

COUNCIL
Monday 15 June 2020

CONFIRMED MINUTES

Present:

Lord Clement-Jones (Chair)	Ade Adefulu	Megan Annetts
Professor Alison Blunt	Professor Colin Bailey	Monica Chadha
Sarah Cowls	Celia Gough	Professor Colin Grant
Stella Hall	Isabelle Jenkins	Dr Darryn Mitussis
Bushra Nasir	Dr Alix Pryde	Luke Savage
Melissa Tatton	Peter Thompson	Professor Wen Wang
David Willis		

In attendance:

Shamima Akter	Sheila Gupta	Dr Maggie Leggett
Dr Nadine Lewycky	Professor Stephanie Marshall	Jonathan Morgan
Louise Parr-Morley	Annika Ramos	

Apologies:

Professor Mangala Patel

Welcome and apologies

2019.090 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The decision had been taken to hold the meeting via video conference to provide effective governance during the social-distancing measures introduced by government to combat the Covid-19 outbreak.

Minutes of the meeting on 21 May 2020 (QM2019/68)

2019.091 Council **confirmed** the confidential and non-confidential minutes of the meeting on 21 May 2020.

Matters arising (QM2019/69)

2019.092 *Minute 2019.092 is confidential.*

Chair's update (Oral report)

2019.093 The Chair said that:

[a] The Chair's correspondence with QMSU had been shared with Council. It had been important to correct QMSU's representation of the discussion in the last Council meeting and to express Council's confidence in the President and Principal and the Senior Executive Team.

President and Principals' report (QM2019/70)

2019.094 Council **noted** the President and Principal's report. The President and Principal said that:

Sector update / government relations

[a] *Minute 2019.094[a] is confidential.*

[b] *Minute 2019.094[b] is confidential.*

Equality and Diversity

[c] Council would receive a substantial report on EDI issues at the meeting on 09 July. Comments received by members of the Senior Executive Team from staff and students in the last few weeks highlighted the work that still needed to be done.

2019.095 The following points were noted in the discussion:

Financial Sustainability

[a] *Minute 2019.095[a] is confidential.*

Equality and Diversity

[b] Council asked about the status of the external review of EDI matters that had been commissioned in the previous year. A number of issues had contributed to a delay in the delivery of the report, including a request from the university to widen the scope of the review and to undertake further focus groups. Council asked for the report to be circulated before the next meeting. The Vice-Principal (People, Culture and Inclusion) confirmed that the management response to the report was being prepared and that both the report and response would be discussed at the next meeting. Council said that actions on the staff pipeline to improve the diversity of the staff profile would be welcomed.

[c] Council challenged the university to view the Black Lives Matter movement as an exhortation and an opportunity to break the frame in the conversation about diversity and inclusion, and to consider that being the leaders in the Russell Group in this space was insufficient. All sectors were currently engaging in the conversation and significant change was to be expected as a result. It was especially important to use the right language and to speak in direct and specific terms on the issue, being ready to embrace uncomfortable conversations in order to address the concerns of students and staff. Achieving diversity at every level was the first step towards becoming a truly inclusive organisation.

[d] The QMSU Vice-President (Welfare) thanked the Senior Executive Team for its second statement to students on this issue, which was more sensitive and addressed the current situation more directly. It was important to use the right language, as conversations about inclusion and diversity were not the same thing as talking about anti-racism. The university needed to be able to discuss uncomfortable issues in relation to the Black Lives Matter movement, the attainment gap and the gender and ethnicity pay gaps. The university should not be seeking external accreditation, such as through the

Race Equality Charter, as an end in itself.

[e] The Vice-Principal (People, Culture and Inclusion) said it was clear that previous language did not resonate with communities with which the Senior Executive Team was trying to engage. The Race Equality Charter would continue to be an important point of reference for work in this area, but was not by any means to be viewed as a tick box exercise or an end point. The Vice-Principal would be meeting regularly with the QMSU Vice-President (Welfare) and the Vice-Principal (Education) to help design support and education that speak to staff and students from under-represented groups. At the most recent EDI Steering Group meeting there had been an open and honest discussion about race and the Black Lives Matter, so it was important that this dialogue continued.

[f] The President and Principal said that the Senior Executive Team was committed to making a difference about inequalities and to establishing internal structures that allow people to feel comfortable about speaking out.

Student Voice

[g] The QMSU Acting President asked what was intended by the codification and formalisation of the university's approach to co-creation and expressed concern that the contribution from students would be limited. Guidelines were being introduced, as suggested by Council at the last meeting, in response to the concerns raised by QMSU, and would address governance, decision making and frameworks for action. The QMSU Acting President noted that, while the university's league table position had recently improved, the position had dropped in the Complete University Guide.

Student recruitment

[h] Council asked about the implications of the Senior Executive Team's decision to accept undergraduate applicants with one grade below the offer. The President and Principal explained that the decision had been taken in the light of evidence that predicted grades, which would feature strongly in the method for calculating final grades under the lockdown, were less likely to be a true indication of achievement and potential for applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Actions: [b] Vice-Principal (People, Culture and Inclusion)

QMSU President's report (QM2019/71)

2019.096 Council **noted** the QMSU President's report. The following points were noted in the discussion:

Black Lives Matter

[a] QMSU had been making its platforms available to students for providing resources and sign-posting in relation to the Black Lives Matter movement. Student groups and individual students had signed a joint letter to the President and Principal, which had been drafted in collaboration with black students following the university's initial statement on the issue. In response to a question about the current level of feeling among black students, the QMSU Vice-President (Welfare) said that there was a sense of being let

down by the institution and of not feeling safe on campus.

- [b] A Council member shared his experience of running listening sessions for black employees within his own organisation so that their voices could be heard and relayed to leadership. It was important to understand the nature of the Black Lives Movement moment and the fact that conversations were changing as a result. The issues of equality, anti-racism and institutional racism needed to be acknowledged before talking about diversity and inclusion.

PhD students

- [c] The President and Principal had been sent an open letter by a number of postgraduate research students asking for a blanket extension to their funding. Extension requests were being considered on case-by-case basis and schools and institutes had been asked to ensure that all of their postgraduate research students were getting the right support and consideration during the lockdown.

Student voice

- [d] Council said that the report highlighted how important it was to have clear expectations from the beginning regarding co-creation and the student voice, and the disappointment that could arise when expectations were not shared. A Council member on the Memorandum of Agreement (MoA) Review Panel said that the group had successfully resolved a number of issues brought forward by QMSU in the past. The Chair confirmed Council's commitment to seeing these issues resolved and to working positively with students as the biggest stakeholder group in the university.

Return to campus: planning and implementation (QM2019/72i)

2019.097 Council **noted** an update on the return to campus. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] The Vice-Principal (People, Culture and Inclusion) said that there had been a phenomenal effort from colleagues across the university to facilitate a smooth re-opening of further research facilities. Sharon Ellis, Director of Research and Business Development, and Rebecca Jones, Director of Health and Safety, had led on ensuring that research environments were safe for re-opening. Engagement with campus trade unions on the institutional risk assessment, which had been shared with Council, had been positive. Local risk assessments had also been completed for individual areas and activities.
- [b] The focus had since shifted onto education facilities, where a similar approach was being adopted. The institutional risk assessment for this would be shared with Council at the appropriate point. The evolving nature of government guidelines meant that a number of different scenarios were being considered. Options for offering antibody testing were being considered as a potential means to build confidence among students and staff for a return to campus in greater numbers.
- [c] As Chair of the EDI Steering Group, the Vice-Principal had commissioned Professor Rainbow Murray to lead a group looking at the EDI implications

of Covid-19, which would report to the Senior Executive Team.

[d] Council asked about personal safety and crime prevention on campuses in the current circumstances. The President and Principal said that risk assessments for individual floors and buildings had to be signed off by local Health and Safety Officers before staff and students could return to campus, and the security presence was being scaled accordingly.

[e] The Vice-Principal (People, Culture and Inclusion) agreed to confirm at the next meeting whether the university's nursery, which had recently re-opened, was being used in staff recruitment material.

Actions: [e] Vice-Principal (People, Culture and Inclusion)

Educational activities on campus for September (QM2019/72ii)

2019.098 Council **noted** an update on educational activities on campus for September. The following points were noted in the discussion:

[a] The Vice-Principal (Education) said that a high-level group with nine work strands was preparing the university's educational offering for September. The Queen Mary Academy and a third party were working with staff in schools and institutes to uplift skills for the transition to online learning. There was a triage system in place to identify which areas required the most assistance.

[b] Counselling services were currently accessible to students online and would become available again on campus from the autumn. The QMSU Vice-President (Welfare) was chairing a group looking at alleviating barriers to student engagement and would be presenting on this to the Directors of Education in schools and institutes. The IT and Estates and Facilities Directorates has a key role in ensuring that facilities and services would be ready for all eventualities.

[c] Council asked how the university was benchmarking its online learning provision. The Vice-Principal (Education) said that the third party supporting the upskilling of staff was providing global exemplars. International conferences also provided opportunities to identify best practice.

[d] Council asked how the expectations of applicants and students were being met in relation to the streamlining of modules. The faculties had engaged with schools and institutes to ensure that decisions were appropriate and a communication plan was in preparation. Additional modules would be run for new undergraduate students whom, by September, would have been out of education for six months.

[e] Council asked how successful current initiatives were in keeping students engaged. There were issues for students with family responsibilities or who lacked study space at home. The next phase of the return to campus project was focused on opening computer laboratories and study spaces for local students. The student hardship fund had been expanded early on in the lockdown and was supplying students with laptops and other equipment as required. The QMSU Vice-President (Education) said that the university

should be proactive in contacting applicants from disadvantaged backgrounds about their support needs.

Student recruitment (QM2019/73)

2019.099 *Minute 2019.099 is confidential.*

Overdraft facility (QM2019/75)

2019.100 *Minute 2019.100 is confidential.*

Agenda for the next meeting (QM2019/74)

2019.101 Council **noted** the draft agenda for the next meeting on 09 July 2020.

Dates of Meetings 2019–20

- Thursday 09 July 2020, 1600 hours, via video conference.
- Friday 17 July 2020, 10.30 hours, via video conference (financial gateway only).