



Minutes Meeting of the Council

Date: 1 May 2025

Present: Martin Temple, Pro-Chancellor (in the Chair)
Claire Brownlie (Pro-Chancellor), Adrian Stone (Pro-Chancellor),
Rob Memmott (Treasurer), Professor Koen Lamberts (President & Vice-
Chancellor), Ghislaine Allilaire, Professor Sue Hartley, Dr John Hogan,
Varun Kabra, Alison Kay, Professor Janine Kirby, Frances Morris-Jones,
Phil Rodrigo, Professor Mark Strong, Dr Phil Tenney, Professor Mary Vincent,
Daisy Watson (for item 1, part of item 2, items 3-5, 9-12, 14-22)

Secretary: David Swinn

In attendance: Matthew Borland, Anna Campbell (for item 1, part of item 2, items 3-5, 9-12,
14-22), Jo Jones, Professor Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, Rob Sykes, Vicki Jackson
(item 7)

Apologies: Gemma Greenup, Professor Robert Mokaya

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed Members and attendees to the meeting. The Chair also gave, on behalf of Council, congratulations to Daisy Watson on her recent re-election as the Students' Union President.
- 1.2 The Chair noted that a quorum of the Council was present for a meeting in accordance with Section 3(5) of University's statutes and accordingly that the meeting was duly convened.

2. Declaration of Conflict of Interests

CLOSED MINUTE

Item 17, Re-appointment of the Senior Independent Governor

- 2.10 It was noted that Phil Rodrigo was conflicted over the recommendation in Item 17, Re-appointment of the Senior Independent Governor, and will not take part in that decision.

Other conflicts of interest

- 2.11 No other conflicts of interest were declared.

3. Approval of Category C Business

- 3.1 Council considered Category C business, which is covered in Minutes 9-25, below.

4. President & Vice-Chancellor's Report

- 4.1 Council received and noted the President & Vice-Chancellor's report, which provided information on key current and forthcoming developments in the policy environment and against each of the themes in the University's Strategic Plan. Attention was drawn to the following updates and developments since the written report was prepared:
- (a) Industrial relations:
The University and College Union (UCU) Sheffield branch had asked its members to take 10 days of discontinuous strike action on Wednesday 30 April, Tuesday 6 to Friday 9 May and Monday 12 to Friday 16 May. They had also asked members to take continuous action short of a strike from Thursday 1 May. The dispute centred on UCU seeking a guarantee from the University that there will be no compulsory redundancies. The University would continue to seek to engage with UCU to attempt to find a resolution to this dispute and avoid any adverse impact on the wider staff and student bodies.
 - (b) Professional Services Framework Consultation:
Work had continued on the collective consultation with Professional Services staff across academic schools and some faculty teams. Further information would be shared with staff later this month.
 - (c) Policy:
The sector faced a risk of adverse policy decisions in relation to the graduate visa, particularly if Reform UK were to make gains at the Labour party's expense in local authority and mayoral elections. This posed a major risk to the University's student recruitment activities.
 - (d) The UK Supreme Court judgment on legal definition of sex within the Equality Act
The University was working to understand the implications of the UK Supreme Court decision on the legal definition of sex within the Equality Act and the subsequent interim guidance issued by the Equality and Human Rights Commission (EHRC). In doing so the University would liaise closely with sector bodies and review the results of the EHRC stakeholder consultation taking place in mid-May.

5. Student Experience

- 5.1 Council received and noted the Student Experience report from the Students' Union, which comprised the results of recent SU elections and the Returning Officers' report on the elections which confirmed that the election was run in a fair and democratic manner which satisfied the stipulations as laid out within the 1994 Education Act.

6. 2025-26 Budget

- 6.1 Council considered the University Group consolidated 2025/26 budget, which Finance Committee had considered at its March meeting and had recommend approval of to Council. The budget reflected the revised financial targets for 2025/26 agreed by Council in March 2025 in respect of the level of underlying deficit, reduction of capital programme and

year end cash balance levels. The report provided a comparison to the November 2024 forecast submitted to the Office for Students (OfS) in the Annual Financial Return.

- 6.2 Attention was drawn to the underlying operating deficit for 2025/26. The year end cash balances were broadly the same in the 2025/26 budget and the OfS submission. In order to maintain cash balances the net own funded capital expenditure in 2025/26 had been reduced. Borrowing at the year end was not anticipated to be significantly different. The bank covenants position set out in the report reflected the University's current covenants, and if new covenants were to be put in place through changes to borrowings then the University would work to them.
- 6.3 Council discussed the optimisation of technology to drive a shift in underlying costs. It was recognised that any projects using technology in relation to the student experience or to back-office functions would be complex change programmes that would take a number of years to deliver savings. A significant amount of work had been undertaken regarding the optimisation of Professional Services structures and this would enable further efficiencies to be realised. Council would be provided with an update report on programmes where technology was being used to reduce cost, and the report would also explore where technology can be used to accelerate cost savings.
- 6.4 It was confirmed that the 2025/26 budget assumptions included that the Mitigating Cost Actions would be delivered and the associated savings realised. Members of UEB were working to achieve the Actions and currently there was no evidence to suggest that the institution was not on track to deliver these Actions. However, there was a need to be flexible in undertaking this work, mindful of the capacity of University management and trade union colleagues involved in these processes. If there were to be any deviation from the timeframe, this would be reported to Finance Committee and to Council.
- 6.5 Council approved the 2025/26 budget and noted the following:
 - 6.5.1 The financial risks and opportunities associated with this position.
 - 6.5.2 That further work was to be undertaken by UEB to move the future year financial forecasts back to an underlying surplus position and forecasts for 2026/27-2029/30 will be presented to Finance Committee in June.

7. CLOSED MINUTE: Borrowings

8. Capital Report

- 8.1 Council received and noted an update on progress of ongoing and pipeline projects in the capital programme, including projects subject to recent consideration and approval at ECSG, UEB and Finance Committee in accordance with the Council Scheme of Delegation.

- 8.2 A brief verbal update on the Epitaxy project was provided and it was noted that a delay in the timeline for receiving the grant provided an opportunity to consider options regarding the location that would provide the best strategic opportunities in the future.

9. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

- 9.1 The Minutes were approved as an accurate record.

10. Action Log and Matters Arising on the Minutes

- 10.1 Council approved the updated Action Log. There were no other matters arising.

11. Minutes of the Senate

- 11.1 Council received and noted the Minutes, and approved the semester dates covering 2028/2029 through to 2031/2032 as set out in the report. Attention was drawn to a report from the Senate Education Committee (SEC) on Education Initiatives and that Senate agreed to adopt the Framework for Undergraduate Programme Design following a detailed discussion and a vote.

12. Minutes of the Council Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

- 12.1 Council received and noted the Minutes. Attention was drawn to the Committee's recent consideration of a high risk internal audit report and a high risk draft audit report, progress against which would be monitored as part of follow up work.

13. Minutes of the Council Finance Committee

- 13.1 Council received and noted the Minutes, including the Draft OfS Interim Financial Return. The Borrowings item and the Approval of the 2025/26 Budget item were presented elsewhere on the Council agenda for approval.

14. Minutes of the Council Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee

- 14.1 Council received and noted the Minutes, including that the University was fully compliant with the Office for Students' (OfS) current Statement of Expectations regarding preventing sexual violence and harassment and there was a clear understanding of the additional work needed to ensure compliance with the new OfS Condition of Registration E6. The Students' Union priorities and an update on the University level pay gap data for 2024 were also highlighted to Council in the Minutes.

15. Minutes of the Council Senior Remuneration Committee

- 15.1 Council received and noted the Minutes.

16. Report of the Honorary Degrees Committee

- 16.1 Council received and noted the report.

17. Re-appointment of the Senior Independent Governor

- 17.1 Council considered and approved the re-appointment of Phil Rodrigo as the Senior Independent Governor from the date of the May Council, 1 May 2025, and extendable consistent with his term on Council.

18. Office for Students Update and Conditions Compliance Register

- 18.1 Council received and noted the register of compliance with the ongoing conditions of registration and an accompanying report providing updates on the latest regulatory developments. Attention was drawn to the University's Access and Participation Plan which was on Council's July agenda and would also be the focus of the virtual Council Briefing session on 19 May. Work continued towards full compliance with the new OfS condition of ongoing registration E6, regarding sexual violence and harassment, which will come into full force on 1 August 2025. The Free Speech Working Group continued to plan for the implementation of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act and related final guidance from the OfS that was not yet published. Two new conditions of registration for new providers, proposed by the OfS in a consultation, would be monitored as it was believed these new conditions of registration would, in time, become applicable to all providers. The first condition (C5) would strengthen the OfS' ability to protect the consumer rights of students and ensure they were treated fairly. The second condition (E7) would ensure new entrants had effective governance arrangements in place to provide a high-quality academic experience, safeguard financial sustainability, and deliver value for money for taxpayers.

19. Report on Action Taken

- 19.1 Council received and endorsed a report on action taken on its behalf since the previous meeting.

20. Council Business Plan

- 20.1 Council received and noted the latest iteration of the business plan.

21. Application of the University Seal

- 21.1 Council received and noted a report on the application of the University seal since the previous meeting.

22. Public Availability of Council papers

- 22.1 Council received and approved recommendations concerning the publication on the web of papers presented at the meeting, in accordance with agreed proposals on the disclosure

of information. It was noted that a number of papers were confidential and would not be made publicly available.

23. Any Other Business

- 23.1 Research: Council noted a verbal update from the Vice-President for Research & Innovation, including opportunities for the University. The Russell Group was continuing to make the case to government regarding full cost recovery for research activity. The Department for Science, Innovation and Technology was believed to view the University's research and innovation activity positively. Research funding for the arts and humanities was an area of concern as the budget to develop the next cohort of Early Career Researchers (ECR) was small. The University was exploring using Leverhulme funding to support ECRs in arts and humanities

24. Feedback on the Meeting

- 24.1 The Chair thanked all members and attendees for their constructive and sensitive contributions.