

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting held on
Thursday 20 March 2014

Present:	Dr B Towle (Chair)	
	The Vice-Chancellor (14/M4-M10, M22)	Mr D Moore
	Mr P Ash	Mr A Morgan
	Mr D Flatt	Professor M Peel
	Professor E Raven	Dr M Rawlinson
	Mr M Hindle	Dr N Reed
	Mr I Johnson	Ms V Sharma
	Professor J Ketley	Professor M Thompson
	Mr P Lawson	Ms C Thorogood
	Professor M Lester	Professor D Wynford-Thomas

In attendance: The Registrar and Secretary, the Director of Finance, the Director of Estates, Ms H Smith (for the business recorded in minute 14/M13), Mr S O'Connor (for the business recorded in minute 14/M14), and Mr N Cox (Assistant Secretary).

Apologies for absence were received from Professor M Barstow, Mr G Dixon, Judge A Hampton, Dr D Luckett and Mr P Mulvihill.

14/M4 **WELCOME**

The Chair of Council formally welcomed Mr Andrew Morgan and Professor Emma Raven (replacing Professor Jon Scott) as members of Council.

14/M5 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

The Vice-Chancellor and Mr Moore declared an interest as Directors of College Court Conference Centre Limited. Mr Flatt and Dr Reed declared an interest as Trustees of the Students' Union.

14/M6 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETINGS**

Council considered the minutes of meetings held on 20 November 2013 and 29 January 2014.

Council approved them as a correct record.

14/M7 **COURTESIES**

Council noted, with great regret, the sudden death on 18 March 2014 of Professor George Fraser, Director of the University's Space Research Centre.

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14/M8 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS

The Vice-Chancellor informed Council of a number of issues and developments involving the University since the last meeting, including:

- the award of the Queen's Anniversary Prize to the University for its 'inter-connected research and expertise in history, heritage and archaeology, highlighted by the discovery of Richard III'
- commencement of construction work for the University's new £42 million Centre for Medicine, at the junction of University Road and Lancaster Road
- the judicial review hearing on the remains of King Richard III had eventually gone ahead on 13-14 March 2014, having been deferred from its original date in November 2013, and a decision was expected in 4-6 weeks.
- the appointment of former member of Council Professor Jon Scott as the University's Academic Registrar, effective from 1 January 2014. The Vice-Chancellor drew Council's attention to the fact that it was not, at present, customary for the Academic Registrar to attend meetings of Council.

14/M9 FUNDING FOR HIGHER EDUCATION IN ENGLAND 2014-2015

Council considered the BIS grant letter to HEFCE for 2014-2015. **Council noted** that total funding for HEFCE in that year would be cut by some £125 million (3%) compared with the indicative allocation announced in 2013. Although this was a slightly more modest reduction than had been rumoured in the media, it continued the downward trend in public funding for universities. It was estimated that public funding would account for around 13% of the University's income in 2014-15, compared with 50% just five years ago.

Council noted that, based on known information at this stage, the funding announcement was consistent with the grant assumptions set out for the initial phase of preparing the college plans. However, the University's detailed grant letter would be received on 24 March 2014 and this would be presented to Council, with an analysis of the implications, at the next meeting.

14/M10 RISK MANAGEMENT – VICE-CHANCELLOR'S INTERNAL CONTROL REPORT

Council considered the Vice-Chancellor's internal control report for the spring term 2014, incorporating the University's Corporate Strategic Risk Register, which covered 26 specific risk areas.

Council observed that, in general, the assessed level of risk associated with each risk area tended to be subject to very little change from one report to the next, and on this occasion all 26 risks were assessed as being at the same level as in autumn 2013. Council queried whether it was realistic for the University to assess its risk exposure as being so unchanging over time, especially in relation to ongoing medium and high risk items that were able to continue at those levels for extended periods.

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Council suggested that the risk management process would benefit from the setting of target dates for the reduction of medium and high level risks, and for some assessment to be included of both the likely financial impact for the University of risk management failures in key areas, and the cost of mitigating actions. This would require a much more concentrated and strategic focus, and Council suggested that the current list of 26 risk areas would be unsustainable under such an approach.

With regard to future developments and next steps, **Council noted** that the new internal auditors had just completed a full review of the University's risk management procedures, and a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Audit Committee, in June 2014. Council would receive a full report on the Committee's discussion of this item, and action points arising from it, at its meeting in July.

14/M11 **ESTATES AND INFRASTRUCTURE STRATEGY COMMITTEE**

Council received reports of meetings of the Estates and Infrastructure Strategy Committee held on 22 January 2014 and 5 March 2014.

With regard to the report of 22 January, Council noted that £500k had been committed from the capital budget for the refurbishment of teaching facilities in the George Porter Building to enable Chemistry to recruit additional undergraduate and taught postgraduate students. The Committee had also established a Capital Programme Working Group as part of a new methodology for prioritising capital projects linked to academic strategy.

With regard to the report of 5 March, Council noted that the deferred project to refurbish the Engineering Building roof would now commence as soon as the Finance Committee was satisfied that appropriate financial arrangements were in place.

14/M12 **SENATE**

Council considered the report of a meeting of Senate held on 13 March 2014.

Council noted that Senate had endorsed proposed amendments to the Charter and Statutes, in order for the University to adopt the title of 'President and Vice-Chancellor', and to use the term 'Chair' instead of 'Chairman' throughout the documents (minute 14/M17 refers).

14/M13 **FINANCE - NEW ACCOUNTING STANDARD**

Council received a short presentation from the Director of Finance and the Head of Financial Accounting on changes in UK accounting principles. **Council noted** that, historically, the University had presented its accounts in accordance with UK Generally Accepted Accounting Principles (GAAP). However, movement towards the adoption of global International Financial Reporting Standards (IFRS) and the introduction of a new GAAP for the UK was starting to impact on the university sector. A new Statement of Recommended Practice for Higher Education would be issued in the summer of 2014.

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Council noted that the University had established a project team to address the significant changes arising from the new accounting standards and to engage the affected individuals, teams and departments in a timely and co-ordinated manner. One major change would affect the way in which the University's operating surplus would be reported in future, and the significance of this would require careful explanation to departments.

14/M14 **FUNDRAISING**

Council received the Annual Report of the Strategic Fundraising Committee for 2012-13, and acknowledged the sustained level achievement of the fundraising team in this area of fundamental importance for the University.

Council noted that the agreed main focus of fundraising activity for the two-year period to 2016 would be the promotion of the £10m Centre for Medicine appeal, which was the University's biggest ever fundraising campaign.

Council congratulated the Development and Alumni Relations Office for its success in winning several prestigious awards during the last year, including the Times Higher Education Award for Outstanding University Fundraising Initiative for 2013, for the Cardiovascular Research Centre appeal.

14/M15 **AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Council received a report of a meeting of the Audit Committee held on 18 February 2014.

Council noted that the Audit Committee had approved the formal compliance sign-off requirement for the University's 2012-13 TRAC return.

14/M16 **STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

Council received a report of a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Alumni Association held on 12 December 2013, and an early extract of a report of a meeting held on 13 March 2014.

Council noted that the Standing Committee had endorsed proposed amendments to the Charter and Statutes, in order for the University to adopt the title of 'President and Vice-Chancellor', and to use the term 'Chair' instead of 'Chairman' throughout the documents (minute 14/M17 refers).

14/M17 **AMENDMENTS TO THE CHARTER AND STATUTES**

Further to its meeting held on 20 November 2013 Council gave a second and final reading to a proposal for the University to amend its Charter and Statutes in order to adopt the title of 'President and Vice-Chancellor' in place of 'Vice-Chancellor'. Council noted that, as provided for under Ordinance 9.7, this amendment had been considered and endorsed by Senate and the Standing Committee of the Alumni Association.

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Council also considered a proposal for a further amendment to be made to the Charter and Statutes so that the term 'Chair' was used in place of 'Chairman' to denote individuals who presided over University bodies such as the Council and the Senate. **Council noted** that this change was a simple modernisation of terminology, which had been considered and endorsed by the Senate and the Standing Committee of the Alumni Association, and on that basis **agreed** that it would be included in the submission to the Privy Council with immediate effect.

Council resolved to approve that a submission be made to the Privy Council for formal consideration and allowance of amendments to the Charter and Statutes, in order for:

- a. all references to *Vice-Chancellor* to be replaced by *President and Vice-Chancellor*;
- b. all references to *Chairman* to be replaced by *Chair*; and
- c. for any associated changes to be made to the Charter and/or the Statutes that may be deemed necessary in order to give full and appropriate effect to a) and b) above.

14/M18 **EXTERNAL SPEAKERS IN HIGHER EDUCATION**

Council considered an update on recent developments regarding the University's policy on external speakers and issues relating to freedom of speech at events held on University premises.

Council noted that the expectations placed on universities to fulfil their legal obligations on ensuring freedom of speech, in a climate of government concern about campus radicalisation and the role of extremist speakers, were becoming increasingly complex and challenging. Recent attempts made within the higher education sector to provide fresh guidance on this matter, including on issues such as the possible segregation of audiences on grounds of gender – which was not supported by the University - had proved highly controversial. However, the University's procedures to ensure freedom of speech within the law, as operated and developed over the last thirty years, had proved reliable and effective in enabling the institution to fulfil its legal obligations, and had recently been updated to reflect present circumstances.

Council approved the University's updated *Regulations and Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech*, and confirmed the University's position that it did not support recent guidance on the possible segregation of audiences by gender, or on any other grounds.

14/M19 **HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Council received a report of a meeting of the Health and Safety Committee held on 3 March 2014.

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14/M20 **STUDENTS' UNION SABBATICAL ELECTIONS 2014**

Council noted that the outcome of the election of full-time sabbatical officers in the Students' Union, for the academic year 2014-15, was as follows:

President:	Michael Rubin
Education Officer:	Yordan Nikolov
Engagement Officer:	Sean Kelly-Walsh
Experience Officer:	Jamie Appleyard

14/M21 **UNIVERSITY SEAL**

Council noted the affixing of the University seal to the documents listed in Appendix 14/M21 attached to the signed copy of these minutes.

CHAIR