**UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER**

**COUNCIL**

**Minutes of a Meeting held on**

**Tuesday 5 March 2024**

**Present:**

Gary Dixon (Chair)

George Acquah Liz Blyth

Nishan Canagarajah Jack Chambers

Martin Cullen Sophie Dale-Black

Mehmooda Duke Cathy Ellis

Kerry Law Catherine Morley

Kevin Nagle Henrietta O’Connor

Gabrielle Provan Jacqui Shaw

Richard Tapp

**In attendance:** Alison Benson (Assistant Secretary to Council); Paul Gowdridge (Chief Financial Officer); Geoff Green (Registrar and Secretary); Liz Jones (PVC Education); Kevin Joyce (Secretariat)

**Apologies:** Lauren Bartlett; Rishi Madlani; Mark Purnell; Archie Robinson

24/M01 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

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

24/M02 **MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING**

**Council approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 12 December 2023 as a correct record.

24/M03 **CHAIR’S BUSINESS**

The Chair reminded Council members of the difficulty facing all Higher Education (HE) institutions in the current economic climate, referencing other Universities that had posted significant financial deficits.

24/M04 **PRESIDENT AND VICE CHANCELLOR’S BUSINESS**

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

It was highlighted that the President and Vice-Chancellor had completed his third tour of the University, during which he had visited every school, department and professional services division. The visits had evidenced a much greater awareness of the University strategy from staff and students. Colleagues had raised concerns about the financial environment in which the University was operating, and the impact this was having.

The University had seen a drop in international postgraduate recruitment in January 2024, but had exceeded its home recruitment target in September 2023.

The President and Vice-Chancellor congratulated the Students’ Union on their Centenary last week and commented on the success of the Centenary event that had taken place.

It was highlighted that Friday 8 March 2024 was International Women’s Day with a range of activities taking place across the University.

**Council noted** the report.

24/M05 **STRATEGIC THEME UPDATE: OUR CITIZENS**

**Council considered** a presentation on the progress made against the Our Citizens Strategic Theme delivery for the period 2022-2023 and the key priorities for 2023-24.

**Council noted** the performance against the set Key Performance Indicators.

**Council noted** that the Internationalisation Strategy had been finalised and implemented and a University Policy Institute had been established with a Westminster launch event in July 2024.

**Council noted** the priority projects for year 2 and the emerging priorities for 2023-24 along with the risks associated with these projects.

**Council noted** that the Staff Survey Pulse Survey had been launched with the closing date of 22 March 2024.

**Council noted** the report.

24/M06 **GUIDING PRINCIPLE: OPERATIONAL EXCELLENCE**

**Council considered** a presentation on the progress that the University had made in embedding its guiding principle of Operational Excellence (OpEx) from its current Strategy.

**Council noted** that OpEx was a way of working and not a project or programme. It was intended to drive efficiency and effectiveness, and to empower staff to deliver continuous improvement.

**Council noted** the governance oversight in place which included a Task and Finish Group, Steering Group, and Advisory Group.

**Council noted** the OpEx framework which included an ethos of innovation and improvement. There were three key workstreams which were People and Culture, Performance, and Process Projects. All of the workstreams had key principles and were aligned to the University Strategy.

**Council noted** that a library of case studies had been built to allow staff to tell and share their stories across the University. This demonstrated a culture change and embracing of OpEx. The messaging needed to remain simple to ensure continued engagement.

**Council noted** that the Concerned@ process was just one of a range of measures the University had in place to provide student support, and to prevent and risk manage concerns from students.

**Council noted** that the majority of the OpEx case studies related to student-focussed events. Consideration was needed to include cases relating to issues identified from the student satisfaction services.

**Council noted** that, although there had been an increase in cases of mitigating circumstances, this represented greater student awareness of the process than in previous years.

**Council noted** that an annual report against each of the Strategy guiding principles would be presented to Council from 2024/25.

**Council noted** the report.

24/M07 **COLLEGE OF SOCIAL SCIENCES, ARTS AND HUMANITIES STRUCTURE**

**Council considered** a presentation on the restructuring of the College of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities (CSSAH) and the creation of a new College of Business.

**Council noted** progress of the CSSAH Task and Finish Group, which was constituted following Senate approval in June 2023, to consider feasibility options for re-structuring CSSAH. The group had met on a number of occasions and presented different options. Colleagues and Trade Unions had been engaged throughout the process and it had been determined that the optimal structure would be to create a separate College of Business.

**Council noted** that deep dives had been completed into other potential options, including the creation of a combined College of Business and Law.

**Council noted** that, at its meeting on 14 February 2024, Senate had considered these proposals and had approved the creation of a new College of Business.

**Council noted** that the cost of implementing the fourth college was being measured against the income gains. This could trigger wider opportunities for further change to maximise financial efficiencies.

**Council noted** that consideration would be given to the impact this change would have on the existing CSSAH. This would be used positively to relaunch and sell the benefits of all of the existing Colleges.

**Council endorsed** the approval given by Senate to create a fourth college, the College of Business, with effect from 1 August 2024.

**Council noted** that the final name of the new College of Business would be considered by Senate at its meeting in June 2024, for implementation from 1 August 2024.

24/M08 **RISK MANAGEMENT**

**Council considered** the latest Strategic University Risk Register (SURR), updated for the winter term 2023/24, which had received prior scrutiny from the Audit and Assurance Committee.

**Council noted** that the emerging risks presented by global instability were not reflected centrally but were suitably captured within the University’s Strategic or local divisional risk registers.

**Council noted** thattwo risks had increased from high to very high rating.

* + **Risk EB5 -** There was the risk that the University would not meet its student recruitment targets as outlined in the approved budget forecast.
  + **Risk EB9 -** Insufficient cash to invest in infrastructure and operating costs while maintaining ability to meet all financial obligations.

**Council noted** that two risks, EB5 and EB6, which remained very high were actively being considered by the Finance and Infrastructure Committee. The high level of risk was being tolerated and the focus remained on finding more actions that would mitigate these risks.

**Council noted** the link between the risk register and OpEx, ensuring that the focus was maintained on the risk register when implementing any efficiencies.

**Council noted** the report.

24/M09 **ASSURANCE AND COMPLIANCE ITEMS**

Annual Academic Assurance Statement 2023

**Council received** the annual report confirming the processes that were in place to ensure quality and standards of provision mapped against the Office for Students (OfS) ‘B’ Conditions of Registration. This included analysis of the University’s assessment and marking processes, an outline of the academic governance structure, a summary of quality assurance practices, and an outline of awarding regulations and the institutional degree.

**Council noted** that, in relation to OfS Condition 3B, the value of courses to employers was measured as part of the Graduate Outcomes Survey which measured the number of students moving into graduate level employment. This was a key metric in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) assessment and the University currently performed well in this area.

**Council highlighted** that Stage Two complaints had increased in volume and in proportion to Stage One complaints. **Council requested** more information into the root cause analysis of this increase.

**Council approved** the Annual Academic Assurance Statement 2023.

Annual OfS Conditions of Registration Assurance Report

**Council received** asummary report showing the internal mapping and assurance routes associated with each OfS condition of registration. This was the first time this had been presented to Council in this format and would now be presented annually.

**Council noted** the Annual OfS Conditions of Registration Assurance Report.

Degree Outcomes Statement 2023

**Council received** the degree outcome statement which provided assurance that the value of qualifications granted by the University was in line with sector-recognised standards. The statement included analysis of the University’s assessment and marking processes, an outline of the academic governance structure, a summary of quality assurance practices, and an outline of awarding regulations and the institutional degree classification profile.

**Council approved** the Degree Outcomes Statement 2023.

Student Protection Plan 2023/24

**Council received** the student protection plan which set out the manner in which the University protected students’ interests in a number of circumstances relating to the ability of the University to deliver its programmes. The plan was a requirement for ongoing registration with the OfS and was subject to an annual review and approval by Council.

**Council approved** the Student Protection Plan 2023/24.

24/M10 **HONORARY DEGREES**

**Council approved** the nominations for Honorary Degrees and Distinguished Honorary Fellowships for 2024.

24/M11 **APOLLO PARTNERSHIP**

**Council received** a verbal update on the recent developments of the Apollo Partnership.

**Council noted** that the Deputy Vice Chancellor (Professional Services) and the Provost and Deputy Vice Chancellor were visiting the TAU University in Chittoor, India in April 2024 to re-enforce the vision of the partnership.

**Council noted** that the full business case was due to be presented to the Finance and Infrastructure Committee in April 2024 and to Council in May 2024.

24/M12 **NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE**

**Council received and noted** the minutes of the meeting of the Nominations Committee held on 1 February 2024.

**Council approved** the extension of all Court memberships with current end dates of 31 December 2023 for a further year in the first instance, to 31 December 2024, to enable a comprehensive review of Court memberships to be undertaken during 2024.

**Council approved** the appointment of two Emeritus Professors as Associate Members of Court, effective until 31 December 2026.

24/M13 **SENATE**

**Council received and noted** the minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 14 February 2024.

24/M14 **AUDIT AND ASSURANCE COMMITTEE**

**Council received and noted** the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Assurance Committee held on 20 February 2024.

24/M15 **FINANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE**

**Council received and noted** the minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Infrastructure Committee held on 15 February 2024.

24/M16 **PEOPLE, EDI AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE**

**Council received and noted** the minutes of the meeting of the People EDI and Wellbeing Committee held on 22 February 2024.

**Council noted** that, whilst analysis was completed on the gender pay gap and ethnicity pay gap separately, there was no available analysis considering the intersection of gender and ethnicity together. **Council requested** that this analysis be completed and/or made available for consultation.

**Council noted** that a Freedom of Speech working group had been set up to monitor and review the recent changes to the Freedom of Speech Act, which had been introduced by the UK Parliament. This legislation placed a legal requirement on the University to protect and facilitate freedom of speech for staff, students and visitors.

24/M17 **DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

**Council noted** the dates of meetings scheduled for 2023/2024:

* Wednesday 8 May 2024 at 4pm
* Tuesday 2 July 2024 at 4pm

Confirmed dates for 2024/2025 meetings were also shared.

24/M18 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

**Council noted** that, following the recent interim Ofsted audit, a full inspection was expected in the next twelve months. Relevant reporting on the results of Ofsted inspections would be presented to Council following its completion.

CHAIR Duration of meeting: 1 hour 40 Minutes