

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting held on
Wednesday 21 March 2018

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

18/9 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Gary Dixon declared an interest in the business transacted under 18/M16a, and left the room for the discussion of this item.

18/M10 **CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

The Chair reflected on the current uncertainty and pace of change in the higher education sector and recommended the 'Wonkhe Monday Morning Briefing' (available by free email subscription) as an excellent source of background information and news.

18/M11 **UNRESERVED MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Council considered the unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2017. **Council approved** them as a correct record. There were no matters arising.

18/M12 **PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS**

The President and Vice-Chancellor drew Council's attention to a wide range of recent developments and news items in the HE sector generally, and at Leicester, including in particular:

- a. USS Pensions Dispute – at national level, UCU branch members had rejected a compromise deal provisionally agreed by union leaders and UUK that would have protected USS defined benefits for three years, but at a lower rate and in return for an increase in contributions. Talks were continuing and UUK had announced that it would establish an independent panel of experts to review the processes behind the valuation of the USS deficit at £6.1 billion, a figure challenged by UCU. As things stood, a plan to place USS on a sustainable footing was still required to be submitted to the Pensions Regulator by 30 June 2018.

Council noted that, at Leicester, the Senate had voted unanimously in support of a motion which encouraged UUK and UCU to continue their ACAS supported discussions with the aim of achieving a sustainable pension outcome acceptable to both employees and employers. This view would be communicated to UUK on behalf of Senate.

Council also noted that the University was taking all possible steps to avoid disruption to students from ongoing industrial action, particularly with regard to the approaching summer examinations.

- b. Higher Education Review – the government had launched a year-long review of university funding and fees. It would consider matters such as student choice and value for money, and possible ways of introducing variable tuition fees;
- c. Office for Students – the OfS had now launched its regulatory framework. This was not greatly different from proposals published at the end of 2017, although now with a stronger emphasis on the need for universities to “engage with the student voice”. The government had also indicated that it expected the OfS to provide more challenge to institutions in areas such as grade inflation on degree classifications, and the increasing number of Unconditional offers being made to applicants.

A detailed OfS update would feature as part of the Council Awayday on 19 April 2018.

- d. Chancellor-Elect – in the light of some feedback regarding the appointment of Lord David Willetts as the next Chancellor, the University had offered to work with staff and students – and other stakeholder groups such as Council, Senate, Court and the Alumni Association - to consider the process by which Chancellors might be appointed in future. It was envisaged that a task and finish group would be established to oversee this work in as timely a way as possible, and to present its findings – with recommendations, as appropriate – for consideration by Council in due course.

Arrangements were being made for Lord Willetts to attend a meeting with the University Executive Board and the Students’ Union Executive, and for him to take part in a subsequent ‘open forum’ event.

- e. Centenary Celebrations – to celebrate the founding of the University, and to avoid ‘anniversary fatigue’, an approach was being developed which would see some events held in 2018, to acknowledge the founding itself, but with the majority of the celebrations scheduled for 2021, as the anniversary for when the first students began their studies.

The plans for the Centenary Celebrations would feature as part of the Council Awayday on 19 April 2018.

18/M13 **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION (EDI)**

Council considered the 2018 Annual EDI Report from the Director of Human Resources. The main report was accompanied by the University’s gender pay gap report for 2018; and a breakdown by gender of awards made by the Senior Staff Pay Committee in 2017, as requested by Council at its last meeting (minute 17/M118 refers).

With regard to the main report, **Council noted** the wide range of successful activities that been undertaken during the last 12 months to further embed the EDI agenda across the University. Supporting data and benchmark information illustrated the current position, the positive progress that had been made, and targets set for the future, with timescales where appropriate. **Council strongly endorsed** the commitment to participate in the Race Equality Charter for Higher

Education, and hoped that initiatives in place to pursue this would be reflected in future EDI reports, particularly in relation to EDI issues in the student population.

With regard to the gender pay gap report, **Council noted** that the detailed analysis confirmed that the University's current average pay gap of 24.1% was higher than the sector average of 21.7%. The different nature of universities – such as the existence of a medical school – was known to have an impact on the pay gap, but the overall conclusion from the analysis was that until the University had a better gender balance at each level within the organisation – and particularly amongst senior staff - a gender pay gap would continue to exist. Over the last two years, though, the gender pay gap across the professoriate had reduced from 8% to 3.4%, and in some departments the gender pay gap was in favour of women rather than men.

With regard to awards made by the Senior Staff Pay Committee in 2017, **Council noted** the breakdown by gender showed that, with the exception of Grade 10 Professional Services Staff, the average award to female members of staff exceeded the level of awarded to male members of staff.

18/M14 **DEVELOPMENT OF THE DIGITAL LEARNING ENVIRONMENT**

Council received a presentation from the Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Digital) on the ongoing programme of work to deliver an enhanced digital learning environment for the University.

Council noted that this work was linked directly to two supporting strategies within the University's overarching Strategic Plan – the Digital Strategy and the Learning Strategy. The aim was to integrate and enrich a wide variety of tools to transform the delivery of the learning and teaching experience, alongside a programme of digital upskilling for staff and students.

Council also noted that in order to be successful the programme needed to embrace the need for cultural change and consistency of approach within the institution, and therefore all work was being undertaken in close collaboration with the wider academic community. This was helping to stimulate a significant level of enthusiasm and engagement across the campus, and the continuing challenge was to find imaginative ways of maintaining this momentum.

18/M15 **SENATE**

Council considered reports of meetings of Senate held on 7 March 2018 and 13 March 2018, noting that significant items of business dealt with at those meetings had been referred to under President and Vice-Chancellor's business (minute 18/M12 refers).

Two items had been referred by Senate for specific approval by Council:

- a. **Council approved** a new Leicester Academic Workload Balance Model, which had been developed in response to strong feedback from academic staff during the Strategic Conversation in 2015. The Model sought to ensure a transparent and equitable approach to the planning of individual workloads, with an enhanced sense of fairness and improved staff satisfaction;

- b. with regard to the University's refreshed Learning Strategy for the period 2017-21, a member of Council indicated that they would have liked an opportunity to discuss with the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Students) some detailed queries on the Strategy, before it was considered for formal approval. **Council agreed** to defer this item to a subsequent meeting, to allow this discussion to take place.

18/M16 **NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE**

Council considered recommendations of the Nominations Committee regarding appointments to be made to Council and Court.

Council approved the following:

- a. the appointment of Gary Dixon as Treasurer of the University, to serve for an initial period of three years effective from 1 August 2018 (Gary Dixon left the room for the discussion of this item);
- b. that Emeritus Professor Robert Carter, of the University's School of Business, be invited to serve as an Associate Member of Court, effective until 31 December 2020 in the first instance

18/M17 **HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Council received and noted a report of a meeting of the Health and Safety Committee held on 26 February 2018.

18/M18 **SAFETY SERVICES ANNUAL REPORT 2017**

Council received the Annual Report of the Safety Services Office for the 2017 calendar year. The report was conceived as an internal health and safety report, designed both to acknowledge the business case for good health and safety performance, and to provide assurance to Council in relation to its strategic responsibilities for health and safety at the University.

Council welcomed and gained significant assurance from the way in which the report had been structured to reflect the five key themes of the Safety Services Strategy, and the inclusion of a range of statistics and other indicators covering health and safety activity and performance. In addition, Council was particularly pleased to see the evidence of the University's proactive response to unexpected in-year events, such as Grenfell.

18/M19 **STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

Council received a report of a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Alumni Association held on 7 December 2017.

Council noted that the Standing Committee was reviewing its current approach with regard to Alumni Awards, to ensure that a diverse range of achievements and distinctions, and age groups, were able to be recognised. The Standing Committee was also seeking to develop closer working links with the Careers Service, and to bring a stronger and more direct international perspective to its work.

18/M20 HEFCE'S ANNUAL ASSESSMENT OF INSTITUTIONAL RISK

Council received confirmation that HEFCE had reviewed the University's annual accountability return for the 2016-17 financial year, as submitted to HEFCE in December 2017.

Council noted that, based on this review of financial sustainability and good management and governance, HEFCE had categorised the University's current risk status as being "Not At Higher Risk". The only other standard risk category used by HEFCE in these assessments was "At Higher Risk".

18/M21 PREVENT DUTY ANNUAL REPORTING

Council received confirmation that HEFCE had reviewed the University's Prevent Duty annual report for 2016-17, as submitted to HEFCE in December 2017.

Council noted that HEFCE had concluded that the information provided in the report demonstrated that the University's policies and procedures continued to meet the Prevent statutory guidance, and that they were being implemented. HEFCE had requested for any ongoing amendments to the University's safeguarding policy and speaker and event booking process to be notified to the relevant Prevent Adviser.

18/M22 STUDENTS' UNION SABBATICAL ELECTIONS

Council noted that the outcome of the elections of full-time sabbatical officers in the Students' Union, to serve for the period from 1 July 2018 to 30 June 2019, was as shown below, and recorded its congratulations to the first three individuals listed, who had been re-elected for a further term:

President:	Amy Moran
Education:	Azza Abdulla
Sports:	Kennedy Adamu
Activities:	Izzy Woolrych
Well-Being:	Oge Obioha

Council also noted that Jon Scott (PVC Student Experience), in his capacity as Observer appointed by the Council, had attended the announcement of the election results and had requested and received confirmation that no concerns had been reported regarding the conduct of the elections.

18/M23 COUNCIL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Council received and noted the reports of meetings of the Council Advisory Committee held on 8 December 2017 and 1 February 2018.

18/M24 FORWARD BUSINESS SCHEDULE

Council received and noted the current schedule of business for the remaining meetings of Council in 2017-2018.

18/M25 **DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Council noted:

- a. The dates and times of its remaining meetings scheduled for 2017-2018:

Thursday 19 April 2017 (Awayday, 9.30am-4.30pm)

Monday 14 May 2017 at 4pm

Wednesday 11 July 2017 at 4pm

- b. The provisional (still subject to confirmation) dates and times of Council meetings in 2018-19:

Wednesday 26 September 2018 at 4pm

Wednesday 21 November 2018 at 4pm (dinner with lay members afterwards)

Wednesday 20 March 2019 at 4pm

Wednesday 15 May 2019 at 4pm

Tuesday 11 June 2019 (Awayday, 9.30am-4.30pm)

Wednesday 10 July 2019 at 4pm

CHAIR

Total duration of meeting (Reserved and Unreserved Business): 2 hours and 40 minutes