

The University of Leeds

THE COUNCIL

29 September 2022

MINUTES

Present:

Mr A Da Costa (in the Chair), the Vice-Chancellor, Mrs L Barber, Mr T Clark¹, Ms B Corner, Ms H Grantham, Dr K Guantai¹, Professor Jimack, Mr I Moffatt, Dr Y Oade¹, Professor O'Grady, Ms L Okhai, Ms M Papageorgiou, Dr C Rogerson, Mr K Sargison¹, Mr T Smith, Mr S Thompson.

In attendance: Professors Grabill, Plant and Yu (Deputy Vice-Chancellors), the Chief Operating Officer, Mr D Hopper, the Director of Finance and Ms C Cho; and, *for the business recorded at CLMM 22/4-6*, the University Librarian.

Apologies: Mr S Elsworth, Ms L Huxley, Mrs J Sheriff, Dr R Tsang, the Secretary, the Chief Financial Officer and the Director of Communications.

Welcome

- 22/1 The Chair welcomed Ken Sargison (new lay member of Council) and Rachel Brealey (Chief Operating Officer) to their first meeting of the Council.
- 22/2 Noting that this was his first meeting as Chair, Mr Da Costa observed that he was excited by the significant change programme on which the University had embarked and noted the Council's responsibility to help navigate and support the institution and the Executive team on the journey.

Presentation: University Library collections

- 22/3 Members were advised that informal presentations were being introduced at the start of Council meetings better to provide members with an appreciation of the scope and scale of University activities.
- 22/4 For this meeting, the Council received a presentation on the University Library collections from the University Librarian, Masud Khokhar. It included consideration of the concept and collection of the University's cultural assets and the way in which they contributed to the achievement of the University Strategy.
- 22/5 Points arising from questions and discussion included the opportunities to make the most of the University's cultural assets for all students, regardless of discipline or background; the way in which cultural assets could support interdisciplinary research collaborations, including the potential role of the Futures Institutes, the Horizons Institute, and other cross-disciplinary centres; and how the institution's cultural assets supported community-building (within and beyond the University), creativity and driving down inequality.
- 22/6 The Chair thanked Mr Khokhar for the illuminating presentation and suggested that he might provide the Council with a follow-up presentation in 2023, updating members on the progress being made on the cultural assets work underway.

¹ Via MS Teams.

Procedural matters

- 22/7 The Chair reminded members of the Council's policy on the disclosure of personal interests (see CLM 87/2). He went on to stress that, although most of the Council's decisions were made public, the proceedings themselves were to be regarded as confidential.
- 22/8 The Council was also reminded that discussion at meetings would be confined to papers 'starred' in advance of the meeting, and of associated practical arrangements.

Formal declarations of interest

- 22/9 Simon Thompson declared an interest in connection with an aspect of the paper CL/22/7 by virtue of his role within IT Services.

Minutes

- 22/10 The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 July 2022 were confirmed.

Schedule of routine business

- 22/11 In noting the Council's schedule of routine business, and given Council's academic governance responsibilities, a member suggested it would be helpful to highlight more clearly the items on the schedule being brought from the Senate to the Council.

Vice-Chancellor's report (CL/22/1)

- 22/12 The Council received a written report from the Vice-Chancellor (CL/22/1), which updated members on matters of higher education policy and reported on issues of interest to the life and work of the University, and which was supplemented by an oral update.

Queen Elizabeth II

- 22/13 The Council recorded its condolence for the death of Queen Elizabeth II. It noted that the Vice-Chancellor had had the honour of attending the Queen's funeral at Westminster Abbey on behalf of the University.

Industrial action

- 22/14 The Council was advised that the University and College Union (UCU) had opened ballots for strike action at 150 universities about the 2023-24 pay round and changes to the Universities Superannuation Scheme. The ballots would close on 21 October. It was also reported that members of Unison had begun six days of industrial action over pay at 17 universities, including Leeds (on 28, 29 and 30 September; and 3, 4 and 8 October). The third campus trade union, Unite, had announced plans to ballot for strike action at around 25 universities.
- 22/15 While it was too early to predict the extent of the impact of the industrial action on the University, contingency planning operations had begun, and, as in previous years, the priorities at this stage were to minimise the disruption of any action on students, to retain the cohesion of the University community and protect the standard of degrees and other qualifications.

Student finance

- 22/16 Members' attention was drawn to the Russell Group's call on the Government to do more to support students challenged by the cost of living increases, including extending

hardship funding, increasing maintenance loans in-line with inflation and reintroducing means-tested maintenance grants.

University news

- 22/17 It was noted that Rachel Brealey had taken up her role as Chief Operating Officer earlier that month and Dennis Hopper, her predecessor, had agreed to stay on as a Special Adviser for a period of time and to support her transition.
- 22/18 The Council associated itself with the Vice-Chancellor's thanks to Mr Hopper for his outstanding work and commitment as Interim Chief Operating Officer during one of the most challenging periods in the University's history.
- 22/19 The Vice-Chancellor was pleased to report a number of key appointments: Professor Jo-Anne Murray as Pro-Vice-Chancellor: Digital Transformation, Dr Kendi Guantai as Dean for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Fiona McClement as the first Director for EDI, Professors Steve Banwart and Manuel Barcia as joint Dean for Global Development, and Jenny Baynes as Director of the Transformation Officer.
- 22/20 Congratulations were extended to Professor Anna Lawson (School of Law) who had been honoured by the British Academy in recognition of her contribution to the humanities and social sciences; and to three members of staff who had been recognised for their outstanding contribution to higher education with National Teaching Fellowships: Professor Bee Bond (the Language Centre), Professor Karen Burland (School of Music) and Dr Nick Cartwright (School of Law).
- 22/21 Looking to the year ahead, the Vice-Chancellor advised members of the goals she had set in consultation with the Chair: the implementation of the University Strategy; working on institutional culture, values and behaviours; advancing the international strategy; moving forward the EDI agenda; and developing the University role as a civic institution.

Provisional financial results, 2021-22 (CL/22/2)

- 22/22 CLMM 22/22-26 are confidential to members of the Council only.

2022 Integrated Planning Exercise outcomes (CL/22/3)

- 22/27 The Council received a summary (CL/22/3) of the outcomes of the 2022 Integrated Planning Exercise and progress made in delivering on the strategic priorities whilst maintaining focus on managing risks and identifying and responding to new opportunities.
- 22/28 Members were advised about the streamlining of the IPE process and the increasing collaborative approach between faculties and services. Members discussed the progress being made by faculties in response to institutionally agreed strategic priorities (the strategic overlays), in particular relating to the Fully Online Education, Continuous Professional Development and Professional Learning programmes; and the staff and recruitment challenges arising from the current geo-political environment.
- 22/29 In response to a question about the frequency of the IPE, it was explained that due to the size of the institution the exercise helped to ensure faculties and services remained aligned to strategic priorities. It also provided a two-way communication channel which promoted better engagement and collaboration. Consideration was being given to the sequencing of the IPE balancing a lighter touch annual approach and more in-depth reviews every three years.

22/30 It was reported that the Strategy and Investment Committee (SIC) had discussed the IPE outcomes and had been supportive of the streamlined approach. In respect of the costs and benefits of the strategic overlays, it had observed that for the time being these more appropriately remained at institutional level, but consideration would need to be given to the point at which those overlays should become part of the faculties and services' IPE, and embedded within their plans.

Taught student recruitment, 2022 entry (CL/22/4)

22/31 The Council considered (as CL/22/4) an update on taught student recruitment for 2022 entry. It also summarised the approach adopted and lessons learnt from the undergraduate recruitment cycle for that intake.

22/32 Introducing the paper, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Student Education advised members that there had been positive progress in terms of the process and recruitment outcomes for both UK and International cohorts and that the work undertaken for 2022 provided a strong platform upon which to build for 2023 entry. This had been achieved despite the ongoing contextual issues such as Covid 19, uncertainty surrounding A-level outcomes and the number of students who had deferred entry from the previous year. He paid tribute to the significant efforts of Marketing Director and his team working alongside faculty executives for the positive outcomes that had been achieved.

22/33 Members' attention was drawn to the more unified, 'gathered field' approach adopted by the University in shaping its student recruitment, while continuing its commitment to balancing the cohort mix, being mindful of the impact of recruitment numbers on the student experience, and continuing to improve its recruitment from Low Participation Neighbourhoods and thus its access ratio. A discussion ensued around the use of the 'gathered field' methodology to enable the University to make more meaningful contextual offers and to achieve a better and more diverse, composition of student cohorts. Comments were also made around cohort rebalancing and the difference between the University becoming an elitist institution, which it would wish to avoid, and an institution that produced elite graduates which would have positive societal consequences.

National Student Survey results, 2022 (CL/22/5)

22/34 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Student Education introduced a paper (CL/22/5) setting out the University's results from the 2022 National Student Survey (NSS), together with comparative performance in relation to the Russell Group and the sector as a whole. It also provided an account of how NSS items were used in the education Key Performance Indicators, and actions being taken (and have been taken since the new education strategy) to address student satisfaction. The paper further provided a short discussion of the purpose of the NSS to help inform an understanding of the survey.

22/35 As alluded to in the Vice-Chancellor's report in July, members were advised that the results were unacceptable: Leeds had achieved a score of 69% for 'Overall satisfaction', a drop of 7 percentage points from the previous year, alongside a decline in scores for almost all categories of the survey.

22/36 Members were advised that Curriculum Redefined was the primary long-term mechanism by which the University was addressing NSS issues, particularly around assessment and feedback, and programme organisation and management. More immediate steps were also being taken to improve outcomes but it was reiterated that the University's response needed to be strategic and holistic rather than tactical. It was also observed that it would take time for the effect of any actions to materialise given that the survey was only of third year students.

- 22/37 During a detailed discussion, observations were made about the student experience and the importance of taking the time to listen to the student voice better to understand their expectations and needs; and the need for communications to students to be clear and jargon-free. Members also discussed the interventions at school level, with bespoke actions and support being directed to schools with poor NSS scores; and the value of students co-creating school action plans. The importance of engaging with areas which had performed well was also noted, and Curriculum Redefined would enable the identification and visibility of those pockets of success and excellence.
- 22/38 Members went on to discuss the value of the NSS as a performance indicator for student learning and the implementation of the University strategy, and the availability of other data to use as leading indicators. Members were advised that the forward agenda for the SIC included a rolling programme of deep dives into key elements of the Strategy, and that its meeting on 11 November would include a focus on student education.
- 22/39 In conclusion, the Council wholly endorsed the approach being proposed to address the issues that had been identified by the NSS results. It also thanked the Deputy Vice-Chancellor: Student Education for the clarity and candour of his analysis.

Amendment to the Charter (CL/22/6)

- 22/40 The Council consider a proposal (CL/22/6) to amend the University Charter to enable the Vice-Chancellor to nominate further senior officers to confer degrees (normally a Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor or Executive Dean of Faculty). It noted the rationale for the change set out in paragraphs 2-3 of the paper.
- 22/41 The Council approved the proposal that the Charter granted by His Majesty King Edward VII on 25 April 1904, and as subsequently amended, be further amended as set out in the Annex to the paper, subject to such amendments as the Lords of the Privy Council may require.

Report from the Strategy and Investment Committee (CL/22/7)

- 22/42 CLMM 22/42-53 are confidential to members of the Council only.

Minutes from the Audit and Risk Committee (20 September 2022) (CL/22/8)

- 22/54 The Council received the minutes of the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 20 September 2022 (CL/22/8).
- 22/55 The Committee had noted the internal auditors' progress against the 2021-22 annual plan, including a summary of the one internal audit review finalised since its last meeting (from which there were no high risk issues). In respect of the update on progress made in implementing internal audit recommendations, the Committee had expressed its disappointment that there remained a relatively high number of recommendations which remained outstanding, and had reinforced its desire for every effort made to complete recommendations as soon as possible.
- 22/56 As previously agreed, the Committee had undertaken risk deep dives into the University's IT capability and infrastructure and security-related risks in the University's internationalisation activities. Following discussion with University management, it had been content that appropriate action was being taken to manage the risks in those areas.
- 22/57 The Committee had considered a summary of the University's key data returns and details of the management and quality assurance processes in place for them. The Committee had agreed that there was a good level of assurance about the University's processes for data assurance.

- 22/58 The Committee had received details of the ongoing work to improve the University's information security architecture. While content with the steps being taken so far, given its importance, the Committee would continue to keep the matter under close review through the receipt of regular updates.
- 22/59 The Committee noted information on the positive outcome of the Human Tissue Authority research licence inspection of the University's compliance with HTA licensing standards undertaken in the summer. It had also completed an annual review of its own effectiveness and had been broadly satisfied with the way in which it was operating, albeit that some improvements were being considered.

Treasury report (CL/22/9)

- 22/60 The Council received a paper, CL/22/9, on the conduct of the University's treasury management operations during the financial year ending on 31 July 2022, which included a commentary on treasury performance and endowment management, and specified the amounts of outstanding bank loans.
- 22/61 The Council approved the addition of the new Senior Treasury Administrator to the list of authorised users for a number of areas as set out in paragraph 11 of the paper.

Annual Report of the Gift Acceptance Committee (CL/22/10)

- 22/62 The Council received (as CL/22/10) the annual report of the Gift Acceptance Committee, which had responsibility for reviewing proposed gifts to the University of £150k or more, including a summary of all gift acceptance cases drawn up in respect of offers over £75k during 2021-22 and their outcomes. A total of 14 cases had been considered by the Committee. Named gifts were as also set out in the paper.

Annual report from the Animal Welfare and Ethical Review Committee (CL/22/11)

- 22/63 CLMM 22/63-65 are confidential to members of the Council only.

Committees of the Council (CL/22/12)

- 22/66 The Council reviewed – and ratified – the constitutions of its committees, as set out in CL/22/12. In doing so, it noted that the terms of reference for the Equality and Inclusion Board was under review in the light of the new EDI Strategy and would be brought to a future meeting of the Council for approval.

Matters for report (CL/22/13)

- 22/67 The Council received a paper (CL/22/13) setting out a number of matters for report including those summarised below.

Obituaries

- 22/68 The Council recorded its condolences for the deaths which were reported in CL/22/13.1.

Distinctions; professorial and senior appointments

- 22/69 Warm congratulations were offered to the recipients of honours and distinctions reported in CL/22/13.2. Details of recent professorial and senior appointments were given in CL/22/13.4-5.

Authority to use the Common Seal

22/70 The Council endorsed the uses to which the Common Seal had been put since its previous meeting, as detailed in in CL/22/13.7.