

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting held on
Wednesday 15 May

Present:

	Bridget Towle	
Janet Arthur		Janet Finch
Edmund Burke		Martin Hindle
Gary Dixon		Anil Majithia
Sarah Davies		Azam Mamujee
Sandra Dudley		Andrew Morgan
Cathy Ellis		Oge Obioha
	Vijay Sharma	

In attendance: Dave Hall (Secretary); Neil Cox (Assistant Secretary); Martyn Riddleston (Chief Financial Officer); Alex Erdlenbruch (Chief of Staff, President and Vice-Chancellor's Office); Geoff Green (Academic Registrar, for item 19/M57 only); Paul Monks (PVC and Head of College of Science and Engineering, for item 19/M58 only).

Apologies for absence were received from Mehmooda Duke, Ian Johnson, Paul O'Brien, Steph Osborn, John Schwabe and Carole Thorogood.

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

19/M53 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

Janet Finch declared an interest in the business recorded under 19/M58, as a Council Member of Research England.

19/M54 **UNRESERVED MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Council considered the Unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 20 March 2019. **Council approved** them as a correct record. There were no matters arising that were not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting.

19/M55 **CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

- a. The Chair reassured Council that the core business of the University was continuing as normal and being well-managed whilst the recruitment process continued for a new President and Vice-Chancellor. The transition to the Acting President and Vice-Chancellor had been implemented smoothly, and Council was reminded of the confident and supportive statement issued to staff by Edmund Burke, at the beginning of April, about the implementation of the Recovery Plan and the acknowledged importance of actions to improve staff morale.
- b. The Chair informed Council that it was expected that the programme for the Awayday on 11 June 2019 would devote the whole of the morning to discussions around the University's current performance, projects and priorities in student recruitment (including the external operating environment and concerns expressed by the OfS over the sustainability of the sector's student number

forecasts), and a linked workshop on brand territory options. The afternoon would feature sessions on a research topic, and staff health and well-being.

- c. the Chair read out a statement from Steph Osborn which explained her decision to stand down as Chair of the Standing Committee of the Alumni Association, and therefore as a member of Council, due to other competing demands on her time. It was expected that her successor would be appointed at the Alumni Association's Annual General Meeting on 8 June 2019. Council recorded its appreciation for Steph Osborn's contribution to the work of Council during her time as a member.

19/M56 **ACTING PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS**

The Acting President and Vice-Chancellor expressed his appreciation for the support he had received from staff and students, and members of Council, since taking on the role, and drew attention to various topical items and developments, including:

- a. As a follow-up to the statement that he had issued to staff in early April (minute 19/M55a refers) the Acting President and Vice-Chancellor, in consultation with senior managers, heads of department and professional services leaders, had agreed a number of changes to the University's senior leadership framework. The University Leadership Team had been renamed as the Executive Board (EB), with an agreed communication plan to engage more effectively with the University community; a new Senior Leadership Team (SLT) had been created to more fully engage with senior leaders in strategic decision-making, through monthly meetings; and the University Executive Board had been renamed as the University Leadership Group (ULG), which would meet termly with an extended membership, including all Students' Union sabbatical officers and leaders of each of the campus trade unions, to foster improved collective ownership and communication of strategy.

The SLT and ULG were both large groups, and senior management was aware of the need to ensure that they were used effectively and efficiently. The establishment of the new SLT had been particularly well received by senior staff, as a means of promoting engagement, ideas and entrepreneurship more positively with them than they had experienced previously.

Amongst a number of other agreed changes to the leadership framework, each Head of College would take strategic responsibility for a cross-University priority; four Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor roles would be established; and an existing member of the Executive Board would be appointed to act as Deputy Chief Operating Officer. The role of Director of Finance had been renamed as Chief Financial Officer, reporting directly to the President and Vice-Chancellor.

- b. During the period when the Deputy Vice-Chancellor was the Acting President and Vice-Chancellor, the Acting Deputy Vice-Chancellor would be the Registrar and Chief Operating Officer. The Heads of Colleges would report to the Acting President and Vice-Chancellor.

- c. The University had dropped ten places, from 34th to 44th, in the *2020 Complete University Guide*. This was a disappointing but not unsurprising result, given the University's recent performance in the NSS. The next league table to be published, within the next few weeks, would be in the *Guardian*, and it was likely that this too would see a further reduction in the University's position, again linked to the NSS. Actions to address the issues with NSS performance were a key component of the Recovery Plan, but an upturn in results would not feed through swiftly. The next NSS results were due to be published on 3 July 2019.
- d. The University had been named among the top 100 most innovative universities in Europe by Reuters, 76th in Europe and 16th in the UK.
- e. The University had signed up to a pledge by UUK and the NUS to close the BAME student attainment gap.
- f. The Universities and Colleges Employers' Association had offered a 1.8% increase across the board for the 2019 staff pay award. Sector trade unions had recommended to their members that the pay offer should be rejected.

19/M57 **STUDENT ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN 2020-21**

Council received a presentation from the Academic Registrar, Geoff Green, on the University's draft Access and Participation Plan (APP), which was required to be submitted to the Office for Students by 24 May 2019.

Council noted that all providers were required to have in place an APP in order to be registered with the OfS. This formed part of the national agenda to widen the engagement of under-represented groups in higher education, with a much stronger focus on students' academic outcomes in HE, not just their access to it. Like many research intensive institutions Leicester was under "enhanced monitoring" by the OfS for its APP, with a particular focus on BAME attainment and on access from low participation neighbourhoods. **Council agreed** that this would have been an appropriate and important strategic priority for the University even without the impetus from the OfS.

Against the above background, Council considered in detail the University's current position and performance with regard to student access, success and progression; and the actions set out in the APP to set ambitious but realistic targets to improve this performance within a reasonable timeframe. The individual actions and their implementation targets would continue to be refined as evidence was gathered of their effectiveness and impact, and as examples became available of successful initiatives at other institutions. The Academic Registrar would welcome the opportunity to provide a progress report on this to a future Council meeting. In the meantime, other related projects would continue in order to explore other relevant aspects in this areas, such as the performance and attainment of 'commuting' students.

Council approved in principle the University's Access and Participation Plan 2020-21, and authorised the Academic Registrar to make any necessary final amendments prior to its submission to the OfS by 24 May 2019.

19/M58 ANNUAL REPORT FROM THE HEAD OF THE COLLEGE OF SCIENCE AND ENGINEERING

Council received a comprehensive presentation and report from the Head of the College of Science and Engineering, Paul Monks, on the current strategic direction, challenges and achievements in the College.

Council noted that the key strategic priorities for the College were to improve performance at the individual and departmental level, and in research; to maintain and improve the student experience; to grow sustainably; to undertake estates transformation; and to deliver enterprise and industrial impact.

The Head of College outlined the programme of activities that were in place to address these priorities. There were a number of very positive existing strengths that could be exploited further, and also some exciting new opportunities to be taken forward, such as releasing the full potential of the Dalian-Leicester International Institute, and the development of Space Park Leicester. **Council noted** that weaknesses and threats in some other areas, including NSS feedback and its impact on student recruitment, and issues with the research income/REF profile, were being addressed within the college-specific sections of the University's overall recovery plan. Progress in pursuing these would be reported to Council through that route.

19/M59 NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Council approved a recommendation of the Nominations Committee for the appointment of Richard Tapp as a new lay member of Council, appointed directly by the Council, effective from 1 August 2019 for an initial term of three years. Richard Tapp had served as a co-opted member of the University's Audit Committee since June 2018.

Council also noted that Senate had elected Alison Goodall, Head of the Department of Genetics and Genome Biology, and Graham Wynn, Head of the Department of Physics and Astronomy, to serve on Council from 1 August 2019, as replacements for Paul O'Brien and John Schwabe, whose fixed-term contracts would come to an end on 31 July 2019.

19/M60 AUDIT COMMITTEE

Council considered and noted a report of a meeting of the Audit Committee held on 30 April 2019. There were no items requiring approval by Council on this occasion.

19/M61 EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

Council considered and noted a report of a meeting of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee held on 13 March 2019. There were no items requiring approval by Council on this occasion.

19/M62 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE

Council considered a report of a meeting of the Health and Safety Committee held on 29 March 2019. **Council noted** that, with the support of a review undertaken by external consultants, the Committee's work had been restructured in order to achieve a much clearer focus on the health and safety aspects of staff and student health and

wellbeing. It was possible that the constitution of the Committee might now be rebalanced/adjusted to help facilitate this new focus.

19/M63 **FORWARD BUSINESS SCHEDULE**

Council received and noted the outline forward business schedule for its one remaining 'Ordinary' meeting in 2018-19. The schedule to be presented to the next meeting would outline the standard flow of business to meetings throughout 2019-20.

19/M64 **DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Council noted:

- a. The dates and times of remaining meetings in 2018-2019:

Tuesday 11 June 2019 – Council/Executive Board Awayday – all day
Wednesday 10 July 2019 at 4pm

- b. The **provisional** dates and times of Ordinary meetings and Awayday in 2019-20, all at 4pm unless stated:

Tuesday 1 October 2019
Tuesday 19 November 2019 (*followed by dinner with lay members - tbc*)
Wednesday 18 March 2020
Wednesday 13 May 2020
Tuesday 9 June 2020 – Council/Executive Board Awayday – all day
Wednesday 8 July 2020

CHAIR

Total duration of meeting (Reserved and Unreserved Business): 2 hours and 50 minutes