of governance and management and, the need to balance identifying efficiencies against managing risk and ensuring an appropriate level of scrutiny.
- 14.2 Council considered and endorsed the proposal as set out in the paper, for its committee arrangements in 2025-26, noting that revised terms of reference and recommendation regarding chairing arrangements would come back to its July meeting.

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

**15.\* RESEARCH INTEGRITY REPORT 2023-24 PAPER 1**

- 15.1 Council noted the assurance provided by the annual Research Integrity Report with regards to the University's management of research integrity matters and received Senate's recommendation for its approval.
- 15.2 Council approved the University's annual Research Integrity Report for publication.

**16.\* UNIVERSITY LAND SALE PROPOSAL PAPER 2**

- 16.1 Council noted the rationale for the proposal to sell a small piece of land (744m<sup>2</sup>) to the owners of an adjoining residential property, Highfield (located on the southern border of the Bailrigg campus) and approved the sale of the land at the valuation of £30,000.

**17.\* WRITTEN REPORTS OF MEETINGS PAPER 4**

- 17.1 Council noted the written reports of the following meetings.
- Audit Committee, meeting of 28 April 2025
  - Senate, meeting of 2 April 2025

**ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**

**18. FORWARD SCHEDULE OF COUNCIL BUSINESS PAPER K**

- 18.1 Council noted the Forward Schedule.

**19. ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

19.1 There was no further business discussed at the meeting.

**20. DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

20.1 An additional meeting is being held via Teams at 13:00-14:00 on 13 June 2025. The next ordinary meeting will be held from 13:00-17:00 on Tuesday 8 July 2025 in Training Suites 1, 2 and 3, POE Building. There will be a lunch preceding the meeting from 12:00, and dinner following the meeting from 18:00 (venue to be advised).