

FINANCE AND INVESTMENT COMMITTEE
07 March 2024

CONFIRMED MINUTES

Present:

Isabelle Jenkins (Chair)
Anne Barnard

Professor Colin Bailey
Dr Tim Harris

Gil Baldwin
Dr Alix Pryde

In attendance:

Dr Phil Clare [m.2023.023]
Dr Nadine Lewycky
Mike Wojcik [m.2023.025]

Dr Sharon Ellis
Jonathan Morgan

Karen Kröger
Thomas Skeen

Apologies:

Serena-Amani Al Jabbar

Welcome, apologies and declaration of interests

2023.019 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies. There were no declarations of interests.

Current financial position [FIC23/17]

2023.020 *Minute 2023.020 is confidential.*

Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) return [FIC23/18]

2023.021 The Committee **considered** the TRAC return. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] Our recovery of the full economic cost of teaching home undergraduate students had decreased to 86%. Our recovery of research costs had improved slightly but remained below target. The TRAC time allocation survey would be updated next year but was not expected to have a material impact on the outcome.

Financial statements benchmarking [FIC23/19]

2023.022 The Committee **considered** insights from a benchmarking exercise drawing on the financial statements of Russell Group institutions. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] In 2022/23, we ranked 16th in the Russell Group for total turnover, the same as the previous year. We were in line with the average income growth for the Russell Group at 7%. Our research income position had improved to 14th from 16th.

- [b] Scottish universities were performing in the top half in the Russell Group. Regulations around home undergraduate students were more restrictive in Scotland, and as a result, Scottish universities relied heavily on overseas student recruitment to make up the shortfall.
- [c] Our staff costs had grown at 13% in comparison to the Russell Group average of 8%. This reflected growth in some disciplines and the outcome of the re-calibration exercise on the starting point of some roles. We were also increasing our staff numbers after having held back posts during the pandemic. Our staff costs were 51% as a proportion of turnover, slightly lower than the Russell Group average of 53%.
- [d] The 'other' income category included investments and income from accommodation or other commercial activities. Some universities outside London had greater opportunity to use their estate for commercial events. We also offered a higher proportion of affordable student bedrooms than the average, which had an impact on our income.
- [e] The Committee would receive an update later in the year once the detailed HESA data was published.

QMI annual report [FIC23/20]

2023.023 The Committee **considered** the QMI annual report. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] Key areas for growing entrepreneurial activity across the University included better communication and engagement with staff and students, and access to funding and expertise for commercialisation. We were exploring partnerships with other London universities as a means to raise larger amounts of capital. We were bringing in experienced leaders to work alongside younger researchers to help them learn how to build businesses. Over time this would lead to a culture that encouraged entrepreneurial activity and produce more researchers who would see spin outs as a career option. Our aim was to have a balanced portfolio of licencing and spin out companies.
- [b] Our ambition was to climb the league tables in innovation and entrepreneurship. The scale of our activity in this area depended on the size of the University's research base.

Update on research overhead recovery [FIC23/21]

2023.024 *Minute 2023.024 is confidential.*

QMSU financial statements 2022–23 and mid–year accounts [FIC23/22]

2023.025 The Committee **considered** the financial statements 2022–23 and mid–year accounts for Queen Mary Students' Union. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] The auditors had been satisfied that QMSU was a going concern based on the evidence provided, which included a letter of support from the

University. The Committee queried whether the letter of support extended to cover the financial position for 12 months from the signing of the accounts. The QMSU CEO agreed to confirm the evidential basis for the going concern assessment.

[b] The Committee asked whether the requirement to have a general reserve had an impact on QMSU's ability to undertake key activities. There were challenges in relation to resourcing student welfare and student experience at busy times of the year.

[c] A small number of minor typographical corrections had been identified and would be sent through to the QMSU CEO following the meeting.

[d] The Committee commended the QMSU management team on the improvements in QMSU's financial position.

*Actions: [a] Chief Financial Officer;
[c] Committee Secretary*

2024–25 budget and five–year forecasts [FIC23/23]

2023.026 *Minute 2023.026 is confidential.*

Updated infrastructure plan [FIC23/24]

2023.027 *Minute 2023.027 is confidential.*

Update on master planning [FIC23/25]

2023.028 The Committee **considered** the update on master planning. The following points were noted in the discussion:

[a] Work had been commissioned to prepare a new Estates Strategy to establish the robust long-term framework for responsible development and operation of the University's physical environment. Work to date involving information gathering and data analysis had uncovered issues in space utilisation, building condition, and requirements for growth under the 2030 strategy. Deeper work was needed with the education and research teams on how to influence utilisation of the estate. The data collected would inform utilisation of the estate going forward, the phasing of new construction projects and investment in long term maintenance.

Minutes of the previous meeting [FIC23/26]

2023.029 The Committee **confirmed** the minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2023.

Matters arising [FIC23/27]

2023.030 The Committee **noted** the matters arising.

Draft agenda for the next meeting [FIC23/28]

2023.031 The Committee **noted** the draft agenda for the next meeting. The agenda would be updated to include the next iteration of the budget.