

COUNCIL
Thursday 06 October 2022

CONFIRMED MINUTES

Present:

Tim Clement-Jones (Chair)	Professor Colin Bailey	Gil Baldwin
Ken Batty	Professor Kavita Datta	Martin Donkin
Celia Gough	Professor Colin Grant	Stella Hall
Professor Yang Hao	Isabelle Jenkins	Dr Philippa Lloyd
Maryanne Matthews	Professor Mangala Patel	Dr Alix Pryde
Adi Sawalha	Melissa Tatton	Peter Thompson

In attendance:

Dr Sharon Ellis	Karen Kröger	Dr Nadine Lewycky
Jonathan Morgan	Charles Sellar	

Apologies:

None

Welcome and apologies

2022.001 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies.

Minutes of the meeting held on 07 July 2022 (QM2022/01)

2022.002 Council **confirmed** the minutes of the meeting held on 07 July 2022.

Matters arising (QM2022/02)

2022.003 Council **received** the matters arising from the minutes of the meeting held on 07 July 2022. The following points were noted in the discussion:

Admissions policy

[a] In response to feedback from Senate on the use of faculty names, the Admissions Policy had been re-drafted to refer to subject areas instead.

Chair's update (Oral report)

2022.004 Council **received** an oral update from the Chair of Council. The following points were noted in the discussion:

[a] The Chair said that a list of his recent activities had been included with the papers. He had particularly enjoyed his visit to Kew Gardens with which the University has a long-standing relationship.

President and Principal's Report (QM2022/03)

2022.005 *Minute 2022.005 is confidential.*

QMSU President's report (QM2022/04)

2022.006 Council **received** the QMSU President's report. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] Welcome Week had been successful and attendance had returned to pre-pandemic levels.
- [b] QMSU was working with the Student Experience Directorate to support students with managing the cost of living. QMSU was signposting students to the different sources of support available across the University.
- [c] QMSU and the University had reached a solution to reduce the number of timetabled activities coinciding with Friday prayer.
- [d] Council commended the QMSU President and his team for their work in concluding some long-standing issues. It was suggested that the report could reflect more clearly the partnership working between QMSU and the University, consistent with QMSU's role in promoting collaboration and greater engagement.
- [e] QMSU had successfully introduced events for postgraduate students. The QMSU President would confirm the attendance figures in his next report.

Action: [e] QMSU President

Strategic Risk Register and KPIs (QM2022/05i&ii)

2022.007 *Minute 2022.007 is confidential.*

Staff survey results and next steps (QM2022/06)

2022.008 Council **considered** the staff survey results and next steps. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] The survey provided a baseline for understanding staff sentiment. A steering group had been established which would develop strategies to increase engagement and review local action plans. The steering group would meet for the first time later in the month. A deep dive on the survey results and action plans at Council was scheduled to take place in March.
- [b] Council noted the importance of being able to demonstrate to staff that management had acted on the survey feedback. There were lessons to be learnt on reducing the time taken to release the results, as delays could give a negative impression. Internal processes and the interface with the external supplier would be reviewed.

Review of governance effectiveness (QM2022/07)

2022.009 Council **considered** the review of governance effectiveness. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] The presentation from Advance HE to Governance Committee included additional information that cast the report in a different light. It had been suggested, for example, that the feedback from Council members reflected differing expectations regarding their governance role compared to the director role on a corporate board. The report made some practical suggestions in relation to attendance at meetings; the gap in the evidence base around staff sentiment and workforce planning; and improving oversight of academic governance and assurance.
- [b] Council discussed the recommendations on its size and composition. The size was in line with the Russell Group average. In commenting on the ethnic diversity of Council, the report did not appear to take account of Council's track record, or current work highlighted in Governance Committee's report to Council. On this basis, Council concluded that there was no need to address the size of Council and that strategies were already in place to diversify the membership.
- [c] Council discussed the evidence base needed to support informed decision making and provide assurance. Supplying more of the underlying data in support of the executive summaries would enable Council members to make their own assessments. More frequent reporting on KPIs that were not on track would provide greater assurance that action plans were progressing. Management would reflect on how to provide Council with the right level of information.
- [d] The University was not unique in the sector for needing to strengthen Council's oversight of academic governance. More information on Council's responsibilities would be included in a deep dive presentation in November. The issue would also be considered as part of the recommendation on Council member induction and development.
- [e] Council agreed to keep under collective review the feedback that some members did not always feel comfortable speaking up in meetings.

Action: [c, d] Chief Governance Officer and University Secretary

Assurance review of industrial relations (QM2022/08)

2022.010 Council **considered** the report of an assurance review of industrial relations between the University and the local UCU branch during the recent industrial action. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] The Chair of Council said that the report provided assurance on how the executive had met its legal and regulatory responsibilities in its dealings with the UCU during the recent industrial action, and how Council had met its regulatory duties regarding student protection and academic assurance. The review did not seek to address the tenor of the relationship between the executive and UCU.

- [b] Council asked how the relationship between the executive and UCU would be rebuilt ahead of future industrial action. The negotiations, under the auspices of the Joint Consultative Forum, had been characterised by openness and an effort to establish common ground. The joint statement between the executive and UCU included commitments to undertake joint work, focusing on areas where there is scope to make a difference.
- [c] There was a discussion on the findings regarding reputational impact. It was noted that National Student Survey results had worsened and that this was having a negative impact on the University's position in league tables. As it is difficult to measure reputation itself, the group who undertook the review had decided to consider tangible measures of impact on students, staff and alumni.
- [d] The review report would be made publicly available on the Council website, subject to any appropriate redactions under the Freedom of Information Act.
- [e] It was agreed that the letter circulated recently to Council members by the Joint Chairs of the local UCU Branch would be forwarded to the Chair of the Joint Consultative Forum, so that the issues raised could be considered through appropriate channels. A briefing would be organised to update Council members on recent developments with the USS pension scheme.

Action: [d, e] Chief Governance Officer and University Secretary

Finance and Investment Committee minutes (QM2022/09)

2022.011 Council **received** the Finance and Investment Committee minutes. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] The Committee had received the draft financial results, which showed a positive position but needed to be considered in the context of the current economic climate. The University had fixed its energy costs for the rest of this financial year and a high percentage of next year, providing some certainty. The Committee had considered and recommended to Council for approval three infrastructure business cases. The Committee received an update on infrastructure governance that would bring together processes for IT and estates. The Committee had agreed to recommend to Council for approval changes to the delegated limit to £10m for infrastructure projects, which was in line with materiality levels for audit.

Current financial position (QM2022/10)

2022.012 *Minute 2022.012 is confidential.*

School of Business and Management business case (QM2022/11)

2022.013 *Minute 2022.013 is confidential.*

Queens' Building phase 2 business case (QM2022/12)

2022.014 *Minute 2022.014 is confidential.*

Mile End Library extension business case (QM2022/13)

2022.015 *Minute 2022.015 is confidential.*

Infrastructure strategy and governance (QM2022/14)

2022.016 Council **considered** the update on infrastructure strategy and governance. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] Council was being asked to approve an increase in the sign-off limit for infrastructure projects to £10m on the recommendation of Finance and Investment Committee. For projects over £20m, Finance and Investment Committee and Council would be given the opportunity to consider the appointment of an independent member to the project board on a case-by-case basis. The independent member would be external to the University and selected for the skills required to mitigate known risks in the delivery of the project.
- [b] Council noted that the three business cases were presented in different ways. A standardised template for business cases was being developed.
- [c] Council **approved** the changes to the Financial Regulations and the Scheme of Delegation of Financial Authority.

Audit and Risk Committee minutes (QM2022/15)

2022.017 Council **noted** the Audit and Risk Committee minutes.

Governance Committee report (QM2022/16)

2022.018 Council **received** the Governance Committee report. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] The recruitment of two new external members to Council was down to the final three candidates. Our experience with Green Park had been positive and we would consider how to engage with them again in future.

Draft agenda for the next meeting (QM2022/17)

2022.019 Council **noted** the draft agenda for the meeting on 17 November 2022.

Dates of Meetings 2022–23

- Thursday 17 November 2022, 1600 hours, Rooms 2.16 / 2.17, Department W.
- Thursday 23 March 2023, 1600 hours, TBC.
- Thursday 18 May 2023, 1600 hours, TBC – part of the residential conference.
- Thursday 06 July 2023, 1600 hours, TBC.