

COUNCIL
Thursday 16 February 2017
DRAFT UNCONFIRMED MINUTES

Present:

Sir Nicholas Montagu (Chairman)	Professor Paul Anderson	Professor Richard Ashcroft
Kath Barrow	Miranda Black	Dr Veronique Bouchet
Monica Chadha	Sarah Cowls	Professor Simon Gaskell
Celia Gough	Stella Hall	Simon Linnett
Bushra Nasir	Professor Bill Spence	Professor Steve Thornton
Professor Geraint Wiggins	Professor Jane Wills	David Willis
John Yard (Vice-Chair)		

In attendance:

Kimberley Freeman	Laura Gibbs	Joanne Jones
Professor Rebecca Lingwood	Professor Peter McOwan	Jonathan Morgan
Rachel Soper		

Apologies:

Dr Annette Doherty	Luke Savage
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Part 1: Preliminary Items

Minutes: 21 November 2016 (Paper QM2016/33)

2016.047 Council **confirmed** the confidential and non-confidential minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2016.

Matters Arising (Paper QM2016/34)

2016.048 Council **noted** the matters arising from the meeting held on 21 November 2016.

Chairman's Opening Remarks (Oral Report)

2016.049 The Chairman said:

[a] The Large Council Dinner on Tuesday 21 February had been organised as a buffet to give all those attending an opportunity to speak with the next Chairman of Council.

[b] Six candidates had been shortlisted for the post of President and Principal. A series of conversations with the wider selection group were underway. These included discussions with students and members of

staff that were being chaired by Professor Morag Shiach and Professor Philip Ogden, and individual meetings with the Chairman, the next Chairman and members of QMSE. The final interviews had been scheduled to take place on 6 and 8 March 2017.

Appointment of the next Treasurer (Confidential paper QM2016/35)

2016.050 Council **approved** the appointment of Luke Savage as the next Treasurer, to succeed Simon Linnett with effect from 20 October 2017.

President and Principal's Report (Confidential paper QM2016/36a)

2016.051 Council **received** the President and Principal's Report.

2016.052 The following points were raised in discussion:

[a] *Minute 2016.052[a] is confidential.*

[b] *Minute 2016.052[b] is confidential.*

[c] *Minute 2016.052[c] is confidential.*

[d] *Minute 2016.052[d] is confidential.*

[e] *Minute 2016.052[e] is confidential.*

[f] *Minute 2016.052[f] is confidential.*

[g] Council had previously approved a facility to increase tuition fees for both new and continuing home undergraduate students in September 2017. It had since become clear there was a lack of understanding within the student body about the possibility of fee increases. Following extensive discussions with QMSU, QMSE had decided not to apply the increase for continuing students this year, despite the implications this had for tuition fee income. This decision had been received very positively by students.

[h] QMUL's written submission for the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) had been provided to HEFCE. The document noted some concerns over the methodology and data, for example where there is a disproportionate effect on London institutions, and highlighted the quality of teaching and other forms of student support provided to QMUL's diverse student body. The contribution of QMSU to the submission was gratefully acknowledged.

[i] *Minute 2016.052[i] is confidential.*

[j] QMUL was ranked one of the world's most international universities in league tables in 2015. A change in methodology this year, which gave substantial weight to reputation, had resulted in QMUL slipping in the same league tables, emphasising the work required to ensure that QMUL's reputation matches its achievements.

[k] In response to a question about how the QMUL model would compare with initiatives at other institutions to improve the employment prospects of

students, the President and Principal explained that the QMUL model was distinguished by its conception as a single, co-ordinated model that is fully integrated within the curriculum and in which every student would take part. In doing so it addressed issues of students who did not have the availability to take part in extra-curricular activities.

- [l] The President and Principal would be involved in further briefings on the Higher Education and Research Bill before it reached the report stage in the House of Lords. Debate had been more substantial and challenging in the House of Lords compared to the House of Commons and over 600 amendments had been tabled for consideration.
- [m] QMSE continued to monitor the situation emerging from BREXIT.
- [n] The Vice-Principal (Research) was leading the formulation of QMUL's response to the Research Excellence Framework (REF) consultation, which would be submitted in mid-March 2017.
- [o] A complaint had been received in respect of an event held on campus. The usual processes for approving external speakers had been followed and the meeting was attended by the Head of Security as a precautionary measure. There had been robust debate and reports of some unpleasant remarks made about Israel at the meeting. These were being investigated, but it was not thought that they had crossed into illegality. After the event, the President and Principal met with officers of the Jewish Society to discuss the specifics of the meeting and whether, in their view, there was an issue with anti-Semitism on campus. None of those attending the meeting said that they had experienced such problems. The situation would continue to be monitored, as an international "Israeli apartheid" campaign was being launched at the end of February. QMUL would retain its approach of assessing speakers and content against the objective measure of freedom of speech within the law, recognising that universities were places where controversial issues and viewpoints were tested, challenged and debated.

Life Sciences (Confidential paper QM2016/36c)

2016.053 *Minute 2016.053 is confidential.*

2016.054 *Minute 2016.054 is confidential.*

QMSU President's Report (Paper QM2016/37)

2016.055 Council **received** the QMSU President's Report.

2016.056 The President said:

- [a] The current National Student Survey (NSS) boycott was part of a national movement encouraged by the NUS to protest about the TEF and the link with tuition fees, as well as wider concerns about the Higher Education and Research Bill and proposals about the new Office for Students. QMSU was re-evaluating its campaign, recognising that students needed more information about the reasons for the boycott.

- [b] QMSU had launched a video celebrating diversity at QMUL.
- [c] The nominations period for elections to senior positions in QMSU had closed. It was noteworthy that more international students had applied for full-time positions compared to the previous year.
- [d] Redbrick had been commissioned to help QMSU formulate its next strategic plan. Students had responded positively to the survey and focus groups, providing a rich data set.
- [e] Study and library space remained key concerns for students.

2016.057 The following points were noted in discussion.

- [a] QMUL valued the feedback obtained from the NSS and had introduced measures this year to increase participation and to publicise how QMUL had responded to the issues raised by students. HEFCE was yet to determine how it would respond if, as a result of the boycott, institutions did not achieve the 50% participation threshold required for the inclusion of NSS data in the TEF. There was concern that placing greater reliance on the data from 2016 in response to difficulties in collecting reliable data in 2017 would be unhelpful for QMUL, as the institution's performance in that year had been below expectations.
- [b] The response rate at the end of the second week of the survey was 24%, 2% lower than the corresponding date last year. If this trajectory was maintained, and taking into account the shortened time for which the survey was open, comparable participation rates to those last year (70%) could be achieved. It was noted, however, that students who had already completed the survey could still ask for their feedback to be deleted, if they were motivated to do so by the NUS campaign.
- [c] The BLSA was mandated to support the boycott, despite its officers voting against the motion. Current completion rates suggested that SMD students were not supporting the boycott in large numbers.
- [d] A strategy had been agreed to advise academic staff on how to respond to questions about the boycott and to promote completion of survey within the rules. A written guide for academic staff was being produced together with online FAQs aimed at students.
- [e] The University and College Union (UCU) nationally was supporting the boycott and a joint statement had been issued from the UCU General Secretary and the NUS President.
- [f] Concerns about provisions within the Higher Education and Research Bill and the relevance of metrics used in the TEF to teaching quality were shared by members of staff, students and members of Council. It was noted that the NSS was only one element of a suite of mechanisms used by QMUL to obtain student feedback, alongside module evaluation questionnaires, dialogue with students based on action plans and direct interaction through Staff-Student Liaison Committees.

[g] QMSU's concerns about study and library space were recognised by QMSE. The recent opening of the Graduate Centre was expected to relieve some of these pressures and it was reported that discussions were taking place about securing access to the Bancroft Road Library, which could offer a substantial amount of additional study space. Smaller spaces would become available to students as a result of other projects, including the Queens' Building foyer refurbishment that was currently underway. A campus survey was to be undertaken to identify other small areas that could be repurposed for the benefit of students.

Part 2: Performance review

VP Public Engagement report [Presentation]

2016.058 Council **received** a presentation from the VP (Public Engagement). The following points were noted:

- [a] Public engagement is integral to QMUL's values and is articulated in a specific strategic aim and associated objectives. QMUL's approach to supporting public engagement is unique in UK universities and QMUL was the first to be awarded the Engage Watermark by the National Co-ordinating Centre for Public Engagement (NCCPE) in October 2016. The Centre held its annual award night on 07 February 2017.
- [b] The Centre for Public Engagement (CPE) provides support and training for research staff and postgraduate research students on activities such as grant applications, and is in a good position to support the preparation of impact statements in the REF.
- [c] QMUL's work on measuring success in public engagement is sector leading and includes an initiative with the NCCPE to develop a toolkit. The CPE had received requests from other universities within the UK and overseas for advice and information about setting up a successful public engagement function.

Report on student satisfaction surveys [QM2016/38]

2016.059 Council **received** a report on student satisfaction surveys conducted in 2016. Detailed results from the surveys had been provided to Council members in the additional reading for the meeting. The Vice-Principal (SETL) said:

- [a] Response rates had increased across all the surveys conducted in 2016.
- [b] Compared to 2015, the NSS results had worsened in all categories, with the biggest drop being in the area of assessment and feedback. PTES results had improved in all categories but remained below Russell Group and sector averages in most areas. The results from the internal QMSS survey were largely positive, with significant performance gains for services and resources. The results varied significantly across schools.
- [c] On overall satisfaction measures, performance in the NSS had decreased and performance in PTES increased.

2016.060 The following points were noted in discussion:

- [a] An earlier, controlled release of NSS results had been made to schools before Confirmation and Clearing; the provision of subject level data for comparator institutions had been invaluable to schools.
- [b] A matrix approach to action planning was being developed, led by the TEF working group. Initially applied to the NSS, this approach was being broadened to create a student experience action matrix that could be used for Professional Services as well. A 'tell us, we listen' campaign was underway to demonstrate to students how QMUL was responding to previous NSS surveys.
- [c] Aside from the NUS boycott, the area of assessment and feedback remained a concern for the NSS in 2017. Work had been completed in the Mile End Library, and other study spaces had been made available, so that scores in the area of learning resources could be expected to increase. Investment decisions such as these were prioritised on the basis of evidence obtained through a variety of mechanisms, including but not limited to student survey results.
- [d] The Chairman commended the Vice-Principal (SETL) for responding to Council's concerns, the work being done and actions being taken.

Report on staff surveys and action plans [QM2016/39]

2016.061 Council **received** a report on the staff survey conducted in 2016 and the action plans developed in response. The following points were noted in discussion:

- [a] QMSE had discussed the key messages emerging from the survey, including concerns about staff welfare and the effectiveness of communications between QMSE and members of staff, and had endorsed the action plan. The President and Principal noted that one of the challenges for QMSE lay in striking an appropriate balance between communicating the increasing external pressure exerted on institutions and protecting members of staff from its effects.
- [b] Members of Council stressed the particular importance of addressing the issues raised about staff welfare and suggested that this required more urgent action than was articulated in the report.
- [c] The timing of the next survey would be discussed with the next President and Principal, to include options for taking a more targeted approach to measuring progress in priority areas.
- [d] Council **agreed** to revisit the action plan at its meeting in July 2017 as well as a report on specific actions taken to address the points raised in the discussion. Members asked that the report should focus on the substantive issues, rather than on processes and data, and underlined the importance of considering and reporting on equality issues.

Action Chief Operating Officer [d]

QMSU Impact report [QM2016/40]

2016.062 Council **noted** the QMSU Impact Report for 2015-16.

Part 3: Strategic planning

Renewal of borrowing facilities (Confidential paper QM2016/41)

2016.063 *Minute 2016.063 is confidential.*

2016.064 *Minute 2016.064 is confidential.*

2016.065 *Minute 2016.065 is confidential.*

2016.066 *Minute 2016.066 is confidential.*

2016.067 *Minute 2016.067 is confidential.*

2016.068 *Minute 2016.068 is confidential.*

Action Finance Director; Council Secretariat

Part 4: Legislative and conformance issues

Application for university title and amendments to the University of London Statutes (Paper QM2016/42)

2016.069 Council **considered** the process for applying for university title and amendments to the University of London statutes. The following points were noted:

[a] The acquisition of university title would help QMUL to consolidate its status outside the UK, where the constitutional arrangements of the University of London were less widely understood. The other Colleges were also intending to apply for university title.

[b] There would be further opportunities to discuss the application and any recommendations for changes to the QMUL Charter before submitting documentation to HEFCE and the Privy Council.

[c] Council **agreed** to start the process for applying for university title.

[d] Changes to the Statutes of the University of London required approval from the boards of each member institution. The proposed amendments to the statutes concerned terminology and permitting an institution to leave the federation without having to seek approval from all the member institutions.

[e] Council **approved** the amendments to the University of London Statutes.

Action Academic Registrar and Council Secretary [c, d]

Health, Safety and Fire Annual Report summary (Paper QM2016/43)

2016.070 Council **received** the annual report on Health, Safety and Fire for 2015-16. The following points were noted:

- [a] Health and Safety Committee had been disestablished in 2010 on the basis that this was an executive function for which the President and Principal was legally accountable to Council.
- [b] Council commended the Director of Health and Safety for an excellent report and contribution to the development of effective health and safety management at QMUL.

Approval of internal audit services (Confidential paper QM2016/44)

2016.071 *Minute 2016.071 is confidential.*

Part 5: Other Matters for Report

Audit and Risk Committee report (Paper QM2016/45)

2016.072 Council **received** the report of the meeting of Audit and Risk Committee held on 07 February 2017 and the Strategic Risk Register. The following points were noted in discussion:

- [a] In his annual presentation, the President and Principal had drawn the attention of the Committee to a range of uncertainties faced by QMUL, including those also faced by other higher education institutions in the current environment. These concerns had been reflected in his regular reports to Council and were appropriately represented in the strategic risk register. A risk-balancing approach should be adopted in these circumstances, rather than a risk-minimisation approach. It was suggested that QMUL should ensure that it is not over-committed and retain contingency in the event of risks being realised, in consideration of the fact that the internal controls, although appropriate, would not greatly alter the risk profile.
- [b] Council **agreed** to appoint Deloitte as external auditors for 2016-17 on the recommendation of Audit and Risk Committee.

Action Finance Director [b]

Finance and Investment Committee report (Paper QM2016/46)

2016.073 Council **noted** the report of the meeting of Finance and Investment Committee held on 02 February 2017.

Honorary Degrees and Fellowships Committee report (Confidential paper QM2015/47)

2016.074 Council **approved** the recommendations made by the Honorary Degrees and Fellowships Committee and Senate for honorary degrees and fellowships to be conferred during 2017.

Senate report (Paper QM2016/48)

2016.075 Council **noted** the report of the meeting of Senate held on 15 December 2016.

Use of the Common Seal of the College (Paper QM2016/49)

2016.076 Council **noted** a report on the use of the Common Seal of the College and action taken by the Chairman since the last meeting of Council.

Any other business

2016.077 The Academic Registrar and Council Secretary reported on plans for Council meetings in 2017-18 in the light of discussions with the next Chairman of Council:

[a] The residential event would take place in the spring of 2018 in place of one of the two meetings normally scheduled in that term. The first meeting of 2017-18 would focus on strategic themes with the next President and Principal.

[b] It was also noted that the final meeting of Council in 2016-17 would need to be rescheduled for a date in July.

Action Council Secretariat [a, b]

Draft agenda for the next meeting (Paper QM2016/50)

2016.078 Council **noted** the draft agenda for the meeting on 04 April 2017.

Dates of Meetings 2016–17

- Tuesday 04 April 2017 at 1700 hours, Colette Bowe Room
- Tuesday 16 May 2016 at 1700 hours, Colette Bowe Room
- July 2017, to be scheduled