

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

COUNCIL

**Minutes of a meeting held on
Monday 25 September 2017**

Present:

	Bridget Towle (Chair)	
Paul Boyle		David Moore
Mehmooda Duke		Andrew Morgan
Cathy Ellis		Paul O'Brien
Janet Finch		Steph Osborn
Martin Hindle		Mark Peel
Ian Johnson		Emma Raven
Dominic Lockett		John Schwabe
Suzanne Macleod		Vijay Sharma

In attendance: Iain Gillespie (for 17/M77); Jon Scott (for 17/M81); Geoff Green and Gill McIntyre (for 17/M82); Martyn Riddleston, and Neil Cox (Assistant Secretary).

Apologies for absence were received from Janet Arthur, Gary Dixon, Amy Moran, Carole Thorogood and David Hall (as Secretary to Council).

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

17/M74 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST (IN RELATION TO AGENDA ITEMS FOR THIS MEETING)

Ian Johnson declared a personal (family) interest in respect of the agenda item on Student Support Services, recorded under 17/M82.

17/M75 MEMBERSHIP OF COUNCIL 2017-2018

Council received details of its membership for the academic year 2017-2018. Janet Finch, Cathy Ellis and Steph Osborn were warmly welcomed to their first meeting of Council, as newly appointed lay members. Steph Osborn was serving in her capacity as the newly elected Chair of the Standing Committee of the Alumni Association.

The Chair observed that, following this latest round of appointments, and for the first time in its history, the Council had started the new academic year with a female majority (11-10) amongst its membership.

17/M76 RESPONSIBILITY OF MEMBERS AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Council received the following documents concerning the powers of Council (including those delegated to other committees/individuals), the conduct of Council business and the role of members, as routinely presented to Council at the first meeting in the new academic year:

- a. Powers of the Council
 - i. Extract from the Statutes (Section 5)
 - ii. Extract from the Ordinances (Section 9)
 - iii. Schedule of Delegation
- b. Statement of Primary Responsibilities
- c. Standing Orders

- d. Charity Commission guidance on acting in a charity's best interests

17/M77 **RESEARCH AND ENTERPRISE – ANNUAL UPDATE**

Council received a presentation from Iain Gillespie, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), on the current status and progress of work to deliver the University's research and enterprise strategies.

In a rapidly shifting and uncertain political and economic climate it was essential for the University to maintain a clear focus on its strengths and priorities. A continued drive to generate increased research income, and the roll-out of an effective strategic approach to the next REF, were two of the key immediate challenges, underpinned by a greater focus on international partnerships, interdisciplinary research, and a more business-led enterprise culture.

Council noted that the current political focus on changes to the funding regime for student tuition fees could raise new risks for the funding of research, which heightened the need for the University to be alert to all new income opportunities as they arose.

17/M78 **MINUTES**

Council considered the unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 5 July 2017. **Council approved** them as a correct record.

17/M79 **CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

With regard to the lay membership of University standing committees in 2017-18 the Chair reported that, due to pre-existing commitments, Janet Finch's appointment as a member of the Audit Committee had been deferred until 2018-19. As a consequence, Janet Arthur would remain on the Audit Committee for one more year, and would not become a member of the Finance Committee until 2018-19. In the interim, it would be possible for her to be 'in attendance' at Finance Committee meetings prior to commencing as a member.

17/M80 **PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS**

The President and Vice-Chancellor drew Council's attention to the following:

- a. he had recently visited the University's new international campus at Dalian University of Technology, Panjin, China, where he had been pleased to meet the first cohort of around 170 students entering degree programmes offered collaboratively by Dalian and Leicester. The objective in the medium term was for 10% of Leicester's undergraduate population to study for their degrees at the Dalian campus;
- b. he had recently spoken at a conference in New York attended by the UN's HeForShe IMPACT Champions, comprised of 10 Heads of State, 10 global CEOs and 10 University Presidents. Professor Boyle's session had discussed how students themselves were generating solutions to address gender-based violence on university campuses;
- c. the Chair of the House of Commons Work and Pensions Committee had written to ministers, the Pensions Regulator and the trustees of the Universities Superannuation Scheme to seek their detailed comments and explanation as to why the shortfall between the fund's assets and liabilities had widened from £5.3bn in 2014 to £12.6bn at the end of March 2017. Minute C/17/M83 also refers;

- d. changes to the funding regime for student tuition fees was featuring prominently on the current national political agenda. The University Leadership Team had already started to model the possible impact of various different future funding scenarios, and this work would be shared with the Council Advisory Committee later in the term.

17/M81 **LEAGUE TABLES AND NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY - OUTCOMES AND ACTIONS**

Council considered a report from Jon Scott, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students), on the University's five-year trend in key domestic and international league tables, and its 2017 NSS results, with resulting improvement actions.

Council noted that in the recently published *The Times* and *The Sunday Times Good University Guide 2018* the University had dropped 9 places on the previous year, to 34th, with relatively poor scores for both student experience and teaching quality. Although there had been a slight improvement in league tables overall, and in the NSS, there was significant variation in performance across the University, which was still below its target position in the rankings and not in a position to submit for TEF Gold in the short term.

Council noted that the key improvement challenges were centred on a common theme for more effective engagement and active communication with students. A comprehensive range of actions to achieve this were now being instigated in all departments, and amongst student-facing staff in Corporate Services. These were all longer term approaches, all about putting students first, and would take time to yield tangible results.

17/M82 **STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES**

Council received a presentation from Geoff Green (Academic Registrar) and Gill McIntyre (Head of Student Support) on the full breadth of student support services provided by the University. Council was reminded of the duty of care and safeguarding responsibilities of higher education institutions, and the rising demand from students nationally for welfare support, particularly in relation to mental health and sexual assault/violence issues.

Council was informed of the levels of demand placed on the various student support services, the number and type of interventions made annually, and the resources available across the specialist teams. **Council noted** that the main strategic priority was to rebalance provision away from reactive approaches to more proactive interventions, with greater collaboration between the different services, including those provided from outside of the University.

17/M83 **FINANCE COMMITTEE**

The Treasurer presented a report of a meeting of the Finance Committee held on 6 September 2017. With regard to the Universities Superannuation Scheme, **Council noted** that the consultation process on the outcome of the recent actuarial valuation of USS would come to a close at the end of September 2017. Council would be updated on possible next steps as they started to emerge.

Council noted that the Finance Committee had approved for final ratification by Council certain matters relating to proposals for the redevelopment/refurbishment of the Freeman's Common and Mary Gee sites (considered separately under 17/M92 and 17/M93 below).

17/M84 **AUDIT COMMITTEE**

The Chair of the Audit Committee presented a report of a meeting held on 12 September 2017. Council's attention was drawn to an internal audit review of information assurance processes, particularly around compliance with the current Data Protection Act and the forthcoming General Data Protection Regulations. The review had identified the need for some improvements in certain areas, and the Committee had requested to receive progress reports on this later in the year.

17/M85 **NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT 2016-2017**

Council received the Annual Report of the work of the Nominations Committee during the 2016-17 academic year.

Council noted that the Committee reported to Council and to Court from time to time, as required by the flow of business, but by long-standing arrangement did not present its minutes to either body. Instead, it reported by way of specific recommendations to whichever body was appropriate, and otherwise submitted an annual report to Council.

17/M86 **ACADEMIC ASSURANCE**

Council received, for information, a copy of a recent Leadership Foundation report on *Support for Governing Bodies in Respect of the Academic Assurance Duty*. **Council noted** that the next report on the assurance of academic quality and the student experience at the University would be presented to Council at its next meeting, as part of the annual assurance return to HEFCE.

17/M87 **FORWARD BUSINESS SCHEDULE**

Council received the current forward schedule of business for Council meetings in the remainder of 2017-18. The schedule identified and explained any adjustments made to the schedule of business since it was presented to the last meeting.

17/M88 **DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Council noted dates and times of remaining meetings of Council for 2017-2018:

Wednesday 22 November 2017 at 4pm (followed by dinner for lay members)

Wednesday 21 March 2018 at 4pm

Thursday 19 April 2018 (Awayday)

Monday 14 May 2018 at 4pm

Wednesday 11 July 2018 at 4pm

CHAIR

Duration of meeting (Unreserved and Reserved Business): Two hours and 45 minutes

