

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on Thursday 1 July 2025 at 4.00pm

Location: Council Room, First Floor, Fielding Johnson Building

Attendees: Gary Dixon (Chair), Professor Nishan Canagarajah, Professor Henrietta O'Connor, Kerry Law, Cathy Ellis, George Acquah, Lauren Bartlett, Jack Chambers, Matt Schofield, Rishi Madlani, Kevin Nagle, Professor Alison Snape, Dr Gabrielle Provan, Professor Stewart Fishwick, Professor Linda Ralphs, Mehmooda Duke, Dr Sophie Dale-Black, Mary Curnock-Cook and Glynis Wright

Apologies: Richard Tapp, Martin Cullen and Liz Blyth

In attendance: Paul Gowdridge, Geoff Green, Sally Priddle and Emma Stevens

INTRODUCTORY BUSINESS

1. Declarations of Interest

- 1.1 Professor Henrietta O'Connor and Professor Alison Snape declared an interest in the Division of Biomedical Services recommendation.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 2.1 Council considered the minutes from the previous meeting.
- 2.2 Council noted the updates on actions from previous meetings.

Resolved:

- 2.3 Council **APPROVED** the minutes of meeting on 7 May 2025 as an accurate record.

3. Chair's Business

- 3.1 Council noted that Mehmooda Duke, Gabrielle Provan and Linda Ralphs were completing their terms of office and thanked for their contributions to Council. Council congratulated Professor Liz Jones on her appointment to the University of Exeter and thanked her for her contributions to the University.
- 3.2 Council noted that on 27 May 2025, at the request of the University Secretary and in line with the University's governing instruments, the Chair of Council took Chair's Action on behalf of Council to **APPROVE** a minor revision to the University's Access and Participation Plan for submission to the Office for Students for approval. The update to the plan was technical, adding reference to fees for Classroom Based Foundation Subjects. This change was required to enable the University to launch Classroom Based Foundation Subjects in clearing this academic year. The matter was taken outside of the normal business cycle to enable earlier submission to the OfS, as timelines for responses were unclear and therefore earlier submission would give the University a better chance of receiving approval ahead of Clearing.

4. President and Vice-Chancellor's Business

- 4.1 Council considered a report from the President and Vice-Chancellor.
- 4.2 Council noted that the Immigration white paper had been published, it included a reduction to the post-study visas and the introduction of a 6% levy for institutions recruiting international students. The potential impact of these measures on recruitment remained unknown, recruitment agents had set out that numbers were holding up but acceptances remained unclear. The University was implementing a new strategy around key markets, including India, to reassure prospective students. Furthermore, revised approaches to maximizing employment and careers opportunities for international students in a shorter timeframe were being developed. The College of Business had piloted a programme of internship opportunities including virtual internships and placement opportunities which would be expanded to enable all postgraduate students to participate.
- 4.3 Council noted that the Vice-Chancellor had visited China to participate in graduation ceremonies for the first cohort to graduate from the Chongqing Medical University partnership.
- 4.4 Council noted that an independent review into the governance and management of the University of Dundee's financial position had been published. The former Vice-Chancellor at Dundee, who was the focus of the investigation, had been a Pro-Vice-Chancellor at the University of Leicester between 2016-2020. It was reported that during this time complaints were raised about their behaviour which had been investigated at the time in accordance with University policy and procedure. The report would be used as a learning case at the Executive Board Away Day and with the Professional Services leadership team. The Executive had already considered an analysis of the report and the measures the University had in place to ensure a similar situation would not arise at Leicester.
- 4.5 Council noted an update on two league tables, the University had risen 5 places to 36th in the Complete University Guide and had fallen 41 places to 326th in the QS rankings. It was reported that despite falling in the QS rankings the University had improved in 8 out of 9 measures, citations and employer reputation had fallen significantly. Analysis had been undertaken and an action plan would be developed.
- 4.6 Council discussed the impact of pre-change engagement on institutional activities. It was noted that there had been no impact on international partnerships and the University was continuing discussions to extend partnerships.
- 4.7 The President and Vice-Chancellor thanked Gary Dixon for the support given to him personally and as Chair of Council throughout his term of office.

STRATEGIC BUSINESS**5. Risk Management**

- 5.1 Council considered the Strategic Risk Report and noted that the Audit and Assurance Committee had discussed the importance of completing mitigations in line with the agreed timeframes. It was reported that following the announcement of pre-change engagement, the strategic risks would be reviewed and updated to ensure there was a single integrated risk register that reflected the institutional challenges. Risk management was being embedded into all institutional processes, there was explicit consideration of risks as part of the institutional planning processes and consideration of risks had been integrated into Council and Sub-Committees workplans. Additional training on risk management would be implemented.
- 5.2 Council discussed how the interdependencies between risks were represented, this would be taken forwards by the University Risk Committee, which was being reviewed by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professional Services as the new chair, to focus further on risk content in addition to risk management process. Council discussed how investment in risk mitigation was articulated in the budget.
- 5.3 Council discussed the how the University planned to deliver high quality education upon the departure of the Pro-Vice Chancellor Education, it was reported that an interim would be appointed to enable a transition from the departing Pro-Vice Chancellor Education and then a substantive role would be recruited. The Remuneration Committee had reviewed the role descriptor and discussed how the right candidate would be identified.

Action:

- 5.4 Articulate investments in risk mitigation in the five-year forecast. **[Owner: Chief Financial Officer]**
- 5.5 Consider having an item on opportunities and risks at the Council and ExB Away Day.
[Owner: Registrar and University Secretary]

6. Strategic Review [RESERVED]

- 6.1 Council considered an update on the progress of the Strategic Review at the University of Leicester since the last Council meeting.

7. Financial Planning [RESERVED]

- 7.1 Council considered the update on financial planning and noted that the budget had been recommended to Council by the Executive Board and Finance and Infrastructure.
- 7.2 Council **APPROVED** the 2025-2026 University Budget.

SECRETARY'S BUSINESS**8. Division of Biomedical Services [RESERVED]**

- 8.1 Council considered an update on the Division of Biomedical Services review.

9. Access and Participation Plan

- 9.1 Council considered a progress update on the implementation of the current Access and Participation Plan and preparations for the implementation of the new Access and Participation Plan from 1 September 2025. The new plan had revised targets and continued the implementation of data-led interventions focusing on supporting students from under-represented groups.
- 9.2 Council noted that the People, EDI and Well-being Committee had reviewed the progress and scrutinized outgoing targets including mature students and the awarding gap. The awarding gap remained a target for the University but there had been progress in the latest data set.

Action:

- 9.3 Schedule a Council deep dive into the new Access and Participation Plan and its targets.

10. Council Effectiveness Review

- 10.1 Council considered a verbal update on the outcome of the Governance Effectiveness Review, that had focused on how effectively Council fulfilled its role, membership and communication. Over 30 interviews had been undertaken, Council and Sub-Committee meetings had been observed and staff and student focused groups had been held. Surveys of members of Council, Senate and the Executive Board had been undertaken.
- 10.2 It was reported that there had been a lot of positive feedback received and Sub-Committees offered constructive challenge. Members sought more time to discuss strategic matters and there could be improved communication between Sub-Committees, Senate and Council. It was suggested that members' skills could be utilized more and the visibility of Council's role could be improved. The Executive Team was considered strong and visible by staff, but there could be greater awareness of Senate and Council and their decision making. Members were confident in the quality of information received but paper packs could be large and there were opportunities to streamline reporting.
- 10.3 Council noted that the full governance effectiveness review would be reported to the October Council meeting.

11. Freedom of Speech Code of Practice

- 11.1 Council considered the revised Freedom of Speech Code of Practice and the update on institutional preparation for the implementation of the Higher Education Freedom of Speech Act 2023 from 1 August 2025. Council welcomed the action plan setting out the arrangements in place to ensure compliance and controls to identify risks.

Council noted communication of the Code and expectations for compliance. Council noted that Students' Union Officers and representatives had engaged with the development and received training on the new expectations. Council considered the complications of implementing the Code and the Act's expectations internationally.

Resolved:

- 11.2 Council **APPROVED** the revised Code of Practice concerning Freedom of Speech.

12. Council and Executive Board Away Day

- 12.1 Council considered the draft agenda for the Council and Executive Board Away Day. It was suggested that the first half day was allocated the Strategic Review to enable in depth discussion and enable Council to understand the implications of proposed changes. It was suggested that the risk implications of the Strategic Review should be included on the agenda, alongside potential growth areas and income streams. It was suggested that potential quick wins from the governance review could be implemented as part of the Away Day. Furthermore, it was suggested that Council would welcome an understanding of strategies to support students' well-being, mental health and the cost of living.

13. Research Integrity Statement

- 13.1 On the recommendation of Senate, Council considered the annual Research Integrity Statement. The Concordat to Support Research Integrity required employers of researchers to publish a short annual statement providing a summary of actions and activities that had been undertaken to support and strengthen understanding and application of research integrity issues.

Resolved:

- 13.2 Council **APPROVED** the annual Research Integrity Statement for publication.

REPORTED BUSINESS

14. Nominations Committee

- 14.1 Council considered the recommendations from the Nominations Committee for Council committee membership and appointments.

Resolved:

- 14.2 Council **APPROVED** the appointment of the additional student member to the membership of Audit and Assurance Committee.
- 14.3 Council **APPROVED** the appointment of Lauren Bartlett as a member of Remuneration Committee from 1 August 2025 for a term of three years.
- 14.4 Council **APPROVED** the appointment of Mary Curnock-Cook as Chair of Audit and Assurance Committee for an interim period from 1 August 2025 to 31 July 2026.
- 14.5 Council **APPROVED** appointment of Associate Members of Court.

15. Senate

- 15.1 Council noted the update from Senate's meeting on 11 June 2025, in particular the College of Life Sciences restructure that established a fourth School and implemented a revised management structure.

16. Finance and Infrastructure Committee [RESERVED]

- 16.1 Council considered an update from the Chair of Finance and Infrastructure Committee and noted the minutes from the meeting held on 17 June 2025 including the in-depth review of the institution's financial position and progress of actions to secure sustainability. The University's strategies to grow income and improve commercial performance were reviewed and would continue to be monitored in the 2025/26 academic year. The independent review of University of Dundee's finances would be reflected upon and lessons learnt built into the way of working of the Committee going forward.
- 16.2 Council thanked the Estates Team for their work and management of a vast number of projects and it was noted that the Estates masterplan would be reported to Council in November.

17. Audit and Assurance Committee [RESERVED]

- 17.1 Council noted the report from 10 June 2025 including the Committee's consideration of the External Audit Plan 2024-25 and the proposed Internal Audit Plan 2025-26.

18. People, EDI and Wellbeing Committee

- 18.1 Council noted the report from 19 June 2025 including the Committee's consideration of the University's response to the Supreme Court judgement on gender and received assurance on support being provided to students and staff. It was reported that the Committee had heard about the increased support the University was providing to staff for debt and mental health, an additional report on this would be considered by the Committee next academic year together with the institutional response ensuring support for students and staff during a difficult time.

Action:

- 18.2 New Council members to receive financial literacy training to support discussion of relevant matters being presented. **[Owner: Registrar and University Secretary]**

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION**19. Any Other Business**

- 19.1 No business was raised.