

# UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

## COURT

### Minutes of the Sixty-Seventh Annual meeting of Court held on Friday 7 February 2025

<b>Present:</b>	Dame Dr Maggie Aderin-Pocock (Chancellor)	
	Mr G Arthur	Mr P Lawson
	Mrs J Arthur	Mr R Madlani
	Mr P Ash	Mr A Mamujee
	Ms E Blyth	Col R Martin
	Mr G Bodiwala	Dr D Moore
	Cllr Mr A Brown	Mr K Nagle
	Professor N Canagarajah	Professor H O'Connor
	Mr J Chatfeild-Roberts	Cllr J Orson
	Mr R Cole	Mr P Rivlin
	Mr M Cullen	Dr N Reed
	Ms M Curnock-Cook	Mr R S Sandhu
	Dr S Dale-Black	Professor S Sharma
	Mr G Dixon	Dr V Sharma
	Ms C Ellis	Mr D Tams
	Mrs S Forsyth	Dr B Towle
	Mrs S Furness	Ms J Venkataraman
	Professor R Graham-Brown	Cllr Ms S Waddington
	Dr R Hake	Mr P Wilson
	Dr J Higgins	Mr A Wessel
	Sir L Howard	Mrs C Wessel
	Mrs G Johnston	Mr R D Wood
	Mr J Kapasi	Mr D Woodhead
	Ms K Law	Dr D Wykes

**In attendance:** Mr P Gowdrige (Chief Financial Officer, University of Leicester); Professor R Parry (Director Institute for Digital Culture); Ms R Faint, Mr J Pandya, Mr S Corbett and Ms R Selfridge-Gaten (Development and Alumni Relations Office, University of Leicester); Mr P Angrave (President & Vice-Chancellors' Office); Miss S Priddle and Mr K Joyce (Governance Office)

**Apologies for absence** were received from those members of Court whose names are listed in the Appendix attached to these minutes.

#### 25/M1 COURTESIES

- 1.1 The Chancellor welcomed all members to the 67<sup>th</sup> meeting of Court.
- 1.2 The Chancellor shared highlights since the last meeting of Court including:
  - 1.2.1 The Chancellor lecture series.
  - 1.2.2 Participating in a PREDICT clinical heart trial
  - 1.2.3 Visiting Los Angeles with the University to meet Alumni and visit a number of organisations that are working with the University.
  - 1.2.4 Attending the Citizens of Change Research Institute launch.

- 1.3 Members noted that Court was an annual opportunity to hear from university leaders on the key achievements of the previous academic year and briefings on key institutional projects.

25/M2 **MINUTES**

- 2.1 **Court formally received** the minutes of the sixty-sixth Annual Meeting, held on 9 February 2024.

25/M3 **MEMBERSHIP OF COURT**

- 3.1 **Court received** the current list of the Full Members of Court, as at 1 February 2025
- 3.2 **Court noted** that the current list was presented each year at the Annual Meeting. The complete and updated Full and Associate membership lists could be viewed at any time on the University's website.

25/M4 **ANNUAL PRESENTATION BY THE PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR**

- 4.1 **Court received** a presentation by the University's President and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Nishan Canagarajah.
- 4.2 Court watched a video on the University's achievements, community achievements and activities in 2023/24.
- 4.3 The Vice-Chancellor provided a review of the previous academic year, how the University was progressed against its strategic objectives and provided an overview of the challenges facing the sector and the University, outlining how Leicester intended to address these challenges.
- 4.4 The Vice-Chancellor thanked the University community for their work and support which was essential to all achievements the University had received over the last academic year. The University received Gold in its Teaching Excellence Framework assessment which meant the University's provision was assessed as the highest quality. The University of Leicester was a research-intensive University; therefore, via the Education Strategy research had been embedded into all taught programmes.
- 4.5 The University had seen improvements across all question themes in the National Student Survey (NSS), it had been ranked 27<sup>th</sup> by Times Higher Education and was 1<sup>st</sup> for Medicine and Modern Languages.
- 4.6 The University was proud of its inclusive and co-created education, that was evidenced through the use of Student Curriculum Consultants, Student-led Physiotherapy Clinic, Legal Advice Clinic, and Black student experience programme. MedRACE was a student led group that looked at what changes needed to be introduced into medical practice and training to respond to increasingly diverse population.
- 4.7 The University had continued to deliver world-changing research, securing more than £86m of research awards in 2023/24 which was a record year for awards. Major grants and awards had been secured across all Colleges. Three major initiatives had been launched: Research leadership Academy, Institute for Policy and Museum Data Service.

- 4.8 The University had furthered its Our Citizens strategy including securing more than £1m in external funding for the Universities Partnership, furthering the work of the Attenborough Arts centre that supported disabled and marginalised members of the community, holding the annual Botanic Gardens festival, raising the profile of Josh Smalley's Science Kitchen and supporting students from Ukraine as a University of Sanctuary.
- 4.9 The Vice-Chancellor shared the University's improvements in domestic league table position, however, emphasised that league tables were only part of the picture. It was important to understand the University's reputation through feedback from students, staff and people across the community.
- 4.10 It was reported that the University had been awarded Daily Mail University of the year, shortlisted for Times Higher Education University of the Year and The Times and The Sunday Times University of the Year.
- 4.11 Six members of the University community had been recognised in the King's Honours: Dame Maggie Aderin-Pocock DBE, Professor Emma Bunce OBE, Professor Elizabeth Draper MBE, Professor Paul Monks CB, Professor David Lloyd MBE and Lauren Henry OBE.
- 4.12 The Vice-Chancellor reported that the University continued to further its equity, diversity and inclusion ambitions, achieving Disability Confident Leader, Silver Athena SWAN and Bronze Race Equality Charter awards. The median gender pay gap had reduced from 18.6% to 17.9%. The University had held flagship events for Black History Month, International Day of People with Disabilities, International Women's Day, LGBT History Month and Leicester Pride.
- 4.13 The University had continued to grow its international partnerships: North America (NASA, UCLA, Smithsonian, Humber and Aga Khan), Chongqing Medical University – first Joint Education Institute (JEI) in clinical medicine and Dalian University of Technology. The Apollo Hospitals Group partnership would provide education programmes in Artificial Intelligence, health, business, engineering and computer science, establish Centre for Digital Health and Precision Medicine and provide professional development to address skills gaps in the NHS.
- 4.14 The University had furthered its fundraising endeavours. The Founders for the Future campaign focused on four themes: people, planet, health and culture with a fundraising target of £100m. The campaign would be launched to the public in 2026. C.£20m pledges and gifts had been secured towards the campaign to date.
- 4.15 The Vice Chancellor provided an update on Higher Education Policy. It was reported that the financial challenges remained across the sector, the sector's regulator, the Office for Students, predicted that 72% of universities would be in deficit by 2025-26 and changes to visa restrictions were negatively impacting international student recruitment which was a key source of income for institutions.

- 4.16 The University was also facing resource challenges which would impact its ability to invest in strategies for Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2029 and Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) 2027. There would be limited scope to invest in key growth areas, new staff or address the digital and physical infrastructure challenges. Furthermore, it had been agreed that funding would be allocated to Mayoral Combined Authorities and Leicester was not part of one, therefore it was important that the University ensured the area did not miss out as a result of the change in funding approach.
- 4.17 The Chancellor thanked the Vice-Chancellor for his report and opened up for questions, the following questions and points were made:
- 4.18 A member asked whether there was an opportunity for the University to apply to join the Russell Group. The Vice-Chancellor reported that a case had been submitted to the Russell Group demonstrating that the University was performing better than some institutions in the group but they had responded that they were not accepting any new members. The Vice-Chancellor would continue to pursue the matter but it was deemed to be unlikely.
- 4.19 A member asked how the University's shape might change in response to the financial challenges. The Vice-Chancellor reported that this could not be foreseen, the Executive was considering all options.
- 4.20 A member thanked the Vice-Chancellor for the contribution members of the University made to the wider community and noted that it was appreciated by residents across the city. Although there were financial challenges, it was hoped that the community contributions would not be sacrificed. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that community relations and the University's work in the community was deemed to be fundamental to the University's success and operation.
- 4.21 A member asked whether the University was working with other local institutions to challenge the new local funding model. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed the University was working with other institutions both locally and nationally. A call had been scheduled for all Vice-Chancellors whose institutions were not in a combined authority. There were concerns beyond local authority funding to other funding allocations including skills England; it was important to ensure the University position was understood.
- 4.22 A member asked about how the University was looking to integrate of Artificial Intelligence (AI) into employability. The Vice-Chancellor reported that a professor had been appointed in the College of Business to look at what AI meant for business and management. The University had an established policy for students on how and when they could use AI for their work.

#### 25/M5 **THE UNIVERSITY'S FINANCIAL STATEMENTS AND OVERVIEW REPORT 2023-24**

- 5.1 **Court received** a presentation by the University's Chief Financial Officer, Mr Paul Gowdridge.
- 5.2 It was reported that the University had finished the 2023/24 with an 8.3m deficit (before USS pension movement); this reflected the challenges the institution was facing. The Executive was focused on identifying strategies to manage finances to deliver investments needed. The University had extended its credit facility to support liquidity needs and manage cash balances.

- 5.3 The University's income had grown 5% year on year, with 50% of the University's income from tuition fees. However, staff expenditure had increased nearly 9% year on year.
- 5.4 The University's primary KPI was operating cash as a percentage of income. It was essential that the University improved its operating cash position.
- 5.5 Court noted that the financial challenges were being experienced across the sector with many institutions dealing with more critical challenges than the University of Leicester.
- 5.6 The Chancellor thanked the Chief Financial Officer for his report and opened up for questions, the following questions and points were made:
- 5.7 A member asked about the process for insolvency or institution mergers. The Vice-Chancellor reported that there had not been any cases of either and therefore the process was unprecedented.
- 5.8 A member asked about the benefit of local pay negotiations versus participating in national pay award processes. It was reported that a small number of institutions had left the national pay award process and others had delayed the implementation of the award. The Executive reported that they supported participation in the national pay award as supported greater equity and transparency for staff, especially when looking at roles at competitors.

#### 25/M6 **INTERNATIONAL STRATEGY (INCLUDING APOLLO LAUNCH)**

- 6.1 **Court received** a presentation by the University's Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Henrietta O'Connor.
- 6.2 It was reported that the University of Leicester was a global university, its global reputation was key to its operations and it aimed to operate with world leading ambitions. The University has an international community, this diversity enhanced the University, the local area and the country. Growing international student numbers and building strategic partnerships were a key institutional priority.
- 6.3 The Leicester International Institute, Dalian University of Technology, now had three programmes with students receiving degrees awarded by both Universities.
- 6.4 A new partnership with Chongqing Medical University provided medical training with a clinical focus and gave students the opportunity to join year 4 of medicine in the UK.
- 6.5 The Apollo Partnership was a collaborative and strategic international partnership that would enable education, training and research between the University and the second largest healthcare provider in India. Apollo are a family-owned company with a strong civic mission focusing on community projects and education.
- 6.6 Court watched a video on the University of Leicester and Apollo partnership.
- 6.7 The Chancellor thanked the Provost for her report and opened up for questions, the following questions and points were made:
- 6.8 A member asked about the validation of medical degrees. It was confirmed that there were different medical professional standards in other countries and the University did not currently validate medical degrees other institutions.

6.9 A member asked whether US political changes would provide opportunities for UK partnerships with China. It was reported that the University was looking at all opportunities for international collaborations.

6.10 A member raised a concern that international students had a perception that it was harder to get a visa to study in the UK than it was to get a visa to study in the US.

#### 25/M7 **INSTITUTE FOR DIGITAL CULTURE**

7.1 **Court received** a presentation by the University's Director, Institute for Digital Culture, Professor Ross Parry.

7.2 The Institute for Digital Culture was a newly launched research institute at the University, it's focus was inter-disciplinary research enabling the culture sector to adapt and grow in a digital world. Its core areas were reported to be:

7.3 Creative and cultural technologies- creative computing for audience and community engagement.

7.4 Digital skills and leadership- strategy and skills for tomorrow's cultural and creative organisations.

7.5 Inclusive digital design- technologies to enable and empower people in all their diversity.

7.6 Cultural informatics- big data, Artificial Intelligence (AI) and simulation for digital heritage and culture.

7.7 The institute worked across all Colleges to facilitate interdisciplinarity around the specialist areas.

7.8 The University had formed a series of digital culture observatories nationally and internationally including in Galleries Ontario Surface Impression, University of Leiden, Belvedere Res. Centre Museum Booster and University of Florence. The University had also signed an agreement with the Smithsonian which would establish staff visits, exchanges and fellowships.

7.9 The University received a £1m grant to establish a Museum Data Service which would be a digital infrastructure to enable museums to share records.

7.10 The Chancellor thanked the Director for Institute for Digital Culture for his report.

#### 25/M8 **CHANCELLOR'S CLOSING REMARKS**

8.1 The Chancellor thanked presenters and members. Members were welcomed to attend the unveiling of Lord David Willets', previous University Chancellor, portrait ahead of the Court lunch.

Duration of meeting: 1hr 30 mins

**UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER  
MEETING OF COURT  
Friday 7 February 2025  
Apologies**

Ms L Bartlett  
Dr R Bettles  
Ms S Bowie  
Mr J Chandarana  
Cllr Mr B Dave  
Ms M Duke  
HH G Dickinson  
Mr H Doyle  
Dr J Foster  
Mr B Ghelani  
Mr H Ghelani  
Mr G Green  
Lady Jennifer Gretton  
Mr B Hindocha  
Mr I Johnson  
Dr A Linsell  
Emeritus Professor K Pounds  
Mr H Stevenson  
Dr P Sykes  
Mr R Tapp  
Dr M Turnbull  
Mrs C Wigley  
Mr P Wilson