

COUNCIL
10 February 2022 at 2pm
Surrey Sports Park and Teams

MINUTES

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Members:	Chair – External member	Mr Michael Queen
	Joint Vice-Chair – External member	Mr Vib Baxi
	Joint Vice-Chair - External member	Ms Rachel Hubbard
	Treasurer - External member	Mr Robert Napier
	President & Vice-Chancellor	Prof Max Lu
	Provost & Executive Vice-President	Vacant
	Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education	Prof Osama Khan
	Chief Operating Officer	Mr Andy Chalklin
	President, Students' Union	Ms Ajay Ajimobi
	Member elected by Senate	Prof Esat Alpay (to 22/010.4)
	Member elected by Senate	Prof Karen Bullock
	Member elected by Senate	Dr Daniel Horton
	External member	Mr Elliot Antrobus-Holder
	External member	Ms Judith Eden
	External member	Mr Charlie Geffen
	External member	Dr Mike Goodfellow
	External member	Ms Pam Jestico
	External member	Mr Nigel Jones
	External member	Ms Pam Powell

In attendance: Ms Ros Allen, Head of Governance Services
Ms Martine Carter, Vice-President - Strategy, Planning & Performance
Mr Phil Grainge, Chief Financial Officer
Ms Sarah Litchfield, University Secretary & Legal Counsel

By invitation: Mr Will Davies, Chief People Officer (22/010)
Mr Greg Melly, Chief Executive Officer, BPL (22/012)
Mr Matt Purcell, Director of Health and Safety (22/013)

A INTRODUCTORY ITEMS

22/001 Preliminaries

- .1 There were no apologies.
- .2 It was noted that Vib Baxi, Dan Horton and Robert Napier were all attending virtually.

22/002 Declarations of Interest

- .1 None

22/003 Minutes

- .1 The minutes of the meeting and Awayday held on 25 November 2021 were **adopted** and agreed for publication on the website.

22/004 Matters Arising

- .1 The updated actions log was **noted**.
- .2 It was noted that Ajay Ajimobi had met the VP External Engagement and agreed that the PG graduation in April would decouple the ceremony (which would be free to attend) from the reception which would cost £25.
- .3 With respect to the action on unconscious bias training, it was reported that the teachers training programme had been reaccredited by Advance HE and converted to a PG qualification. An inclusive education module would be included within the qualification and an update provided to Council.
- .4 It was **agreed** that an update on Cervus + would be provided to the next Council meeting.
Action: AC

22/005 Chair's Items

- .1 Council **ratified** the approval for a second term on Council for Charlie Geffen and for Pam Powell to join Audit and Assurance Committee.

22/006 Vice-Chancellor's Report and Performance Monitoring

- .1 The VC presented the report.
- .2 Council noted updates on the national policy landscape:
 - .2.1 The Levelling up White Paper had now been published. There were implications for HE and there may potentially be a move of funding away from the South.
 - .2.2 With respect to the Augur review, further announcements were expected in the next few weeks.
 - .2.3 The OfS had published minimum standards for progression, continuation and completion for providers.
- .3 All Council members had been invited to the launch of 'Campaign' (the University's major new fund-raising campaign) the following week. The Duke of Kent would be in attendance.
- .4 The University had commissioned an Independent Review of the Centre for Wellbeing, focussed on suicide prevention measures. The Report was generally positive, but there were a number of recommendations to be considered. A high-level summary of the report would come to EB and Council.
Action: RA to add to March Council agenda
- .5 Council discussed the student recruitment position noting the following points:
 - .5.1 UG applications for September 2022 entry were currently 12% behind target overall, with some areas ahead of target and others below. Overall, the expectation is the target can be met as the year progresses.
 - .5.2 Whilst international applications were around 13% below target, these figures had been skewed by the loss of EU applications. The main reduction was from China, but applications were up in other markets.

- .5.3 There were some indications that whilst there were fewer applications, they were of higher quality as the number of offers was 4% up and the number of firm acceptances 18% up on last year.
- .5.4 The University typically accepted between 50 and 350 students in Clearing but important to note it is not used to compromise on student quality. Students are only accepted through Clearing at grades at or above those who have been accepted through the normal application process.
- .5.5 Whilst the University had performed very well in the NSS in 2021, this was not yet fully reflected in league tables, which combined with the long application cycle (18 months +) would therefore not have had its full effect on recruitment.

B ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION AND/OR APPROVAL

22/007 Student Experience/85 Plan

- .1 Osama Khan gave a presentation.
- .2 The following additional points were noted:
 - .2.1 The University was meeting all the OfS indicator benchmarks for the TEF and access and participation, with the exception of Assessment and Feedback. Ajay Ajimobi asked for data to be provided to the USSU to enable them to complete the TEF submission.
Action: OK
 - .2.2 The University was significantly above the OfS student outcomes thresholds.
 - .2.3 The University is doing very well when compared to the national picture on student experience.
 - .2.4 MEQ scores are also showing improvement and the Faculties had met the 'Assessment and Feedback' and 'Organisation and Management' targets. With regards to 'Overall Satisfaction', only FHMS had met target, but FASS was very close to target. With regards to FEPS, it was felt that perhaps more of a sense of belonging was needed, but the current improvements to the lab infrastructure may also help.
 - .2.5 There is a strong campaign to encourage students to complete the NSS and formal thanks to Osama and the team were recorded.
- .3 It was noted that the University had performed much better than most of the sector in terms of getting back to face to face teaching. Around 63% of classes were face-to-face last academic year and currently almost 95% of classes were face to face.

22/008 Education Report

- .1 Council noted the report, which had been covered in the presentation of the previous item.

22/009 Senate Report

- .1 Council noted the report. The Chair of the Senate reported a cultural shift of taking accountability of academic performance data and discussing performance openly through strategy PowerBI dashboards, which builds a sense of trust among colleagues in a supportive way.

22/010 People Survey Results

- .1 Will Davies attended to give a presentation.

- .2 The following additional points were noted:
 - .2.1 Most themes had seen improvement and were above the HEI norm. Understanding of the University's purpose had seen a small decrease and, whilst confidence in leadership had seen a significant improvement, it was still below the HEI norm. With regards to confidence in leadership, more visibility of senior management as well as better communication was suggested.
 - .2.2 Further investigation of the relative satisfaction of staff with disabilities was taking place, including workshops.
- .3 It was recognised that staff recruitment and retention was a national issue, and the University was looking at ways to encourage the take up of offers. Finance Committee had asked for a regular update on this area.
- .4 Council requested further information on the breakdown of results by Faculty and by type of staff.
Action: WD
- .5 Council noted a verbal update on the USS pensions scheme, recognising that the current scheme was unaffordable and needed reform. It was noted that a meeting of the USS Joint Negotiating Committee would take place the following week to consider if to accept the employer proposal submitted by UUK. If agreement could not be reached, then a backstop position would come into force from 1 April which would see total contributions rise to 50% of salaries, amounting to additional cost of £6-£7m over three years for the University.

22/011 Strategy/Council Awayday follow up

- .1 Martine Carter presented the paper.
- .2 Council noted the progress that had been made since the November Awayday, with the following additional points noted:
 - .2.1 Whilst Cervus+, the subsidiary for delivery of a number of services, had been sent up, there were still some issues to resolve, and it was expected to be at least 18 months before any external contracts were sought. Audit and Assurance Committee had requested further discussion on the assurance functions.
 - .2.2 Council asked to see the business plan for the private medical programme. It was noted that the c. 40 students would all be international and privately funded. Due to the way in which Health Education England and the OFS fund and plan medical training, the programme would not be able to accept domestic students until such time as UK places are allocated to us (which we would have to bid for at the point at which additional medical places are agreed nationally).
Action: RA to put business case in Convene Document Library
 - .2.3 There was discussion of funding availability and requirements, noting that the capacity to fund the proposed research fellowships would need to be created, but other items in the list were either funded or did not need additional funding.
- .3 It was noted that there was consideration of holding a full, off-site Awayday later this year. Comments and suggestions from Council members were welcome.
- .4 It was suggested that it would be useful to provide an overview of items discussed at the Awayday to staff. The VP External Engagement was putting together an engagement plan.
- .5 Michael Queen reported that he was collating a list of strategic ideas and proposals and would share with the VC.

22/012 Blackwell Park Ltd

- .1 Greg Melly attended to present the paper.
- .2 Council recognised the issues facing the project and that the negotiations with Guildford Borough Council were not proving productive.
- .3 A strong academic relationship with the Royal Surrey County Hospital and support for the new Medical Programme was noted.
- .4 An active communications plan was under discussion.
- .5 There should be reconsideration of the initial access route for Blackwell Park to avoid the ransom issues.

22/013 Annual Health and Safety Report

- .1 Matt Purcell attended to present the paper.
- .2 Council noted the improvements planned for the annual report next year and that a new Health and Safety Strategy was being developed.
- .3 A new H&S training delivery model would be launched on the 1 March. It was noted that all staff received a health and safety induction on joining the University, with other training required to meet the job requirements.
- .4 There was discussion of drugs and county lines risks and measures being taken with the police to safeguard students. A drugs awareness campaign took place in 2021.

22/014 Appointment of Julia Buckingham to Council

- .1 Michael Queen presented the paper.
- .2 It was noted that there had been a long-standing skills gap for a lay Council member with a senior academic background. Professor Buckingham was eminently qualified to provide this experience and was recognised as an outstanding candidate.
- .3 Council **approved** the appointment of Julia Buckingham to Council.

22/015 Senior Independent Member report

- .1 Judith Eden presented the paper.
- .2 She reported that she had not yet been able to meet all Council members individually but would be doing so shortly.
- .3 The recruitment of a new Chair of Council was proceeding well, and more detail would be provided at the next Council meetings.

22/016 Finance Committee report

- .1 Robert Napier presented the report.
- .2 It was noted that the Q2 forecast was being finalised and it was apparent that due to underspends on both staff and non-staff costs there was an upside to budget. There would be discussion at Executive Board in February of how best to use this upside.

22/017 Student Experience Committee report

- .1 Vib Baxi presented the report, drawing to Council's attention the key elements of discussion at the Committee.

22/018 Audit and Assurance Committee report

- .1 Nigel Jones presented the paper, emphasising the key matters regarding the Students' Union and Cervus+, the new subsidiary.

22/019 Effectiveness Review action plan

- .1 Sarah Litchfield presented the report, noting that an internal effectiveness review of Council would take place in 2022, with a focus on academic governance.
- .2 With regards to the Scheme of Delegation, it was noted that it was timely to carry out a full review and restructure. This was a significant undertaking and will be carried out this Spring with a view to it coming to Council late in July.
- .3 Sarah Litchfield and Ros Allen were thanked for their hard work in getting the Effectiveness actions completed.

22/020 Emeritus professorships

- .1 Max Lu presented the paper, noting that there were no female candidates on this occasion as there were currently no female professors retiring.
- .2 Council **approved** the appointments as proposed in the paper.

C ITEMS FOR INFORMATION ONLY

22/021 TRAC annual return
Council **noted** the report.

22/022 Health and Safety report
Council **noted** the report.

22/023 CMA Task Group annual report
Council **noted** the report.

22/024 Human Resources annual report
Council **noted** the report.

22/025 Annual Treasury Management Report
Council **noted** the report.

22/026 Surrey Sports Park annual report

Council **noted** the report, recognising that SSP was returning to its previous performance after a difficult two years through the pandemic.

22/027 Corporate Risk Management annual report

Council **noted** the report.

D CLOSING ITEMS

22/028 Any Other Business

- .1 It was noted that Audit and Assurance Committee had recommended via email correspondence the reappointment of KPMG as the external auditors for two more years (subject to performance review after year 1). The Chair of Council took Chair's action to approve the appointment on behalf of Council.
 - .2 With regard to student accommodation, it was noted that:
 - .2.1 The University had purchased the lease of Millennium House and was now in discussions regarding International House. If successful, there would be consideration of whether it should be returned to student accommodation or be converted to academic space.
 - .2.2 There was consideration of Guildford Court, unused buildings that had been student accommodation. Options were being explored, including the potential sale of Hazel Farm to part fund redevelopment.
 - .2.3 More generally, the University recognised the need to ensure the quality and facilities of its student accommodation offering was comparable and competitive with external providers.
 - .2.4 It was agreed that it would be useful for Council to receive an update on accommodation.
- Action: AC**

22/029 Date of next meeting

31 March 2022

Mr Michael Queen, Chair