**UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER**

**COUNCIL**

**Minutes of a Meeting held on**

**Wednesday 11 May 2022**

**Present:**

Vijay Sharma (Vice-Chair)

George Acquah Rhiannon Jenkins

Janet Arthur Ian Johnson

Huw Barton Andrew Morgan

Edmund Burke Catherine Morley

Nishan Canagarajah Mark Purnell

Martin Cullen Jacqui Shaw

Sophie Dale-Black Richard Tapp

Cathy Ellis Carole Thorogood (by Teams)

**Apologies** for absence were received from Gary Dixon, Craig Brown, Mehmooda Duke and Azam Mamujee.

**In attendance:** Rebecca Lord and Alison Benson (Secretariat); Alex Erdlenbruch (Chief of Staff, President and Vice-Chancellor’s Office);), Geoff Green (Registrar and Secretary); Kerry Law (Chief Marketing and Engagement Officer); Martyn Riddleston (Chief Operating Officer); Liz Jones (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education); Phil Baker (PVC Research and Enterprise, for items 22/M19 and 22/M20), and Rob Fryer (Director, Student Opportunity, for item 22/M22)

22/M15 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of personal interest in any of the items dealt with in this meeting.

22/M16 **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

**Council approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 15 March 2022 as a correct record and **noted** the responses to the matters arising from that meeting.

22/M17 **DEPARTMENT FOR EDUCATION STAFF VISIT**

It was reported that civil servants from the Department for Education (DfE) had carried out a fact-finding visit to the University on 11 May, hosted by Executive Board members, lay members of Council and members of the Students’ Union Executive.

The visit had showcased the University’s stakeholder engagement strategy and focused on how Government policy impacted the University ‘on the ground’, particularly in the areas of diversity and inclusion and academic strength, and in relation to education and skills policy areas. The opportunity had also been taken to highlight Leicester-specific issues such as economic deprivation.

The visit was felt to have been successful in building relationships with DfE staff in order to facilitate more direct working in future. It was acknowledged that the consistency of strategic messaging during the visit had been a particular strength.

22/M18 **PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS**

The President and Vice-Chancellor introduced his written report for Council which provided a wide-ranging and comprehensive update on recent developments in the HE sector generally, and at Leicester specifically.

Particular attention was drawn to the recent campus visit by John Blake, Director, Fair Access and Participation at the Office for Students. The visit had been well-received and had received positive coverage on social media.

In response to a member query, it was clarified that although this was not the first time that Commonwealth Shared Scholarships had been awarded to the University, a revised approach to co-ordination of the scholarship process had led to greater success in this area. Further information would be shared with Council. [ACTION – Chief Marketing and Engagement Officer]

**Council noted** the report.

22/M19 **RESEARCH EXCELLENCE FRAMEWORK (REF) 2021 UPDATE**

Phil Baker, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) joined the meeting to present a report on the REF 2021 results.

**Council noted** that the results of REF 2021 were embargoed until 12 May 2022. The attention of Council was particularly drawn to the Grade Point Average (GPA) metric as the key measure of success and the measure on which both internal and external University messaging would focus.

It was reported that although REF submissions had increased by 42% in the 2021 round due to scheme changes since 2014, overall research funding allocations were unlikely to increase, leading to a potential real-terms decline in per-capita funding.

**Council received** a presentation on the REF 2021 results, which would be made available on SharePoint for members after the lifting of the embargo [ACTION – Secretariat].The presentation provided context on the REF, how submissions were made, how the GPA metric should be interpreted and the range of potential outcomes, with 4\* being viewed as world-leading research outputs.

The importance of REF outcomes in relation to research income, impact, quality and reputation, as well as to the University’s ability to attract and retain researchers (and, ultimately, students) was stressed.

**Council noted** that most UoL submissions had been made in REF Panel C (social sciences). Across the board Leicester’s submissions had increased by 6.7% against a sector increase of 42%, the relatively modest increase in 2021 reflecting that the UoL’s 2014 submission had been more inclusive than that of other HEIs.

**Council was pleased to note** the overview of results:

* 42% of UoL research outputs had been assessed as 4\* (world-leading), with 89% assessed as either 3\* or 4\*;
* UoL’s performance had almost doubled in the space of one seven-year REF cycle, with the highest UoL scores given for research impact;
* UoL’s institutional rank position for research now 30th in the UK, the ‘biggest mover’, representing a transformational step change;
* Six UoL subjects were ranked within the top 5 in the UK;
* Within the Wesley Group, UoL had seen the largest increase in rank position, having been bottom of the Group in REF 2014;
* Performance was strong against Russell Group universities;
* UoL was ranked 1st in the UK for Panel D for Arts and Humanities research, and second nationally for Clinical Medicine.

It was noted that internal assessment and preparation exercises had contributed to the University’s success and would provide a useful foundation for the preparations for REF 2028. A Dean of Research Excellence had also recently been appointed to ensure that momentum was maintained.

**Council welcomed** these tremendous successes, acknowledging the contribution and input of many hundreds of staff across the University and extending its thanks and congratulations to all of those involved.

Whilst not wishing to detract from the highly commendable results, Council members queried how research performance could be consolidated and further improved in future years. Given that the degree of success had been consistent across many different research areas, it was felt unlikely that the University’s 2021 performance had been an anomaly. However it would be important to resist complacency and the inherent risk of worsening performance in future REF rounds. Planned in-depth analysis of the REF results in the coming weeks would inform planning and preparation for the maintenance of research excellence going forward.

Council observed that the results were an appropriate reflection of the University’s research quality and standing, and validated its institutional mission as a research-intensive University. The provision of appropriate support and resource across all academic disciplines to maintain this standing would continue to be an underpinning challenge for Council in the years to come.

Council considered the University’s performance against that of its close competitors, considering factors such as the numbers of submissions which could affect rankings significantly. The potential for research success in particular disciplines to boost and drive student recruitment, especially in those areas where recruitment had been particularly challenging, was noted.

**Council noted** the REF 2021 results presented and formally recorded its thanks and congratulations to the University.

22/M20 **RESEARCH INSTITUTES**

**Council noted** a report on outcomes of the Research Institute Review and the establishment of Research Institutes, following endorsement and approval by Senate, as per Ordinance 10.10.

22/M21 **ANNUAL REPORT ON HARASSMENT AND SEXUAL MISCONDUCT**

**Council received and noted** the annual report on Sexual Violence and Harassment, accompanied by a presentation from the Registrar and Secretary which would be made available for members after the meeting, and which confirmed the University’s compliance with the new CUC guidance in this area [ACTION: Secretariat]. It was noted that the reporting arrangements for the Annual Report were now formalised and in future the report would be made at this point in the year via assurance from the People, EDI and Wellbeing Committee (PEDIWC) [ACTION: Secretariat].

**Council noted** the progress made by the University in response to the Office for Students (OfS) recent Statement of Expectations for preventing and addressing harassment and sexual misconduct affecting students in higher education. **Council received assurance** that, following rigorous self-assessment in 2021, the University was compliant with all expectations and had made significant progress in the identified areas of improvement.

**Council also noted** the draft Tackling Harassment and Sexual Misconduct guidance recently issued by the Committee of University Chairs (CUC). The guidance was intended to provide practical support to university governors in leading and managing harassment and sexual misconduct by highlighting their role and obligations, offering support on leading associated strategies and enabling the promotion of culture change where required. Appropriate questions for governor scrutiny were included and would be a useful resource for both PEDIWC and Council in future.

*Post-meeting note: Finalised guidance was published by the CUC on 18 May 2022.*

It was reported that in February 2022, the University had signed the Department for Education’s pledge to avoid the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDAs) in staff or student cases involving sexual harassment or misconduct. This had been well received and had reflected the University’s existing stance on NDAs rather than provoking a change in policy; Council welcomed this approach.

Council acknowledged the upward trend in related disclosures in recent years, and commended the considerable reduction in investigation length which had happened simultaneously. Discussion of this reflected the University’s investment in bringing investigation in-house and outlined the timing challenges inherent in those investigations which also involve the police and criminal justice systems. It was felt that sufficient resourcing was the main driver of improvements.

Ownership and governance arrangements for this area of work across executive, academic and corporate governance functions were noted, and these arrangements would form part of the assurance given in future annual reports. [ACTION: Registrar & Secretary]

One matter of Reserved Business was discussed.

22/M22 **STUDENT EMPLOYABILITY STRATEGY**

*Rob Fryer, Director, Student Opportunity joined the meeting*

**Council received and noted** an overview of the Student Employability Strategy. It was reported that student employability was a key driver in relation to the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) as well as for student recruitment and student experience.

Highlights of the presentation included the high-level vision, aims and KPIs; the University’s current performance in relation to the Graduate Outcomes Survey (GOS) at just above the sector average; the University’s ambition to deliver highly-skilled employment rates comparable to Russell Group universities; and its commitment to delivering equal outcomes across different demographic groups.

Work with the Students’ Union was also highlighted, including the recent launch of the student-led and student-designed Student Careers Hub.

It was noted that a KPI dashboard was currently in development which would inform future reporting in this area.

Noting the value of appropriate work experience, Council members asked whether access to schemes such as internships could be increased. It was reported that the skills log was a key element in students learning to articulate their skill set and determine their needs; not every student would benefit equally from a placement such as an internship. The approach was thus to diversify and differentiate work experience provision as well as to expand it.

Council queried the ability of Leicester graduates to compete with their peers in relation to accessing traditional graduate employers such as ‘Big 4’ accountancy firms. It was noted that engagement with such graduate employers was increasing, for example working in partnership with academic schools or other departments. It was reported that careers and employability success would realise benefits for student recruitment as well as for graduate outcomes.

Council queried the usefulness of the Graduate Outcomes Survey ‘highly-skilled work’ measure. It was acknowledged that the metric was felt not to be sufficiently well-defined and that there was currently no adequate measure of meeting individual graduate expectations. The upcoming TEF review would be likely to refine the measures, looking for example at whether or not graduates were using skills learned in their degree in their future employment. However Leicester was planning to address this in its own leavers’ survey undertaken after six months, particularly as Graduate Outcomes Survey had a 60% response rate threshold for publication.

It was clarified that the employability offer was available across all student groups including Postgraduate Research (PGR).

**Council noted** the report.

22/M23 **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI) COMMITTEE – ANNUAL REPORT**

Angie Pears, Associate Director, EDI joined the meeting

**Council received and noted** the annual report of the Equality, Diversion and Inclusion Committee.

It was reported that activity over the preceding 12-month period had focused on disability, race, gender and LGBT+ issues with a strong focus on intersectionality and on building the team’s capability. Key highlights were drawn out, including the introduction of an online EDI module as part of staff mandatory training and the Race Equality Charter submission.

In response to a member query, it was confirmed that the online EDI module currently had an 82% completion rate. It was noted that a working group, chaired by the Chief Operating Officer, was currently examining the mandatory training suite across the University to ensure that it was fully fit for purpose.

Council acknowledged the positive impact of the increase in declaration of equality characteristics, which would help to nuance and tailor EDI work going forward.

In response to a member query, it was confirmed that the University would retain single-sex facilities as well as gender-inclusive facilities.

**Council noted** the role of, and assurance provided by, the People, EDI and Wellbeing Committee in respect of this report.

22/M24 **COUNCIL EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW**

**Council noted** the follow-up report on the effectiveness review carried out in 2021. It was noted that an implementation plan would be discussed by the Nominations Committee in June 2022 with the aim of implementing all outcomes by July 2023.

22/M25 **AUDIT AND ASSURANCE COMMITTEE (RESERVED)**

**Council received and noted** a report of the Audit and Assurance Committee meeting held on 5 April 2022.

**Council noted** that there were currently no outstanding overdue audit actions and commended University colleagues for this achievement.

One matter of Reserved Business was discussed.

**Council noted** the ongoing programme of development sessions being undertaken by the Committee in line with established good practice, in order to triangulate information the Committee received elsewhere.

22/M26 **FINANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE (RESERVED)**

**Council received and noted** a report of the Finance and Infrastructure Committee meeting held on 3 May 2022.

One matter of Reserved Business was **noted.**

The Committee had considered draft financial planning for 2022/23 and had noted many challenges including increasing inflation and utilities costs. Assumptions on forecast revenues such as student tuition fee income, student accommodation and catering income had been questioned. It was noted that the final 2022/23 financial plans would be considered by Council in July 2022 and that these would be supplemented with appropriate downside analyses.

22/M27 **ALUMNI ASSOCIATION COMMITTEE**

**Council noted** a report of a meeting of the Alumni Association Committee held on 21 April 2022.

22/M28 **PEOPLE, EDI AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE**

**Council noted** a report of a meeting of the People, EDI and Wellbeing Committee held on 26 April 2022.

22/M29 **NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE BUSINESS – APPOINTMENT TO COURT**

**Council approved** a recommendation of the Nominations Committee that Mr David Wood, former High Sheriff of Rutland, be invited to become a member of Court in a personal capacity for an initial term of 3 years from 1 June 2022.

22/M30 **UNIVERSITY SEAL**

As custodian of the University’s Seal **Council received and noted** details of the affixing of the Seal to the document(s) as listed in Appendix C/22/M30 App, attached to the signed copy of these minutes.

22/M31 **DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

**Council noted** that its remaining ‘ordinary’ meeting in 2021-22 would be held at 4.00pm on Tuesday 5 July 2022.

Council noted dates of meetings scheduled for 2022-2023:

* 1pm Tuesday 13 September – 4pm Wednesday 14 September 2022: Council/ExB Awayday   
  (including Tuesday night dinner and overnight stay in Leicester)
* Wednesday 19 October 2022 - Ordinary meeting 4pm
* Tuesday 13 December 2022 - Ordinary meeting 4pm
* Wednesday 8 March 2023 - Ordinary meeting 4pm
* Wednesday 10 May 2023 - Ordinary meeting 4pm
* Wednesday 5 July 2023 - Ordinary meeting 4pm

CHAIRDuration of meeting: 1h 45 mins