

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

COUNCIL

**Minutes of a meeting held on
Wednesday 3 December 2025 at 2.00pm
in the Council Room, First Floor, Fielding Johnson Building**

MINUTES

Attendees: Neil Goulden (Chair), Nishan Canagarajah, Henrietta O'Connor, Kerry Law, Cathy Ellis, Lauren Bartlett, Liz Blyth, Jack Chambers, Martin Cullen, Mary Curnock Cook, Sophie Dale-Black, Rishi Madlani, Kevin Nagle, Glynis Wright, Stewart Fishwick, Alison Snape, James Fitchett, Edith Malemba and Matt Schofield.

In attendance: Geoff Green, Paul Gowdridge and Sally Priddle

Apologies: Hilary Coyle, George Acquah, and Richard Tapp

INTRODUCTORY BUSINESS

1. Declarations of interest

1.1 Stewart Fishwick declared an interest under item 16 as the Head of School for Geography, Geology and Environment. There were no concerns about their participation in the meeting.

2. Minutes

2.1 Council considered the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2025.

2.2 Council considered an update on the matters arising from the minutes.

2.3 Council noted that the revised Statutes had been informally submitted to the Privy Council. Following the ratification of the minutes and Council's approval, the revised Statutes would be sealed and formally submitted to the Privy Council for consideration.

2.4 Council noted that following the Audit and Assurance Committee's and Council's feedback, the Due Diligence Philanthropy Policy was being reviewed and would be returned to Council in the Spring term.

Resolved:

2.3 Council **APPROVED** the minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2025.

2.4 Council **APPROVED** the submission of the revised Statutes for Privy Council consideration.

3. Chair's Business

3.1 Council received an update from the Chair of Council. It was reported that the Chair of the Board of the Office for Students had written to the Chairs of University Governing Bodies regarding the emerging risks across the sector and expressing concerns about governance within institutions. The Chair had requested that the University review the emerging risks and how they were being overseen, the report was included later on the agenda.

- 3.2 The Chair reported that he had undertaken a series of meetings to discuss strategic priorities including the Council effectiveness review, estates strategy and community engagement. The Chair had also met with the Chair of Council at Loughborough University and De Montfort University.
- 3.3 The Chair had met with the University Treasurer and agreed objectives which included: a plan for long-term financial sustainability of the University, a governance assurance framework following the Council Effectiveness Review, championing student issues, and supporting UoL Food and Drink to break-even and provide a good offering for students.

4. President and Vice-Chancellor's business

- 4.1 Council considered an update from the President and Vice-Chancellor. It was noted that the Post 16 White paper had been published, and that the University was covering all the priorities but there were areas for improvement. The Government had set a target of two thirds of young people going into Higher Education including high quality apprenticeships, this provided an opportunity to think about the University's offer. The University had begun conversations with WQE College and Leicester College about opportunities for their students. The government intended to introduce a levy on international student income, the funding would be utilised to increase the maintenance grant for students studying priority subjects. For the University, the levy would be around 5% of income and it had been indicated in the University's 5-year plan.
- 4.2 Council noted that the University had received two Times Higher Education Awards, which celebrated institutions delivering innovative solutions and overcoming sector-wide challenges. Dr Sarah Inskip won the Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences Research Project of the Year for 'uncovering distinctive differences in bone composition between historical tobacco users and non-users' and the University also earned the Outstanding Contribution to Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Award for MedRACE, a student-staff collaboration that had advanced a safer, more inclusive environment in medical education and influenced meaningful anti-racism improvements across the NHS.
- 4.3 The Vice-Chancellor was visiting all parts of the University, there had been positive engagement so far, it had provided an opportunity to discuss the Strategic Review and the impact it was having on all parts of the University.
- 4.4 Council noted an update on a student safety incident that had happened in private accommodation. The University was working with the police, relevant civil agencies in the city, the Students' Union and De Montfort University to manage the situation. The University was looking at its relationship with private accommodation providers and working with the Students' Union on student safety. The University had strengthened its external and internal communications in relation to safety.
- 4.5 Council noted an update on 2025/26 recruitment cycle. It was reported that Leicestershire students appeared to be late at applying and there was no clear reason behind this behaviour but the University was working consistently with partner Schools.
- 4.6 Council discussed the contribution of research to the University's financial position which had grown to a 22% contribution to the overheads of the University. It was noted that the University's research cost recovery was around 65% but was slightly lower in Life Sciences as the majority of funding was from the charity sector.
- 4.7 Council discussed the *Citizens of Change* Strategy refresh, noting that the University was five years into its ten-year strategy, the refresh would consider whether the KPIs were still appropriate and aligned with the University ambitions and how the University wanted to grow. The refresh would begin in June 2026 and consider the University's approach to internationalisation, enterprise and flexible learning.

PART A- PROCEDURAL ITEMS

5. Office for Students letter to Chairs of Council

- 5.1 Council noted that the new Chair of the Board of the Office for Students had written to each Higher Education Institution setting out the emerging risks across the sector, these aligned with the OfS' newly published strategy. The University had provided a summary of how each risk was currently overseen and managed, and any proposed additional steps to ensure there was robust and transparent governance in place. It was noted that following Council's consideration, the Chair would respond to the Office for Students confirming that it was managing the risks and share a summary of the report provided. The report mentioned the University's consideration of the Gillies Report and it would be reviewed to ensure it included all recommendations to improve practice, particularly in the financial aspects. It was noted that the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) was also undertaking a review of its code to ensure it clarified expectations for best practice governance.
- 5.2 Council considered the assessment and the overview of controls in place. Council discussed the governance arrangements for major change programmes and the strategic oversight. It was agreed it would be beneficial for the Audit and Assurance Committee to receive a report on the University's approach to major change programmes and the current suite of projects underway.

Action:

- 5.3 Schedule a report for Audit and Assurance Committee on the University's approach to major change programmes and the current suite of programmes offered. **[Owner: Registrar and Secretary]**

6. Audit and Assurance Committee

- 6.1 Council considered the summary of meeting held on 20 November 2025, it was reported that the internal audit plan would be updated to include reviews of the marketing function and the UUK accommodation code of practice, which the University was required to undertake every 3 years. The Committee had challenged the number of red risks that remained red after mitigations and the number of delayed actions. The Executive had been asked to review the University's risk tolerance for previously accepted risks, in particular cyber security risks.
- 6.2 Council considered the Audit and Assurance Committee's Annual Report.
- 6.3 Council noted the Internal Auditors' Annual Report for 2024-2025.
- 6.4 Council considered the Safeguarding and Prevent Policy, Data Protection Policy and Cyber Security Policy. The recommendations from the Cyber Security Internal Audit were discussed and whether the Cyber Security Policy would address all matters raised. It was suggested that the recommendations should be explicitly addressed within the policy. Council discussed the interaction between Artificial Intelligence (AI) and cyber security, it was reported that the University had developed an updated AI Policy that would establish positions on appropriate and proportionate uses of AI in institutional operations. It was agreed that the AI Policy would be shared with Audit and Assurance Committee for information and assurance on how the Policy would address particular cyber risks.

Resolved:

- 6.5 Council **APPROVED** the Safeguarding and Prevent Policy.
- 6.6 Council **APPROVED** the Data Protection Policy.

Action:

6.7 Update the Data Protection Policy to reference Performance Development Discussion (PDD) rather than Personal. **[Owner: Registrar and Secretary]**

6.8 Update the Cyber Security Policy to explicitly reference how it addressed the concerns raised in the Internal Audit recommendations and return the policy to the Audit and Assurance Committee and Council in the Spring term for consideration. **[Owner: Registrar and Secretary]**

7. People, EDI and Wellbeing Committee

7.1 Council considered the summary of meeting held on 30 October 2025 and noted that the Committee had reviewed the annual mental health and wellbeing report.

7.2 Council considered the Dignity and Respect Policy and EDI Policy, Staff and Students Relationship Policy and the Student Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy. Council discussed how historic relationships would be recorded under the Staff and Students Relationship Policy and sought clarity on how students who were in some capacity employed by the University should comply with the Policy. It was reported that the University would judge individuals in their primary relationship with the University.

Resolved:

7.3 Council **APPROVED** the Dignity and Respect Policy.

7.4 Council **APPROVED** the EDI Policy.

7.5 Council **APPROVED** the Staff and Students Relationship Policy, subject to the change on wording regarding status of students as employees and how to report on historic relationships.

7.6 Council **APPROVED** the Student Sexual Violence and Misconduct Policy.

Action:

7.7 Update the Staff and Students Relationship Policy to clarify the status of students as employees and how to report historic relationships. **[Owner: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Professional Services)]**

8. Finance and Infrastructure Committee

8.1 Council considered the summary of meeting held on 18 November 2025. Council discussed the University's approach to student growth; market analysis and how differential fees were determined.

9. Remuneration Committee*

Resolved:

9.1 Council **APPROVED** the Annual Remuneration Report 2024-2025 for publication on the University's website.

10. Modern Slavery Statement*

Resolved:

10.1 Council **APPROVED** the annual Modern Slavery Statement.

11. Students' Union Elections*

- 11.1 Council noted that Ordinance 22(8) required that the conduct of the election of Officers of the Students' Union be subject to inspection by a person appointed by the Council.

Resolved:

- 11.2 Council **APPROVED** that Linda Ralphs, Pro-Vice Chancellor Education, be appointed to inspect the conduct of the Students' Union elections in 2025-2026.

12. Course Fees*

- 12.1 Council noted the summary statement of Course Fees Charged by the University in 2025-2026.

PART B- STRATEGIC BUSINESS

13. Strategic Review Update [RESERVED]

- 13.1 Council considered an update on the Strategic Review. The Executive was prioritising staff and student engagement, encouraging feedback from a series of channels and offering support to those impacted. Council noted the range of actions undertaken to mitigate compulsory redundancies including the Voluntary Severance Scheme.

14. Apollo Partnership Update

- 14.1 Council considered an update on the Apollo Partnership. It was noted the key initiatives were the creation of the Centre for Digital Health and Precision Medicine, 2+1 Undergraduate Programmes, new Health focused MScs and 2+2 Clinical Fellowship Programme. Additionally, Apollo Total Health was a non-profit initiative delivering holistic healthcare and rural community support in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana, offering research opportunities for Leicester.
- 14.2 Council discussed how the principles of the Apollo partnership and the lessons learnt from the process could be captured to inform future international projects.

15. University Accounts and OfS Returns 2024-2025 [RESERVED]

- 15.1 Council considered the Assessment of Going Concern, Management Representation Letter to the External Auditors, External Auditors' Audit Report 2024-25, 2024-25 Annual Report and Financial Statement and OfS Annual (Financial) Assurance Return for submission.

Resolved:

- 15.2 Council **APPROVED** the Assessment of Going Concern.
- 15.3 Council **APPROVED** the Management Representation Letter to the External Auditors, subject to clarification on note 14 of the accounts that would be resolved by Chair of the Audit and Assurance Committee and Chair of the Finance and Infrastructure Committee.
- 15.4 Council **APPROVED** the 2024-25 Annual Report and Financial Statement.

16. Financial Performance [RESERVED]

- 16.1 Council considered the 2025/26 Q1 Financial Performance Report including Financial Performance Improvement Plan.

17. Risk Management

17.1 Council considered the Risk Management Policy, the Risk Appetite Levels and Statements and the Strategic Risk Register.

Resolved:

17.2 Council **APPROVED** the Risk Management Policy.

17.3 Council **APPROVED** the Risk Appetite Levels and Statements.

18. Council Effectiveness Review

18.1 Council considered the Council Effectiveness Review and the proposed action plan to respond to recommendations. Council discussed the governance assurance framework in place and how it received assurance on academic matters, balancing Senate's role with Council's oversight.

Resolved:

18.1 Council **APPROVED** Council Effectiveness Review Action Plan.

19. Students Union 2025-26

19.1 Council considered an update on Students Union priorities 2025-26.

19.2 Council considered the changes to the Students' Union election processes and Standing Orders in line with Education Act 1996 Part 2. As a result of the election process challenges that arose from the last elections, key changes were proposed to ensure accountability and transparency.

Resolved:

19.3 Council **APPROVED** the changes to the Students' Union election processes and Standing Orders in line with Education Act 1996 Part 2.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

20. University Seal*

20.1 Council noted the affixing of the University Seal to Official Documents.

21. Dates and times of future meetings*

21.1 Council noted the dates and times for future meetings.

22. Any Other Business*

22.1 No additional business was raised.