

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

COUNCIL

Minutes of a Meeting held on
Wednesday 16 October 2024

Present:

Gary Dixon (Chair)

George Acquah	Lauren Bartlett
Liz Blyth	Nishan Canagarajah
Martin Cullen	Mary Curnock Cook
Sophie Dale-Black	Cathy Ellis
Stewart Fishwick	Kerry Law
Rishi Madlani	Catherine Morley
Kevin Nagle	Henrietta O'Connor
Gabrielle Provan	Linda Ralphs
Richard Tapp	Joshitha Venkataraman
Glynis Wright	

In attendance: Paul Gowdrige (Chief Financial Officer); Geoff Green (Registrar and Secretary); Liz Jones (PVC Education); Alison Dubas (Governance Office); Phil Baker (PVC Research and Enterprise) and Ian Forristal (Director of Strategy and Planning) for minute 24/M71; Emma Stevens (Director of Human Resources) for minute 24/M58

Apologies: Jack Chambers, Mehmooda Duke

24/M52 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of personal interest pertaining to any of the items on the agenda.

24/M53 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Council **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 2 July 2024 as a correct record and **noted** the responses to the matters arising from that meeting.

24/M54 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Chair welcomed Mary Curnock Cook, Stewart Fishwick, Linda Ralphs, Joshitha Venkataraman and Glynis Wright to their first formal meeting of Council.

Members were reminded, particularly for information security reasons, to access Council papers through their University accounts.

The Chair commended University staff, and finance colleagues in particular, noting the University's financial position and the challenges faced by the higher education sector.

24/M55 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 higher education sector

generally, and at Leicester specifically.

A number of events had occurred at the University over recent weeks, including Fresher's week and a series of activities to celebrate Black History Month. All events had been well received by students.

95% of expected students had registered and commenced their studies at the University. The sector continued to experience challenges in international student recruitment, however, the University had met its expected position in terms of the number of international students recruited.

The challenging financial, and higher education environment generally, had an impact upon staff morale. Although recruitment control processes remained in place, staff were being recruited into areas where additional resource was crucial.

Council **noted** the report.

24/M56 FINANCE [RESERVED]

24/M57 STUDENT EXPERIENCE – ANALYSIS OF THE NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2024 RESULTS

Council **considered** a paper and supporting presentation that reported on the analysis of the National Student Survey (NSS) 2024 results and subsequent actions that had been developed in response to the results.

In comparison to previous years, the University had improved its performance to rank within the top 30 UK higher education institutions, rising to 27th place from 39th in 2023. The University's positivity scores had increased across each of the seven NSS themes, resulting in an improved decile position for 'organisation and management' and 'student voice' metrics. Although other areas, such as 'teaching on my course' had seen improved decile positions in 2024, work was required to further improve the position.

Significant gains had been made in the timely return of marking to students, but there remained some elements, such as clarity of marking criteria, where continued improvements were needed.

Analysis of the results identified variation in performance across all schools, and Council **noted** the correlation between consistent institutional performance and achieving and maintaining Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) gold award. Priority areas for improvement would be set out for all individual Schools, via education meetings, led by the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Education. The ambition was to rank in the top three deciles across all NSS themes by 2026.

The positivity gap for different student demographics continued to narrow year on year, but it was **noted** that ongoing work was required to continue this trend.

Council explored the reasons why 'freedom of expression' was the lowest scoring area for the University. Analysis of the data did not identify any particular trends in responses and, as the question had only been introduced within the past two years, there was not a significant amount of benchmark data. There could be a link to the discipline studied and that some students would not identify with the question, or find it relevant.

Council **noted** the NSS results and subsequent follow up actions and commended the positive scores achieved in the 2024 survey.

24/M58 VOLUNTARY SEVERANCE SCHEME [RESERVED]

24/M59 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Terms of Reference 2024/25

Council **approved** the Nominations Committee 2024/25 terms of reference and the Corporate Governance Code of Practice and Code of Conduct (referred for Council's approval, see item 24/M67).

Report of Business Arising in September 2024

Council **noted** the report of business arising from the Nominations Committee meeting held on 23 September 2024.

Council Membership of University Committees 2024/25

Council **noted** the Council memberships of University Committees for 2024/25.

The Nominations Committee Annual Report 2023/24

Council **noted** the annual report of the Nominations Committee 2023/24, which would be published on the University's website [**ACTION: Governance Office**].

24/M60 FINANCE AND INFRASTRUCTURE COMMITTEE [RESERVED]

Council **noted** the report of the Finance and Infrastructure Committee meeting held on 26 September 2024 and **approved** the terms of reference for 2024/25.

24/M61 AUDIT AND ASSURANCE COMMITTEE [RESERVED]

Council **noted** the report of the Audit and Assurance Committee meeting held on 1 October 2024 and **approved** the terms of reference for 2024/25.

24/M62 PEOPLE, EDI AND WELLBEING COMMITTEE

The Acting Chair of People, EDI and Wellbeing Committee (PEDIWC) provided Council with an overview of the key discussion points at the most recent meeting of the Committee. The Committee had considered the access and participation plan, in particular the potential future groups of students that might require additional support and bursaries.

[RESERVED] An equality analysis of the VSS scheme should be submitted to a future meeting of PEDIWC for its consideration [**ACTION: Director of HR/Governance Office**].

Council **noted** the report of the People, EDI and Wellbeing Committee meeting held on 8 October 2024 and **approved** the terms of reference for 2024/25.

24/M63 SENATE

Council **noted** the report of the Senate meeting held on 2 October 2024.

24/M64 COUNCIL GOVERNANCE FRAMEWORKCouncil Governance Framework 2024/25

Council **approved** the Council Governance Framework for 2024/25, which comprised the following elements:

- a) Council membership 2024/25, inclusive of the new members;
- b) Powers of Council 2024/25, which were unchanged from the previous year;
- c) Statement of Primary Responsibilities, which was unchanged from the previous year;
- d) Standing Orders 2024/25, which were unchanged from the previous year;
- e) Charity Commission Guidance, which was unchanged from the previous year;
- f) Council Members' Register of Interest 2024/25.

Annual Review of the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) Code of Compliance Analysis

Council **noted** the annual review of compliance with the CUC Higher Education Code of Governance 2020. Section 5.8 of the code would be amended to reflect the date of the Chair's appraisal process, which was carried out in March 2024, not 2022 as stated [**ACTION: Registrar and Secretary/Governance Office**].

24/M65 CHANGES TO STATUTES AND ORDINANCESProposed Change to Ordinance 34

Council **noted** that the establishment of the College of Business had increased the number of colleges from three to four. This increase resulted in changes to the number of members of Senate, which needed to be reflected within Ordinance 34: Appointment of members of Senate under Statutes Section 6.1.

Council **approved** the proposed changes to Ordinance 34 as presented within the paper. The updates would be actioned and published on the University website [**ACTION: Governance Office**].

Proposed Changes to Statute Six

Council **noted** that the increase in the number of colleges also resulted in changes to Statute six.

Council **approved, in principle**, the proposed changes to Statute six: The Senate. Per process for updates to Statutes, Senate had given in principle approval at its October 2024 meeting, following which, Council was required to review and approve the revisions on two separate occasions. The revisions to Statute six would be submitted back to Council at its December 2024 meeting for approval, before submission to the Privy Council for the final stage of approval [**ACTION: Governance Office**].

24/M66 SCHEDULE OF DELEGATION

Council **approved** amendments to the Schedule of Delegation, subject to a review and check of section 44b (power of the Remuneration Committee to approve severance or other payments made to members of the Executive Board and staff where salaries were in excess of £150k). It was **discussed** that this should be amended to 'in excess of £100k', but this

would be checked and confirmed [**ACTION: Registrar and Secretary**].

24/M67 CORPORATE GOVERNANCE CODE OF PRACTICE

Council **approved** the Corporate Governance Code of Practice, including the Code of Conduct.

24/M68 PREVENT DUTY

Council **approved** the University's Prevent duty accountability and data return for the 2023/24 academic year for signing by the Chair of Council and submission to the Office for Students by 1 December 2024.

Council **noted** that actions taken by the University to safeguard its student population would be reported through the People, EDI & Wellbeing Committee [**ACTION: Registrar & Secretary**].

24/M69 PHILANTHROPY [RESERVED]

Council **noted** the 2023/24 end of year philanthropy and alumni engagement report.

24/M70 UNIVERSITY SEAL

Council **noted** the affixing of the University seal to official documents.

24/M71 UNIVERSITY STRATEGY

Annual Strategy Performance and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Council **considered** the Annual Strategy Performance and KPI report.

The performance of the ten institutional, strategic KPIs had been measured and rated using red, amber, green (RAG) ratings against both overall target and year on year milestones. Seven of the KPIs had been rated green, one was rated amber and two had been rated red.

In respect of the research inspired education strategic theme, Council **noted** that the target to achieve TEF gold by 2030 had been exceeded, but that ongoing work would be required to maintain this award in future years. Good progress continued to be made against the internal student survey KPI, although the low response rate was **noted**. The education outcomes awarding gap was rated red, however, there had been a sector wide increase in the awarding gap.

In respect of the research inspired education theme, Council **noted** that the University achieved a top 30 position in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021, and the target had been reset to achieve a top 25 position in REF 2029. The research income per FTE KPI was rated amber and the doctoral completions per FTE KPI was rated green.

In respect of the our citizens strategic theme, Council **noted** the student engagement KPI was rated amber, but remained on track to achieve the target milestone. Progress towards achievement of the net zero carbon emissions was positive and had been rated green. The staff engagement KPI had also been rated green.

The ongoing financial challenges meant that the operating cash KPI was currently rated red. However, this KPI remained a priority and significant work would continue to progress the

KPI towards target.

A strategy refresh exercise would commence in 2025, which would enable a review, and a potential reset, of some of the KPIs. This refresh exercise would also present an opportunity to reconsider the internal student survey KPI as it was acknowledged that response rates were relatively low, and there could be the option to consolidate and garner higher quality data from fewer student surveys. There would be opportunities for Council to feed into the refresh process.

[RESERVED] Council **noted** that an impact assessment, as a result of the implementation of the VSS, would need to be conducted on each of the KPIs at an appropriate point [**ACTION: Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professional Services**].

Strategic Theme Update – World Changing Research

Council **considered** the report on the World Changing Research theme of the University strategy.

Good progress had been made against each of the four strategic aims of the theme. There had been significant research awards and research income received during 2022/23 and 2023/24, including the University's largest ever award from the Biomedical Research Centre (BSC). It was anticipated that the receipt of such awards and income would continue to increase. The Times Higher analysis had ranked the University second in the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF). The University had also experienced a record year for income generated by IP licenses and two new spin out companies had been established.

Council **noted** the priorities within each of the strategic themes for the 2024/25 academic year.

24/M72 DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Council **noted** the dates of meetings scheduled for 2024-2025, all at 4pm:

Wednesday 4 December 2024

Tuesday 4 March 2025

Wednesday 7 May 2025

Tuesday 1 July 2025

24/M73 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

There was no other business considered at the meeting.

Duration of meeting: 2 hours 5 minutes