

COUNCIL
Tuesday 17 May 2016

DRAFT UNCONFIRMED MINUTES

Present:

Sir Nicholas Montagu (Chairman)	Professor Paul Anderson	Kath Barrow
Dr Veronique Bouchet	Monica Chadha	Dr Annette Doherty
Professor Simon Gaskell	Simon Linnett	Carolina Mantzalos
Cheryl Mason	Bushra Nasir	Patricia Newton
Luke Savage	Professor Steve Thornton	David Willis

In attendance:

Will Atkins	Emma Bull	Professor Edmund Burke
Eleanor Crossan	Joanne Jones	Sian Marshall
Jonathan Morgan	Robert Sherratt	Rachel Soper
Nilufa Yasmin		

Apologies:

Professor Richard Ashcroft	Stella Hall	Professor Raymond Kuhn
Professor Morag Shiach	Professor Geraint Wiggins	John Yard (Vice-Chair)

Part 1: Preliminary Items

Welcome and apologies

2015.097 The Chairman welcomed:

[a] Nilufa Yasmin, Graduate Management Trainee, who was attending Council as an observer for her professional development. Nilufa had been participating in the management trainee programme since September 2015 and was an alumna of QMUL.

[b] Rachel Soper was attending her first meeting of Council since her appointment as Assistant Registrar (Council & Governance) (maternity cover).

Minutes: 05 April 2016 (Paper QM2015/65)

2015.098 Council **confirmed** the confidential and non-confidential minutes of the meeting held on 05 April 2016.

Matters Arising (Paper QM2015/66)

2015.099 Council **noted** the matters arising from the meeting held on 05 April 2016. The

following points were made:

Minute 2015.059[c] St Paul's Way Multi-Academy Trust

- [a] An application to the Department for Education had been prepared for the conversion of St Paul's Way Foundation Trust to a Multi-Academy Trust. The sub-group of Council convened to review the application had given its full support to the initiative but had noted some concern regarding the time commitment required from the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning) in light of her other commitments. The application required a number of minor amendments and would shortly be submitted to the Department of Education.

Minute 2015.055[g] QMSU President's Report

- [b] The Chairman and the President and Principal had held a productive meeting with the QMSU President to discuss mechanisms for improving communications between the Council and QMSU. A series of actions had been agreed and would be taken forward over the coming months.

Chairman's Opening Remarks (Oral Report)

2015.100 The Chairman said:

- [a] He had recently given the closing remarks at a high profile conference held by the Centre for Commercial Law Studies (CCLS) on banking conduct and culture. The conference was an excellent example of a successful external event, which served to raise the profile of QMUL in the legal community.
- [b] Sian Marshall, Assistant Registrar (Council and Governance) was attending her last meeting of Council prior to starting maternity leave. The Chairman thanked Sian for her contribution as Assistant Secretary to Council and wished her well for her maternity leave.

President and Principal's Report (QM2015/67)

2015.101 Council **received** the President and Principal's report which had been circulated by email on 13 May 2016.

2015.102 The President and Principal **said** that:

[a] *Minute 2015.102[a] is confidential.*

[b] *Minute 2015.102[b] is confidential*

[c] *Minute 2015.102[c] is confidential*

[d] The Higher Education White Paper had been released on Monday 16th May and included proposals that were broadly in line with the earlier Green Paper. The main proposals included:

- i. A single register of higher education providers;
- ii. Substantially easier entry for new providers, described as

- 'challenger institutions', which would be enabled to achieve university status and degree awarding powers more quickly;
- iii. An expectation and acceptance that some new and existing providers would be allowed to fail, for which eventually a student protection plan was to be put in place by each institution;
 - iv. Provision for a more light-touch approach to quality review in line with current HEFCE proposals, to be supplemented by the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) as a parallel process to the Research Excellence Framework (REF). The TEF would be voluntary but there would be considerable pressure on institutions to participate, though it was expected that some would opt out. The first year would require institutions to meet minimum Quality Assurance Agency standards, which all institutions had already achieved, and would allow an RPI increase in fees (currently 2.8%) in 2017–18. The second year would include a pilot of a fuller assessment that would be determined by the technical consultation, initially to be undertaken at institution level, but to be expanded to subject and postgraduate level by 2019–20.
 - v. A single body, UK Research and Innovation (UKRI), would replace the seven existing Research Councils and Innovate UK and would have additional responsibility for block grant funding. This was a contentious proposal owing to concerns regarding the erosion of the dual funding principle through the award of research funding streams by a single body. However, it was intended that this principle would be enshrined in legislation, which was considered to be a positive step.

[e] The President and Principal had fed back to the Minister of State for Universities and Science that there was significant potential for negative reputational impact, owing to the proposals brought forward by the white paper, on a sector that already benefited from a very good reputation.

[f] Until further detail was known on the specific metrics to be used, it would not be necessary to begin preparations for the TEF given that many of the proposed areas were already high priority for QMUL, such as improving National Student Survey (NSS) scores and teaching outcomes for widening participation students. The Chairman of Audit and Risk Committee requested that a report on risks and the steps to ensure compliance be prepared for consideration by the Committee in due course.

[g] A shortlisting meeting for the role of Vice-Principal and Executive Dean (Humanities and Social Sciences) had identified a strong field of four candidates; interviews would be held within the next three weeks.

[h] Discussions were ongoing with the University of London to enable the colleges to be permitted to hold university title. This would require Parliament to amend the University of London Act and the process was expected to take around nine to twelve months.

[i] A response from HEFCE to QMUL's Pre-vent submission was expected in early June. Further details about the expectations on institutions and their governing bodies would be known at a later stage.

- [j] An article had been printed in The Times newspaper regarding an event, organised by the Islamic Society that had been due to take place on campus in February, following a leak of information relating to the background checks on the proposed external speakers. A review was being undertaken to ensure the event was assessed in line with QMUL's policy on Freedom of Speech and that the existing process was effective.

Actions:

Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning): [f]

QMSU President's Report (Paper QM2015/68)

2015.103 Council **received** the QMSU President's report which had been circulated by email on 13 May 2016.

2015.104 The President said:

- [a] The Students' Union had raised concerns regarding the lack of communication from the Estates and Facilities Directorate in relation to the proposed increase in student residences fees. The Students' Union had requested information about the distribution of the additional income from the previous increase in fees but this had not been forthcoming. It was noted that the additional income had been spent on refurbishment and to cover inflationary cost increases. QMSE had requested that the Interim Chief Operating Officer follow up on the matter, which might include developing a timetable for discussion with the Students' Union of any proposed fee increases in future.
- [b] Discussions were ongoing with the Vice-Principal (Student Experience, Teaching and Learning) regarding the availability of space for Friday Prayers. It had been agreed two years ago that QMSU would be notified each week of any suitable space that was available after teaching commitments were met. A safety assessment had reduced the capacity of the Great Hall stage and had meant that using the Octagon, Sports Hall and other locations was now being discussed. The issue had been compounded by a lack of timely communication by the Estates and Facilities Directorate regarding the Great Hall.
- [c] Members noted concern regarding the lack of timely resolution of the matter. However, it was acknowledged that there was no obvious solution owing to the pressures on space across the institution. QMSE members would continue to work with the Students' Union to support the necessarily ad hoc approach to identifying and communicating available space in a timely way to ensure that students understood that the issue was being taken seriously. Council reiterated its commitment that the practicing of students' faith should be facilitated, where possible within QMUL's primary objectives, and acknowledged the significant efforts being made to address the matter.

Part 2: Performance Review

Vice-Principal's Report: Science and Engineering

2015.105 Council **received a** presentation from the Vice-Principal (Science and Engineering). The following points were made by Professor Edmund Burke:

- [a] The Faculty's key strategic goals were:
 - i. Controlled and sustainable growth;
 - ii. Improving research performance and increasing grant income from RCUK, the EU, industry and charities;
 - iii. Providing the highest standard of student experience across the Faculty;
 - iv. Increasing and diversifying international collaboration in teaching and research.

- [b] Student recruitment numbers were above target in 2015 at undergraduate home and postgraduate research level but further work was required to improve overseas undergraduate and postgraduate taught student numbers. Recruitment was below the 2015 level at present but there was scope for improvement through Clearing.

- [c] The School of Electronic Engineering and Computer Science had introduced an innovative degree apprenticeship programme in Digital and Technology Solutions in September 2015 in partnership with IBM and GlaxoSmithKline. An increase in student numbers was planned for 2016–17 with the existing employer partners and also with Goldman Sachs and John Lewis. The programme was important both for the student experience and to enable research partnerships to be developed with external organisations; this was a key strategic aim to improve long term research provision and investment. A disadvantage of the programme was its high cost; student fees were not sufficient to cover the cost of delivery.

- [d] Interest in degree apprenticeships was motivated by the new Government apprenticeship levy, which also applied to QMUL at a cost of around £900k per year.

- [e] The Faculty had a number of successful transnational education initiatives with institutions in China, providing both research-led teaching and opportunities for research collaboration. QMUL was awaiting official notification of the outcome of the application to establish a Joint Education Initiative (JEI) with Northwestern Polytechnical University but had been unofficially informed of its approval. The Faculty was seeking to diversify the location of international transnational activity and to increase overseas student numbers in London.

- [f] Performance in REF 2014 was good, particularly in relation to publications, but there was scope for improvements in relation to impact. The Faculty currently did not have sufficiently strong industrial research collaborations to support the research infrastructure and to improve outputs.

- [g] Mechanisms to improve success in large grant applications were being

developed and introduced in order to increase research income. The Faculty had also achieved steady increases in PhD student numbers and submission rates.

2015.106 The following points were noted in discussion:

- [a] The key priorities for the Faculty Executive currently were:
 - i. The provision of support for longer, larger grants; the Faculty had recently received PAR approval for a mechanism for match funding;
 - ii. The reallocation of resources to incentivise investigators achieving grant successes.

- [b] QMUL hoped to receive confirmation of significant EU funding for the Medical Devices Centre, which facilitated collaborations between engineering and cardiovascular sciences staff.

Engagement, Retention and Success: monitoring progression data (Paper QM2015/70)

2015.107 Council **received** a report on the work of the Engagement, Retention and Success Group in relation to monitoring progression data. The following points were noted in discussion:

- [a] Over the past three years the rates of non-completion had improved and progression remained steady, but with significant differences between schools and institutes. In relation to non-continuation, QMUL was placed in the bottom three or four institutions within the Russell Group. It was noted that QMUL's good record on the recruitment of widening participation students may be inversely correlated to the high levels of non-continuation; however, data was not available currently to support this theory.

- [b] A crude assessment of the potential financial impact of non-completion, non-progression and non-continuation was around £2.5m, including loss of fees.

- [c] It was difficult to assess the impact of the wide range of activities introduced in order to make improvements in this area owing to the lack of formal standards agreed for data collection and analysis. Evaluation of individual projects suggested a positive impact on students.

- [d] A central team had been funded to support engagement, retention and success activity. A new Research and Data Manager post would enable more detailed analysis of activity and outcomes. The focus during the coming year would be on the transition to university and the first year of study, working with school and institutes identified as most in need of support. A Research Fellow would be funded for the next two years to consider the experience and outcomes of black and minority ethnic students.

- [e] The Students' Union had surveyed students about feedback on assessment, which had identified that feedback was good but there was a misalignment of expectations. There was a need for improved clarity about feedback provision to address this.

- [f] A report on engagement, retention and success would be provided annually

to Council. Members requested that future reports should identify the quick wins and long term initiatives that could be achieved with further resources, and should consider best practice from other institutions.

[g] The Chairman thanked the Head of Engagement, Retention and Success for the comprehensive report.

Action:

Head of Engagement, Retention and Success: [f]

Evaluation of 2010–15 Strategic Plan (Paper QM2015/71)

2015.108 Council **received** a report on the evaluation of 2010–15 Strategic Plan. The following points were noted in discussion:

[a] The President and Principal said that the evaluation of performance against the 2010–15 Strategic Plan must be considered in the context of the positive overall perception and the reality of the university's position and trajectory. Monitoring of the Plan was subject to rigorous, high standards in that targets missed by up to 5% were 'amber' and more than 5% 'red'. It was important for the review to be used to guide future target setting and prioritisation of activities.

[b] The approach taken to target setting and monitoring achievement by QMUL was considered, at the time, to be unusual; few institutions had opted to include measures that could be monitored both internally and externally and objectives that would not change over the life of the plan regardless of the internal and external context. QMUL had also sought to set more stretching targets than would result from simply extrapolating the current trajectory in certain areas, where significantly higher targets were considered to be appropriate, but also ambitious.

[c] The period of time covered by the Plan was a successful period for QMUL, demonstrated both by the realisation of many headline and underlying targets, but also through other significant achievements not captured in the Plan. This included membership of the Russell Group and QMUL's strong performance in the Times Higher rankings, achieving a place of 107th globally by 2014–15 from 160th in 2008–09.

[d] There were a range of areas where further work was still required to achieve the level of performance appropriate for QMUL:

- i. Research; further increases were required in relation to research power (the product of research quality and volume) to improve QMUL's position in the REF. It was a key performance indicator to submit 90% of eligible staff to REF, but a change in practice resulted in a strategic decision to return only 74% of staff to maximise income generation and ranking.
- ii. Grant income; across the institution there was variability in the level and sources of funding, but QMUL could be expected to attain more income than it current did, which also impacted on reputation.
- iii. Student satisfaction; performance in the NSS dipped in 2014 but improved in 2015. Work was already being undertaken to understand

- the reasons for lower scores and to make improvements.
- iv. Overseas student numbers in London; an increase of 54% was achieved (as compared to the target of 100%), which was considered to be positive in the context of the challenging, external environment and changes to immigration rules.
 - v. Professional education; the target of £3m was missed (£1.19m was achieved) owing to lack of available cash for investment, but this area had received more focus recently.

[e] Members noted that QMUL had made significant achievements over the life of the Plan and that the approach taken to focusing on ambitious targets was laudable. Members **agreed** that the format of the report should be revised before being presented to staff. It was suggested that there should be less focus on the use of traffic lights and that information should be presented in terms of the achievements made and areas where more could be achieved, with links to objectives in the current QMUL Strategy. The President and Principal would prepare a revised report for review by a number of Council members prior to circulation to staff.

Action:

President and Principal: [e]

Overview of QMUL's accounts: risks and opportunities (Presentation)

2015.109 *Minute 2015.109 is confidential.*

Finance and Investment Committee report including current financial position (Confidential paper QM2015/72)

2015.110 *Minute 2015.110 is confidential.*

Part 3: Strategic Planning

Divestment in fossil fuels (Paper QM2015/73)

2015.111 *Minute 2015.111 is confidential.*

Life Sciences (Oral report)

2015.112 *Minute 2015.112 is confidential*

Part 5: Other Matters for Report

Draft schedule of business 2016–17 (Paper QM2015/74)

2015.113 Council **noted** the Draft schedule of business for 2016–17.

Use of the Common Seal of the College (Paper QM2015/75)

2015.114 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.

Agenda for next meeting (Paper QM2015/76)

2015.115 Council **noted** the draft agenda for the next meeting on 28 June 2016.

Any Other Business

2015.116 In relation to the EU referendum, the President and Principal **said** that:

[a] In the view of QMSE, it was be beneficial for QMUL and other universities to be part of a country within the EU. QMUL staff had been encouraged to exercise their right to vote and to consider the benefits of EU membership when doing so. This position was in line with QMUL's charitable status; it was considered that QMUL's charitable purpose could be best served through continued EU membership.

[b] Universities UK (UUK) had expressed the view that the UK should remain part of the EU for the benefit of universities and the country and was working hard to support the 'remain' campaign. Eddie Izzard had attended a recent meeting of UUK to present his campaign that would tour many university campuses to encourage students to vote.

Dates of Meetings in 2015–16

- Tuesday 28 June 2016 at 1700 hours, Colette Bowe Room