Queen Mary
University of London

COUNCIL
Tuesday 19 May 2015

DRAFT UNCONFIRMED MINUTES

Present:

Sir Nicholas Montagu (Chairman)	Professor Paul Anderson	Professor Richard Ashcroft
Kath Barrow	Professor Simon Gaskell	Elizabeth Hall (Vice-Chair)
Simon Linnett	Cheryl Mason	Patricia Newton
Dola Osilaja	Professor Morag Shiach	Professor Richard Trembath
Professor Geraint Wiggins	David Willis	John Yard

In attendance:

Margaret Ayers	Nirmal Borkhataria	Eleanor Crossan
Professor Susan Dilly	Sian Marshall	Jonathan Morgan
Mike Shore-Nye		

Apologies:

Dr Veronique Bouchet	Professor Raymond Kuhn	Richard Learwood
Bushra Nasir	Luke Savage	

Part 1: Preliminary Items

2014.055   The Chairman:

[a] noted that the meeting was inquorate as there was not a majority of external members present. It was decided that the meeting would proceed on the basis that any decisions made would be provisional until they had been reviewed by those members not present and agreed via email circulation by the required majority.

[b] welcomed Margaret Ayers, Director of HR, and Eleanor Crossan, Governance Administrator, who were attending their first meetings of Council.

Minutes: 10 February 2015 (Paper QM2014/49)

2014.056   Council **confirmed** the confidential and non-confidential minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2015, subject to the correction of a typographical error in minute 2014:041[j].

Matters Arising (Paper QM2014/50)

2014.057   Council **noted** the following decisions taken by email circulation since the meeting

held on 10 February 2015:

[a] approval of the conferment of seven honorary degrees and three fellowships of QMUL;

[b] approval of the recommendation from Governance Committee that Remuneration Committee should be serviced by the Director of HR.

Chairman's Opening Remarks (Oral Report)

2014.058   The Chairman **reported** that:

[a] Professor Richard Trembath would be leaving QMUL to take up the role of Executive Dean for the Faculty of Life Sciences and Medicine at King's College London from 01 September 2015. Members would have the opportunity to say goodbye to Richard at the next meeting of Council.

[b] the Vice-Chair of Council would be stepping down at the end of the current calendar year. External members would be invited in due course to self-nominate for the role.

President and Principal's Report (Paper QM2014/51)

2014.059   Council **received** the President and Principal's Report which had been circulated by email on 15 May 2015.

2014.060   The President and Principal **reported** that:

[a] the student recruitment position at undergraduate and postgraduate taught level was encouraging. The number of applications for postgraduate research (PGR) was lower than at the same point in 2013–14. The position was being kept under review, but was not currently an area of significant concern, given that offer levels were broadly in line. The limited availability of funding for students impacted on QMUL's ability to recruit at PGR level. On a positive note, the China Scholarship Council intended to offer QMUL 49 scholarships for 2015–16, up from 38 in 2014–15. QMUL had received the second largest number of scholarships in 2014–15; only the University of Cambridge had received more.

[b] A summary of the 2015–16 HEFCE grant letter had been included in the President and Principal's report, with additional comparative data. HEFCE allocations to support research were determined from the outcome of REF, reflecting both the quality and volume of research, but the methodology for calculating funding was not announced until after the REF outcome was known. HEFCE had additionally decided to remove the financial protection for STEM subjects, but with transitional funding made available during 2015–16 to reduce the initial impact on institutions.

[c] QMUL's achievement in the REF would result in a small increase in the research grant (£469k or 1.5%), which included £657k of transitional funding. Imperial's good REF performance had translated into a significant increase in funding for 2015–16, but without the transitional funding this would represent a significant reduction. The large investment in staff

recruitment ahead of the REF by competitor institutions in London may not be considered a good return based on the funding allocations.

[d] It was noted that it was not possible to normalise the financial data on the basis of the size of the institution. Size had a significant impact on the REF outcome: QMUL was placed in the top 10 for REF grade point average, but only in the top 20 for research power. The Times Higher Education had published an article detailing the calculation of research funding per student; QMUL was one of only ten institutions named in the article, all based in the South East, to receive more than £2k per student.

[e] It was difficult to predict the impact of the General Election result on universities. The Institute for Fiscal Studies had predicted an 18% cut in non-protected government department budgets over the next parliament and no commitment had been made to ring-fence science funding. The new government's first budget would be announced on 8 July, when further information would be known.

[f] Universities UK (UUK) had announced its decision to move from a position of highlighting the advantages of EU membership to actively campaigning for it. UUK intended to promote discussion within universities and the President and Principal had suggested that a Mile End Institute event planned for November on EU membership could be co-badged as a UUK event.

[g] Interviews for the Vice-Principal (Science and Engineering) post would be held on 20 May 2015.

[h] The Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) had made a final pay offer of 1% for all staff, with higher increases for the lowest eight spinal points to ensure that all staff would be paid the National Living Wage. Unison had decided to ballot its members (20 May – 26 June) on the pay offer and had communicated to members that this was the best offer that could be agreed through negotiation and without the need for significant industrial action. The University and College Union (UCU) planned to discuss the matter at its higher education sector conference on 23 May 2015. The GMB had not yet indicated how it planned to engage its members on the offer.

QMSU President's Report including the QMSU Returning Officer's election report (Paper QM2014/52)

2014.061   Council **received** the QMSU President's Report including the QMSU Returning Officer's election report.

2014.062   The President said:

[a] Carolina Mantzalos, the current Vice-President (Education), had been elected as QMSU President for 2015–16. The Chairman of Council invited Carolina to attend the final meeting of Council during 2014–15.

[b] QMUL had increased the block grant to QMSU for 2015–16, which would enable additional expenditure and support for clubs and societies, which

had grown considerably in recent years, and an increased focus on international students.

[c] A review of the governance relating to the Barts and The London Students' Association, which formed part of QMSU, was being undertaken.

[d] The Students' Union elections had received a turnout of 20.5%. The slight decrease on the 2013–14 turnout (22.6%) was attributed to a power cut which prevented students voting on the first day. It was noted that the turnout was in line with the sector but that some students' unions, such as at the University of Exeter, were able to achieve a turnout in the region of 40%. QMSU would seek to understand how other institutions were able to achieve a significantly higher turnout.

Actions:
[a] Council Secretariat
[d] QMSU President

Part 2: Performance Review

HR staffing report (Paper QM2014/53)

2014.063   Council **received** the HR staffing report. The following points were noted:

[a] The Chairman noted that the completion of the equality impact assessment box on the coversheet for Council papers had become formulaic with very few responses other than 'none' or 'not required'. The Chairman had asked the Director of HR to consider how the equality implications could be better captured, which might include specifying where more granular or additional data was required.

[b] The Director of HR said that the report provided high level data about staffing and sickness absence over the 12 month period ending in January 2015, in response to a request from Council. It was intended that future reports would provide a more detailed analysis.

[c] Staff numbers had grown steadily over the report period, with 9% growth overall. The largest increase was seen in the School of Medicine and Dentistry (SMD), which grew by 15%. Staff turnover was slightly higher than the sector average at 12%, but on par with the UK as a whole. There was a spike in staff turnover ahead of the REF census date in October 2014.

[d] Overall levels of sickness absence were comparable with the sector at 4.2 days per person. However, there was significant variation across the institution with 10.5 days per person in Professional Services and around 2 days per person in the faculties. Further work was required to understand the extent of under-reporting of sickness absence amongst academic staff and the underlying causes of high sickness absence amongst Professional Services staff. QMUL was better able to monitor sickness absence than many other institutions owing to the availability of online sickness reporting.

[e] Council was to receive further information regarding the staff survey in

June, which had highlighted the issues of stress and work life balance. A task and finish group had been set up to consider these issues and it was acknowledged that there was a need for HR and Occupational Health and Safety staff to work together to respond to the concerns raised.

[f] Staff costs had reduced from 61% to 58% during the report period but were expected to rise in 2015–16 due to changes to National Insurance and pension contributions. It was noted that staff costs were above the sector average of 52%, which was not unexpected given that QMUL paid the London Living Wage, did not outsource, was located in London and had a high proportion of staff working in the SMD. The President and Principal said there was a need to quantify the impact of these factors in order to consider whether the higher staff costs were acceptable.

[g] Members **agreed** that it would be helpful if future reports could include the following:

- sector benchmark data;
- reference to the QMUL Strategy to enable members to understand how the data related to the aims and objectives;
- prior year data to enable trends to be highlighted;
- staff turnover data broken down by reason for leaving;
- a comparison of staff costs at QMUL and other institutions, where data for other institutions included agency and outsourced staff.

[h] The Chairman thanked the Director of HR for the helpful and interesting report, which went some way to addressing the issues raised by Council when the report was requested.

Actions:
[a], [g] Director of HR

Chief Operating Officer report including:
- **Professional Services strategy (Paper QM2014/54)**

2014.064 Council **received** the Chief Operating Officer's report including the Professional Services strategy. The following points were noted:

[a] Professional Services (PS) comprised staff associated with schools and institutes, who were responsible for supporting students and academic staff, and staff in central departments. Staff within schools and institutes reported to the Head of School or Institute and the Faculty Operating Officer and indirectly to the Chief Operating Officer.

[b] Central PS costs were around £58m in 2014–15, £10m higher than in 2012–13 and 2013–14. In 2012–13, owing to institutional financial challenges, the budget for PS was reduced and all departments apart from Finance restructured and reduced staff numbers. The increased budget for 2014–15 represented a partial return to previous funding levels, with the majority of the increase in non-pay costs in relation to IT and Estates maintenance and statutory compliance plus increases as a result of institutional growth such as international agent fees.

[c] QMUL was to participate in a Russell Group benchmarking exercise on PS expenditure, which would report in one year's time. It was hoped that the exercise would enable conclusions to be drawn regarding the level of expenditure at QMUL as compared to other institutions.

[d] The PS Strategy had recently been approved by QMSE and set out the mission for the team to be world class in supporting, enabling and contributing to the success of the institution. The strategy was aligned to the QMUL Strategy 2014 and aimed to ensure that work undertaken by PS would contribute to and support the achievement of the Strategy's aims and objectives. Work was ongoing to develop sub-strategies and enabling aims and objectives for each of the PS directorates or departments.

[e] It was noted that the PS achievement of 'world class' status would be measured by how efficient and well rated PS staff were according to other staff, through the provision of high quality service with few mistakes and responsiveness to changing legislation and service requirements. Another factor was the creation of an environment in which staff were happy and able to develop to their full potential.

[f] PS was working to become more efficient, effective and innovative. This had thus far been achieved through departmental restructures, process improvement and review projects, and stretching procurement targets.

[g] A large range of initiatives had been introduced in order to deliver best customer service, including:

- the Going the Extra Mile awards, which recognised and rewarded staff making extra effort;
- service level descriptions;
- student experience champions, who ensured students were at the forefront of new projects, proposals and initiatives;
- the PS Perceptions Survey of senior staff to identify areas of good practice and any issues;
- better engagement with the faculties and academic staff, in particular.

[h] The introduction of the Chief Operating Officer role had enabled the reduction of siloes. Initiatives included the PS conference; the PS Giving Campaign, which aimed to fund five hardship bursaries; and group working towards the Investors in People award, which included training on holding effective team and 1-2-1 meetings. The PS roadshows, which aimed to improve the visibility of senior PS staff, had been less successful owing to poor attendance by staff.

[i] PS had significant responsibilities in relation to legal compliance and risk management. Developments in this area included the PS risk register, a review of the Carbon Management Plan and additional investment in statutory compliance. It was intended that regular audits of schools, institutes and PS directorates would be conducted to identify and share best practice across the institution. A trial school administrative audit had been undertaken, the outcomes from which would be considered by QMSE.

[j] The key challenges that remained for PS included the completion of the IT transformation programme, improving financial information provision in relation to research overheads, achievement of Investors in People, and improving communications to schools and institutes, particularly in relation to budget cuts.

[k] Future areas of work for PS included:

- delivery of the PS Strategy and sub-strategies to support the QMUL Strategy. This would include the development of a 5 year financial plan to support the delivery of the institutional surplus;
- further work to inspire a culture of innovation and improvement, and deliver value for money. This would be achieved through the development of a school and faculty support model, the introduction of value for money teams in each faculty, and the review and development of procurement capability;
- embedding customer-focused thinking and responsive services through the development of an Estates Masterplan, improved space planning, and increasing the number of scholarships funded by PS;
- the improvement of cross-PS working, through a greater focus on collaborative working, staff development for school and institute managers, the development of a PS staff development strategy, and the introduction of a Research Support Group.

[l] Members congratulated the Chief Operating Officer for the significant achievements across PS and the development of a coherent and ambitious strategy. Members noted that significant efforts had been made to improve the relationship between schools, institutes and PS, which had been a particular concern of the Audit and Risk Committee.

[m] Some concern was noted that interactions between academic and PS staff were primarily amongst more senior staff in both areas. Initiatives such as academic reference groups and ensuring that PS staff understood the nature of academic life and the impact that PS staff could make were intended to improve and build relationships. It was acknowledged that past, poor performance by PS directorates and processes had impacted on relationships. However, members **agreed** there had been notable improvements in the quality of PS work in recent years. The Chief Operating Officer said that he welcomed any further suggestions, particularly from staff members.

[n] The quality of the tendering and delivery of capital projects were considered to have improved significantly. There were now clear procedures and structures in place for managing projects from beginning to end.

[o] IT infrastructure and provision was considered to be much more robust despite the continuous challenges faced by staff in responding to the quickly changing demands of the sector and new developments in technology. It was noted that there were significant challenges ahead that could not be overestimated. In particular, it was noted that there was an ongoing need to review the IT Strategy to ensure alignment with staff and student needs and new technology. Good communication with school and institute staff was also imperative to ensure maximum cost benefit.

[p] The Chairman of Council thanked the Chief Operating Officer for the interesting and informative report, which explicitly linked PS activities to the Strategy and provided a clear focus on future work and challenges.

Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning)'s report (Paper QM2014/55), including:
- **QMUL Student Survey (Paper QM2014/56)**

2014.065   Council members **received** the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning)'s report.

2014.066   Council members **received** a paper and presentation from the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning) on the QMUL Student Survey. The following points were made:

[a] The QMUL Student Survey (QMSS) was introduced to evaluate the impact of local initiatives to enhance the quality of the student experience and to enable indicators of progress and targets in the QMUL Strategy and sub-strategies to be monitored over a 5–10 year period. The survey had been developed over a six month period through collaboration between academics, Professional Services staff and the Students' Union. It was designed to complement existing surveys and would be completed by students at the beginning of their second and subsequent years of study.

[b] The introduction of the QMSS was part of a larger project to develop an overall survey policy and process which would reduce the need for ad hoc surveys to be conducted in future. The policy would include guidance on best practice in survey production and a requirement that results and action plans are shared with students in a timely way, in response to comments from students that surveys were not always an effective use of their time.

[c] The QMSS was structured to allow the results to be compared with the outcomes of other surveys and to be linked to data on factors such as UCAS entry tariff, widening participation, ethnic background and academic achievement. The new Business Intelligence (BI) tool would enable staff from across the institution to access pre-prepared reports using the data.

[d] The first iteration of the survey, conducted in 2014–15, was not well promoted and received a response rate of only 11.5%. In order to improve the turnout in 2015–16, a publicity campaign was being planned to increase awareness of the survey and to enlist staff in improving engagement from students. It was suggested that a link to the survey could be embedded in MySIS (the web portal for the student record system) so that students were directed to the survey when selecting their modules.

[e] The low turnout in 2014–15 meant that analysis was only possible at the institutional level. The results showed that students were satisfied that programmes of study are well-designed and challenging in nature, and with the quality of learning materials and the size of classes. Lower levels of satisfaction were recorded with the amount of feedback and contact with academic staff and with the opportunities for involvement in research. Both QMSU and Professional Services had received good scores.

[f] The results also indicated that there was a greater emphasis on improving written, over spoken English and that students would welcome more opportunities to develop skills in quantitative analysis. This was a good example of how the QMSS results could be fed back to staff in order to influence how programmes of study are designed and delivered.

[g] One member of Council said that the response rate for employee surveys typically depended on the level of engagement by staff with the targets and outcomes being set. It was therefore important to ensure that staff and students understood the benefit of the QMSS on a personal level. It was suggested that survey questions could be linked to particular outputs or areas of the Strategy and that communications could be targeted at discrete groups within the student body.

[h] It was noted that academic staff with relevant expertise had been consulted on the statistical interpretation of the data, but it had proved difficult with the time and resources available to construct suitable statistical rules for all questions. Further work would be undertaken in this area to ensure the usefulness of the reports.

[i] The Chairman of Council thanked the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning) for providing a clear and informative presentation.

[j] The Chairman said that the Vice-Principal was retiring at the end of July and both thanked and congratulated her for her considerable achievements and contribution during her time at QMUL.

HEFCE Annual Assessment of Risk (Paper QM2014/57)

2014.067 Council members **received** the HEFCE Annual Assessment of Risk. The following points were made:

[a] *Minute 2014:067[a] is confidential.*

[b] *Minute 2014:067[b] is confidential.*

[c] The Audit and Risk Committee and the Finance and Investment Committee would review the HEFCE letter at their meetings in June.

Report on PAR 2014 outcomes and alignment with strategy (Paper QM2014/58)

2014.068 Council members **received** a report on the Planning and Accountability Review (PAR) 2014 outcomes and their alignment with the QMUL Strategy. The following points were made:

[a] The paper illustrated how QMSE was responding to the areas of priority and focus identified in the Stocktake paper to Council in February in order to ensure that the institution remained on track to achieve its strategic aims.

[b] The paper described the process for assessing progress and identifying and correcting shortcomings, such as through the prioritisation of investment. For example, additional investment in studentships had been

agreed in light of concerns regarding the rate of increase in PGR student numbers.

[c] Members commended the paper for the clear link provided between the PAR process and the QMUL Strategy.

[d] The PAR outcomes were the result of considerable work by staff across the institution. It was noted that the process was useful in requiring schools and institutes to review their current position and refocus on strategic priorities. However, the process was time consuming and the benefits were not always obvious to everyone when investment cases were rejected. QMSE recognised that there was a need for better communication of the process and outcomes and that the paper would therefore be circulated to academic and Professional Services staff to improve their understanding of the relationship between PAR and the Strategy. It was also noted that there was a tendency for schools and institutes to focus on short-term objectives. The President and Principal said that QMSE was in the process of considering the long-term institutional strategy and in future staff would be encouraged to consider their priorities over one-year, five-year and 10–20 year time scales.

[e] In light of the challenging financial context of changes to National Insurance and pension contributions, and tuition fees remaining at £9k, future PAR requests would need to be increasingly innovative.

QMSU Financial Statements 2013–14 (Paper QM2014/59)

2014.069   Council members **received** the QMSU Financial Statements 2013–14, which had been reviewed by Finance and Investment Committee, and **noted** the improved financial performance of the Students' Union.

Part 3: Strategic Planning

HEFCE Recurrent Grant Allocation 2015–16 (Paper QM2014/60)

2014.070   Council **received** the annual letter from HEFCE detailing the recurrent grant allocation for 2015–16.

2015–16 Budget (Paper QM2014/61)

2014.071   Council **approved** the 2015–16 Budget. The following points were made:

[a] *Minute 2014:071[a] is confidential.*

[b] *Minute 2014:071[b] is confidential.*

[c] *Minute 2014:071[c] is confidential.*

Life Sciences (Oral report)

2014.072   Council **noted** that an update on Life Sciences had been provided in the President and Principal's report to Council.

Policy on Naming of Buildings and Physical Spaces (Paper QM2014/62)

2014.073   Council **approved** the Policy on Naming of Buildings and Physical Spaces, subject to the amendment of paragraph 3.8 to include the word 'normally'.

Part 4: Legislative and Conformance Issues

Procedures for dealing with Complaints about the Students' Union (Paper QM2014/63)

2014.074   Council **approved** the procedures for dealing with complaints about the Students' Union.

Health and Safety Annual Report 2013/14 (Paper QM2014/64)

2014.075   Council **noted** the Health and Safety Annual Report for 2013–14. The following points were made:

[a]   *Minute 2014:075[a] is confidential.*

[b]   *Minute 2014:075[b] is confidential.*

[c]   The proposed internal audit plan, to be considered by Audit and Risk Committee in June, would include an audit on health and safety.

[d]   *Minute 2014:075[d] is confidential.*

[e]   The Director of Occupational Health and Safety had recently retired; a member of staff had been appointed as the Interim Director until a new Director could be recruited.

Part 5: Other Matters for Report

Finance and Investment Committee report including Current Financial Position (Paper QM2014/65)

2014.076   *Minute 2014:076 is confidential.*

Remuneration Committee report (Paper QM2014/66)

2014.077   Council **received** the report and recommendations from Remuneration Committee, which met on 09 April 2015.

Draft Annual Schedule of Business (Paper QM2014/67)

2014.078   Council **received** the draft Annual Schedule of Business for 2015–16.

Use of the Common Seal of the College (Paper QM2014/68)

2014.079   Council **received** a report on the use of the Common Seal of the College and action taken by the Chairman since the last meeting of Council.

Draft Agenda for next meeting (Paper QM2014/69)

2014.080   Council **received** the draft agenda for the next meeting on 30 June 2015.

Dates of meetings 2014–15:
- Tuesday 30 June 2015, 1700 hours, Colette Bowe Room