

Council Minutes: 11 October 2024

PRESENT: Rt. Hon. Alistair Burt (Pro-Chancellor) (in the Chair); Professor Andy Schofield (Vice-Chancellor); Tania Baumann (lay member) (*online*); Rt. Hon. Hazel Blears (lay member); Alun Branigan (lay member) (*online*); Hanah Burgess (lay member); Anthony Carey (lay member); Cerys Evans (Students' Union President); Adrian Jonas (lay member); Claire Leitch (Senate representative) (*online*); Professor Rebecca Lingwood (Deputy Vice-Chancellor); Alison Mullan (Senate representative) (*online*); Marcia Reid Fotheringham (lay member); Professor Ella Ritchie (Deputy Pro-Chancellor); Harrison Stewart (student Council member); and Maureen Whilby (lay member).

IN ATTENDANCE: Phill Dixon (Director of People and Organisational Effectiveness) (*for items 11-13*); Claire Geddes (Committee Clerk); Ben Gill (Head of Strategic Projects) (*for item 9*); Professor Alisdair Gillespie (Academic Dean) (*for items 9-10*); Catherine Harrison (Associate Director for People, Culture and Inclusion) (*for item 13*); Simon Jennings (Director of Strategic Planning and Deputy Secretary); Nicola Owen (Deputy Chief Executive (Operations) and Secretary); Russ Quigley (Deputy Director, People and Organisational Effectiveness) (*for items 11-12*); Sarah Randall-Paley (Director of Finance); and Professor Wendy Robinson (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education) (*for items 9-10*).

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Professor Jo Rycroft-Malone (Senate representative).

INTRODUCTION

1. WELCOME AND APOLOGIES

- 1.1 Council noted apologies from Professor Jo Rycroft-Malone (Senate representative).
- 1.2 The Chair expressed thanks on behalf of Council to Simon Jennings for contributions to the Council and wished him well with his new role in Ireland.

2. DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

- 2.1 There were no declarations of interest.

3. MINUTES OF THE LAST MEETING: 5 JULY 2024

PAPER A

- 3.1 Council approved the minutes of the Council meeting held on 5 July 2024.

4. NOTES FROM THE COUNCIL AWAY DAY 16-17 MAY 2024

PAPER B

- 4.1 Council noted the notes from the Council Away Day held on 16-17 May 2024.

5. MATTERS ARISING

- 5.1 **Item 11: Office for Students Ongoing Conditions of Registration: Assurance Report:** Council noted that the OfS had announced the introduction of a new condition E6 from 1 August 2025 relating to harassment and sexual misconduct.

- 5.2 **Item 14: Potential Major Gift:** the first instalment of the Fort Pledge (£0.5M) had been received.
- 5.3 **Item 15: UA92 Directorship:** Professor Steve Bradley had been appointed as the University's second Director on the UA92 Board from 1 September 2024, to be reviewed in 3 years.
- 5.4 **Item 17: Student Complaints Procedures:** Further to Council's approval of the revised procedures on 5 July 2024, the Deputy Chief Executive (Operations) had approved under delegation, further minor changes to remove references to the OfS Free Speech Complaints Scheme after the Government issued its statement in July to pause enactment of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023.
- 5.5 **Safeguarding Refresher:** Council members confirmed their engagement with the safeguarding refresher training.

6. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S UPDATE AND QUESTIONS TO THE EXECUTIVE (INCLUDING EXECUTIVE'S PRIORITIES FOR 2024/25) ORAL UPDATE
Some Restricted and Commercial in Confidence

6.1 Council noted a written report from the Executive circulated to Council on 4 October 2024. The Vice-Chancellor addressed members regarding his recently announced move to take up the role of Principal and Vice Chancellor at the University of Glasgow at the end of August 2025. He highlighted his ongoing commitment to the University until then and that there were a number of strategically important projects for the Executive to progress over the transition period. He emphasised the criticality of Council's support over the period and the importance of it holding the Executive to account regarding progress on strategic project delivery. He went on to report the following.

- (i) Positive performance in the domestic league table rankings but contrasted with the UK Higher Education Sector's recent decline in performance in the QS World Rankings, and the University's plans to regain and improve up its own previous position.

Council noted how it could contribute to the University's efforts to improve its QS World University Rankings regarding reputation.

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- (iii) The Vice-Chancellor presented the Executive's Shared Objectives for 2024/25 which had been developed to ensure the long-term sustainability of the University. The objectives were: optimisation of the University's size and shape to ensure a thriving institution; to make Lancaster a destination of choice for students; to ensure the collective endeavour of our research is world class; and to enhance the effectiveness of UEB as a Team.

Council welcomed and endorsed the focus of the Executive's Shared Objectives for 2024/25.

7. STUDENTS' UNION PRESIDENT'S REPORT: JULY 2024 **PAPER C**

- 7.1 Council noted the written report from the Students' Union Elected Officer Team of 2023/24 regarding the Officers priorities for the year and other matters of concern and challenges faced by the Students' Union relating to its services, commercial activity and financial sustainability. The President supplemented this with an oral report regarding the Students' Union's activities and events in Welcome Week.
- 7.2 Council requested that the Executive gave further consideration to the matters raised under the President's Report (Section 3) outside of the meeting, as there was a mixture of issues to reflect upon.
- 7.3 Council noted the report and asked for its thanks to be conveyed to the Students' Union Officer and staff for their contributions to a successful Welcome Week.

ITEMS FOR DISCUSSION

8. FINANCE AND GENERAL PURPOSES COMMITTEE: MEETING **ORAL REPORT**
UPDATE FROM THE FGPC CHAIR, FROM 18 SEPTEMBER 2024

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9. CURRICULUM TRANSFORMATION PROGRAMME (CTP): PRESENTATION
NEXT STEPS

- 9.1 Council received a presentation on the Curriculum Transformation Project from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) which outlined its progress to date and the planned next phases of implementation.
- 9.2 Members discussed the strategic imperative of the project, the key proposed changes and the timeframe in which benefits would be realised and its importance in both improving the student experience and in the context of ensuring high quality education with a declining unit of resource for teaching. Council fully supported the direction of travel and the urgency of its completion.
- 9.3 Council noted the presentation and endorsed the approach been taken to CTP.

10. NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY 2024: OUTCOMES AND RESPONSE **PRESENTATION**

- 10.1 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) and the University Academic Dean gave a presentation on the results of the National Student Survey 2024 and how insights were being used to identify actions, and drive improvements at an institutional, faculty and departmental level.
- 10.2 The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) reminded Council of the critical importance of the NSS to the Teaching Excellence Framework and league table performance. She highlighted that the direction of travel was good with an increase in positivity measures across all NSS themes but, there remained persistent issues to be addressed.

- 10.3 The University Academic Dean detailed wider work being undertaken through a standing committee on teaching excellence as well as the introduction of an annual survey for all non-finalist undergraduates to both predict NSS results and respond earlier to issues, with all inputs and other research activity inputting into CTP.
- 10.4 Council noted the presentation.
- 11. GOVERNANCE OVERSIGHT OF REDUNDANCIES** **PAPER D**
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- 12. FUTURE VOLUNTARY SEVERANCE SCHEME (VSS)** **PAPER E**
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- 13. STAFF EXPERIENCE SURVEY 2024** **PAPER H**
- 13.1 The Associate Director of People, Culture and Inclusion presented the key findings from the 2024 Staff Experience Survey conducted by Hive. She emphasised the improvements in results since the full 2018 survey, the thematic approach taken to improving the staff experience and how the results were being taken forward at a Faculty and Divisional level.
- 13.2 Members noted that the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee had already considered the results from an EDI perspective and had been felt that the survey had provided useful data.
- 13.3 Council discussed the proposed adoption of Employee Net Promoter Score (eNPS) as the University's 16th key performance indicator (KPI). The proposed target score was challenged by some members who questioned whether it was sufficiently stretching given the University's ambitions. Both typical scores for the sector, and the University's operating context going forward were considered, and it was agreed that a realistic but stretching target should be set perhaps using a target range in the first instance.
- 13.4 Council noted the presentation regarding the findings of the 2024 Staff Experience Survey and endorsed the adoption of eNPS as the University's sixteenth key performance indicator.
- 14. KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (KPIs) (END OF YEAR REPORT)** **PAPER I**
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- 15. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S APPOINTMENT** **PAPER J**
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16. SENIOR OFFICER APPOINTMENTS **PAPER 1**

- 16.1 Council received Senate's recommendation to reappoint Professor Wendy Robinson as Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) until 30 September 2029 and approved her reappointment.
- 16.2 The Vice-Chancellor's intended approach to recruiting a new Executive Dean for the Faculty of Science and Technology was set out and taking into account the views of Senate which had been supportive, Council approved an appointment being made to this Senior Officer role.

17. NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE LAY MEMBER SEARCH UPDATE **ORAL UPDATE**
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18. COLLEGE PRINCIPAL APPOINTMENTS **PAPER 1**

- 18.1 The Chair stated that there had been a request for this starred item of business to be discussed as members had raised concerns regarding the potential impact of the proposals on maintaining the distinctiveness of the Colleges and ensuring that any process for search and appointment avoided an insular approach.
- 18.2 Council received a brief update from the Deputy Chief Executive (Operations) regarding the rationale for the proposal. She highlighted the focus of the Dean for Colleges on strengthening the leadership of Colleges through effective appointments to all Principal vacancies, this was to enable concentration on the development of a strategy for the Colleges.
- 18.3 After discussion, Council was satisfied with the basis for the proposal and confirmed that the Vice-Chancellor had the delegated authority to approve College Principal appointments.

*** ITEMS NOT FOR DISCUSSION UNLESS REQUESTED IN ADVANCE TO THE CHAIR**

19*. PETER SCOTT GALLERY CHARITABLE TRUST: **PAPER 2**
UNIVERSITY APPOINTED TRUSTEE

- 19.1 Council approved the appointment of Professor Ed Simpson, Executive Dean of Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences as the University's appointed trustee to the Peter Scott Gallery Trust for a period of 5 years until 10 October 2029.

20*. REMUNERATION COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT AND **PAPER 3**
GOVERNANCE STATEMENT

- 20.1 Council considered and approved the annual report of its Remuneration Committee including the Committee's Annual Governance Statement.

21*. STRATEGIC REWARD COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT (2024) **PAPER 4**

- 21.1 Council approved the annual report from the Strategic Reward Committee.

22*. REPORT ON THE USE OF THE UNIVERSITY SEAL PAPER 5

22.1 Council noted the paper.

23*. CHAIR'S ACTION PAPER 6

23.1 Council noted the Chair's approval of a minor amendment to the standing orders.

24*. WRITTEN REPORTS OF MEETINGS PAPER 7

24.1 Council noted the written report of the Estates Committee, meeting of 9 September 2024.

ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

25. FORWARD SCHEDULE OF COUNCIL BUSINESS PAPER J

25.1 Council noted the Forward Schedule.

26. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

26.1 There was no further business discussed at the meeting.

27. DATE OF NEXT MEETING

27.1 The next meeting will be held from 9:00 on Friday 22 November 2024 in the Training Suites 1, 2, and 3, POE Building.