

UNIVERSITY OF LEICESTER

COUNCIL

Minutes of a meeting held on
Tuesday 1 October 2019

Present:

	Gary Dixon (Chair)	
Janet Arthur		Alison Goodall
Edmund Burke		Azam Mamujee
Martin Cullen		Andrew Morgan
Sarah Davies		Oge Obioha
Sandra Dudley		Vijay Sharma
Mehmooda		Richard Tapp
	Carole Thorogood	

In attendance: Dave Hall (Secretary); Neil Cox (Assistant Secretary); Martyn Riddleston (Chief Financial Officer); Alex Erdlenbruch (Chief of Staff, President and Vice-Chancellor's Office); Graham Wynn (Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education); Nishan Canagarajah (President and Vice-Chancellor-Elect); and Philip Baker (Head of the College of Life Sciences, for item 19/M105).

Apologies for absence were received from Cathy Ellis, Martin Hindle and Ian Johnson.

UNRESERVED BUSINESS

19/M99 **DECLARATION OF INTERESTS**

There were no declarations of personal interest in any of the items dealt with under the Unreserved Business section of this meeting.

19/M100 **UNRESERVED MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Council considered the Unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2019. **Council approved** them as a correct record. There were no matters arising that were not dealt with elsewhere on the agenda for this meeting.

19/M101 **CHAIR'S BUSINESS**

The Chair:

- a. welcomed the University's President and Vice-Chancellor-Elect, Nishan Canagarajah, who was attending the meeting as an Observer prior to formally taking up his appointment on 4 November 2019, this having been approved by Council, by correspondence, on 19 August 2019.
- b. encouraged the lay members of Council to take advantage of the reintroduction of the Academic Pairing Scheme, which sought to achieve an enhanced awareness and understanding of the academic mission of the University by providing opportunities for lay members to be paired with a school of their own choosing for 1 or 2 years. The Chair invited lay members wishing to take advantage of this opportunity to contact the Council Secretariat (Neil Cox or Vicky Harrison) in the first instance.

19/M102 THE COUNCIL 2019-20

Council received details of its membership for the academic year 2019-2020. Richard Tapp (new lay member appointed on the recommendation of the Nominations Committee), Alison Goodall (new staff member appointed by the Senate) and Graham Wynn (currently attending as an Observer, in his capacity as Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor - Education) were warmly welcomed to their first meeting of Council.

19/M103 RESPONSIBILITY OF MEMBERS AND CORPORATE GOVERNANCE

Council received the following documents concerning the powers and responsibilities of Council, the conduct of Council business and the role of members, as routinely presented to Council at the first meeting in the new academic year:

- a. Powers of the Council
 - i. Extract from the Statutes (Section 5)
 - ii. Extract from the Ordinances (Section 9)
- b. Statement of Council's Primary Responsibilities
- c. Standing Orders
- d. Schedule of Delegation
- e. Charity Commission guidance on acting in a charity's best interests

With regard to d) above, **Council approved** a small number of proposed minor amendments to the Schedule for 2019-20, designed to give further clarity as to the delegated authority and reporting lines of certain senior officers.

19/M104 ACTING PRESIDENT AND VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS

Edmund Burke expressed his gratitude for the support he had received from members of Council and colleagues across the University during his period as Acting President and Vice-Chancellor. The University was well placed to embark upon the next phase of its development and he was very much looking forward to working with and supporting Nishan Canagarajah when he joined the University in November. He then drew Council's attention to various topical items and developments, including:

- a. the University was expecting to deliver a surplus of around £1.3m for the 2018-19 financial year, before USS adjustments, and this was a significant achievement given that income had fallen by £13m in-year (19/M97 also refers).
- b. the University had been ranked 41st, a drop of three places, in the Times/Sunday Times Good University Guide 2020. The University needed to improve its teaching performance and outcomes, and the student experience and graduate prospects, in order to reverse its recent declines in national league table positions. A new League Table Working Group had been established to help inform the University's tactical approach to league tables.
- c. the University had had another successful year in research, with the Colleges of Social Sciences, Arts and Humanities and Science and Engineering both recording their best ever performance in terms of research awards.

- d. student wellbeing remained a priority for the University. A new strategy was being developed, and the Acting President and Vice-Chancellor and the President of the Students' Union had published a joint 'blog' to coincide with the start of term, which set out recent significant investment in student support and the capacity of the wellbeing service.
- e. the University's Access and Participation Plan had been accepted by the Office for Students. An implementation plan was now being developed and this would be shared with Council in due course.
- f. A Brexit Transition and Risk Management Group had been meeting regularly throughout 2019 to engage closely with University colleagues and with external bodies and stakeholders, including the UK government, to ensure that the University was well-prepared for Brexit. A communications plan had been developed to keep staff and students informed if the likelihood of a 'no deal' Brexit showed signs of increasing over the next few weeks.

19/M105 **ANNUAL REPORT FROM HEAD OF COLLEGE**

Council received a comprehensive presentation and report from the Head of the College of Life Sciences, Philip Baker, on the recent achievements and current strategic direction and challenges in the College.

Council was pleased to note that the College had had a very successful past twelve months, with strong overall performance in student recruitment and research, and in the National Student Survey. With student intake targets having been exceeded this had enabled some limited extra budget flexibility and targeted investment and it was hoped that this would have a positive impact on staff morale, which was an acknowledged ongoing challenge.

With specific regard to the College's performance in the 2019 NSS, overall satisfaction was significantly ahead of the University average in most areas. However, there were some notable demographic differences in these results, particularly in Psychology where BAME students were significantly less satisfied than their White counterparts, despite similar levels of attainment. The College acknowledged the BAME and diversity challenges it was facing, amongst both its students and staff.

19/M106 **NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2019**

Council considered a comprehensive report from the Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) on the University's approach to the NSS 2019, with a summary of the results and key follow-up actions for 2019-20.

Council noted that the University had improved its position in Overall Satisfaction from 82% to 84% (and had improved in all eight sections of the NSS), which equated to a rise in rank amongst all HEIs from 89th to 62nd. This demonstrated the extent to which significant changes in the rankings could be driven in either direction by relatively minor changes in the results. At a simple level if, for example, only an additional 64 students had agreed that they were satisfied overall (rather than neither agreeing nor disagreeing), Leicester would have been placed in the top 20% of the sector for this measure. A shift of 98 students would have delivered a top 10% placing. Converting these 'neutral' students to positive responses would be a key focus for NSS 2020.

As mentioned elsewhere in the meeting (19/M96 and 19/M105 both refer), detailed analysis of the results revealed a statistically significant 'satisfaction gap' between BAME and White responders, and particularly so for Black students, at University and School level. Action planning for NSS 2020 would need to address these significant differences and gaps, alongside the work of the Education Excellence 'Inclusivity' theme which was aimed at closing the BAME attainment and satisfaction gaps.

19/M107 **AUDIT COMMITTEE**

Council considered the report of a meeting of the Audit Committee held on 10 September 2019. There were no matters that required the approval of Council on this occasion.

With regard to the scheduled programme of internal audit reviews, **Council noted** that the outgoing internal auditors would not complete all of the reviews included in their final internal audit plan for 2018-2019. Three reviews had been transferred to the draft plan for 2019-20 put forward by the new internal auditors.

With regard to value for money (VFM), **Council noted** that the Committee had requested the new internal auditors and the external auditors to undertake some comparative benchmarking of the University's approach to VFM and VFM reporting, as this had been a source of some disagreement with the outgoing internal auditors.

19/M108 **EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION COMMITTEE**

Council considered the report of a meeting of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee held on 11 July 2019. There were no matters that required the approval of Council on this occasion.

Council noted that the Committee had discussed in detail the challenges presented by the BAME attainment gap, and the actions that were being taken at various levels across the University in order to address this.

19/M109 **STANDING COMMITTEE OF THE ALUMNI ASSOCIATION**

Council considered the report of a meeting of the Standing Committee of the Alumni Association held on 11 September 2019. There were no matters that required the approval of Council on this occasion.

Council noted that the launch of the 'alumni pin' had been well-received at the July degree ceremonies, and more than 75% of graduates had opted-in for future alumni communications. The new London Chapter had been launched in September 2019 and the level of alumni attendance had been significantly ahead of the target. The Standing Committee was actively considering the diversity aspects of all of its activities, and the support and advice it might draw upon from inside the University in this regard.

Council noted that the next Alumni Awards Dinner would be held at Drapers' Hall, London on Thursday 5 March 2020. Sponsors for the event were still needed and Council members were invited to make the Chair of the Alumni Association aware of any potential sponsors that might be approached.

19/M110 ANNUAL REPORT OF THE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE

Council received the annual report of the work of the Nominations Committee during the 2018-19 academic year.

Council noted that the Committee reported to Council and to Court from time to time, as required by the flow of business, but by long-standing arrangement did not present its minutes to either body. Instead, it reported on specific matters to whichever body was appropriate, and otherwise submitted an annual report to Council. The annual report brought together in summary form the various matters dealt with by the Committee in the course of the year, most of which had already been the subject of specific recommendations presented to and approved by Council/Court.

19/M111 APPOINTMENTS TO COUNCIL

Council approved the following recommendations of the Nominations Committee for the appointment of new lay members to replace Janet Finch and Anil Majithia, both of whom had resigned from Council in the summer with an official end date of 31 July 2019:

- i. the appointment of Craig Brown to replace Janet Finch as a lay member of Council, for an initial term to run until 31 July 2022;
- ii. subject to formal approval by Court, the appointment of Sophie Dale-Black to replace Anil Majithia as a lay member of Council appointed by the Court, for an initial term to run until 31 July 2022 (Court's approval for this would be sought by correspondence).

As part of the appointment process both candidates had already provided satisfactory registration of interests and fit and proper persons declarations.

19/M112 APPOINTMENTS TO COURT

- a. **Council considered and approved** a recommendation of the Nominations Committee that Bridget Towle, who had retired as a lay member of Council in July 2019, having served in various lay roles over nearly 20 years, be invited to serve as a Full Member of Court, in a personal capacity, until 31 December 2022 in the first instance.
- b. **Council considered and approved** a recommendation of the Nominations Committee for the following newly-appointed emeritus professors to be invited to become Associate Members of Court, effective until 31 December 2022 in the first instance:

David Davies	Chemistry
Kirsten Malmkjaer	Arts

19/M113 REMUNERATION OF UNIVERSITY GOVERNORS

Council received a discussion paper published by the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) on the possible remuneration of University governors, and the positive benefits this might have on the diversity, age profile and effectiveness of governing bodies.

Council noted that, although the paper made various recommendations aimed at different audiences within the HE sector, it did not suggest how or by whom these might be taken forward and considered in a unified way. However, it did contain a number of references to the CUC's *Higher Education Code of Governance* and it would be interesting to see whether the new edition of the *Code*, when published, had anything more of substance to say on the issue of the payment of governors.

19/M114 **STUDENTS' UNION ELECTIONS**

a. **Conduct of elections in the Students' Union**

Council considered a report which it had requested from the Students' Union on the outcome of an investigation into the conduct of the executive officer elections held in February 2019. At its meeting in March 2019 Council had been informed that the original result of the election for Education Officer had been discounted and the election re-run, under significant extra scrutiny, in the light of evidence that the chairing of the election debate showed significant bias in favour of one of the candidates. Other concerns had also been raised regarding the level of abuse and intimidation reported by some of the candidates, and the way that complaints and counter-complaints had been dealt with.

Council noted that the investigation had identified three areas that had worked well in the planning and delivery of the 2019 elections, but five areas were found to have fallen short of expectations. These included the chairing of the Debate Night; 'candidate shadowing' arrangements; closure of complaints; the availability of the Independent Returning Officer to deal with issues promptly; and various other lower level concerns from previous elections that had not received sufficient attention.

Council noted the details of the remedial actions that had been put in place by the Students' Union to address each of these issues, and that the Union's Trustee Board, Executive Officer Team and Senior Management Team now had full confidence in the planning for future elections. **Council endorsed** the planned approach and looked forward to a successful round of elections in 2019-20.

b. **Appointment of Observer**

Council noted that Ordinance 22(8) required that the conduct of the election of Officers of the Students' Union be subject to inspection by a person appointed by Council.

Council approved the appointment of Graham Wynn, in his capacity as Acting Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), as Observer for the elections to be held during 2019-20.

19/M115 **RESEARCH INTEGRITY**

Council considered the 2019 annual statement on research integrity, as required under Commitment 5 of the national *Concordat to Support Research Integrity*.

Council noted the full and comprehensive range of work that was being overseen by the Research Ethics and Integrity Training Group, and the related activities that were being promoted and delivered across the University, to support and strengthen the understanding and application of research integrity issues within the institution.

Council agreed that the 2019 report contained an appropriate level of detail for a public report, and **approved** its publication on the University's research integrity webpages.

19/M116 **FORWARD BUSINESS SCHEDULE**

Council received and noted the outline forward business schedule for its 'Ordinary' meetings throughout the remainder of 2019-20.

19/M117 **DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS**

Council noted the dates and times of remaining Ordinary meetings and Awaydays in 2019-20, all at 4pm unless stated:

Tuesday 19 November 2019 (*followed by Council dinner for all members*)

Monday 17 February 2020 - Council/Executive Board Awayday – all day*

Wednesday 18 March 2020

Wednesday 13 May 2020

Tuesday 9 June 2020 – Council/Executive Board Awayday – all day

Wednesday 8 July 2020

*Extra Awayday, added after dates first confirmed

CHAIR

Total duration of meeting (Reserved and Unreserved Business): 3 hours and 20 minutes