

Minutes Meeting of the Council

Date: 6 October 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, Rebecca Freeman, Dr John Hogan,
Varun Kabra, Professor Janine Kirby, Frances Morris-Jones, Dr Siobhán North,
Professor Conchúr Ó Brádaigh, Phil Rodrigo, Professor Mark Strong,
Rob Sykes, Dr Phil Tenney, Professor Mary Vincent

Secretary: David Swinn

In attendance: Matthew Borland, Jo Jones, REDACTED, Kiara Delgado Derteano (items 7-23)
and Anna James (items 7-23)

Apologies: Professor Sue Hartley, Alison Kay

1. Welcome and Introductions

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed Members and attendees to the meeting. Apologies as recorded above were noted.
- 1.2 The Chair informed Council that Alison Kay had given notification of her intention to step down from Council. Clarification was being sought on the date her resignation would be effective from.
- 1.3 Following time pressure towards the end of July's Council meeting, the Chair reiterated to members that they should always feel that they can ask a question during a meeting regardless of time pressure. Members could also raise questions outside of the meeting with the owners of papers, and if they felt it to be of significance could raise such a question via the University Secretary's Office.

2. Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

- 2.1 CLOSED MINUTE
- 2.2 There were otherwise no other conflicts of interest declared.

3. CLOSED MINUTE

4. CLOSED MINUTE

5. CLOSED MINUTE

6. Capital Report

- 6.1 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.
- 6.2 Options regarding the siting of the equipment for the Epitaxy project were being assessed.

7. Further Welcome and Introductions

- 7.1 The Chair welcomed Kia Delgado, SU International and Welfare Officer, and Anna James, Sustainability and Development Officer to the meeting. The four new members and attendees of Council each provided a brief introduction.

8. Further Declarations of Conflict of Interests

- 8.1 There were no conflicts of interest declared.

9. Approval of Category C Business

- 9.1 Council considered Category C business, which is covered in Minutes 14-20, below.

10. President & Vice-Chancellor's Report

- 10.1 Council received and noted the President & Vice-Chancellor's report, which provided information on the principal 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) Briefing staff on the University's recruitment and finance position:
A summary update on University's recruitment and finances had been recently shared with all colleagues via the President & Vice-Chancellor's September all-staff email, which explained that the University expected to be close to its rebased recruitment targets for this academic cycle. It also confirmed the intention to return to a financial surplus in 2027-28. At an all-staff briefing on Monday 13 October, this will be explored in more detail, summarising once again why the University needed to make savings and the rationale for revising that student number targets. The final student recruitment position this year and student population projections for the next few years will then be outlined, as well plans to move back into underlying surplus by 2027-28.
 - (b) Voluntary Severance Scheme:
A short extension to the VSS deadline had been put in place and the scheme will now close at 12 noon on Friday 31 October, rather than Wednesday 15 October. It was

hoped that this extension will allow colleagues interested in taking voluntary severance further time to consider and prepare their applications. It should also give Heads of School and Professional Services Directors more time to have exploratory conversations with potentially interested colleagues. The updated timings had been shared all staff.

(c) Industrial action:

The University and College Union (UCU) Sheffield branch had informed the University that it had a mandate for industrial action, following a ballot of its members in which 52 per cent of its members voted. 77 per cent voted in favour of strikes (40 per cent of membership) and 82 per cent supported Action Short of a Strike (ASOS) (45 per cent of membership). The Union had not confirmed if or when industrial action will take place. The University had a third dispute resolution meeting later this month (October) where it will reiterate its commitment to no compulsory redundancies this year and minimising them in the future. It was hoped that we can work together with the unions to avoid industrial action. The University had started contingency planning in the event that UCU decided to take industrial action. The Heads in those schools expected to be most affected by industrial action will be brought together as had happened in the past. Senior leaders will be provided with guidance around managing industrial action if and when necessary. Nationally, UCU will carry out an aggregated UK-wide ballot of its members over pay. The ballot opens on Monday 20 October.

(d) External environment

The government had announced the partial reintroduction of maintenance grants for students from underrepresented backgrounds. A move the sector had been calling for some time, though this will be targeted to priority subjects aligned with the Government's Industrial Strategy and not across the board. The policy will be paid for by imposing a levy on international student fee income, a move that will affect research-intensive universities hardest. The University had been pushing against the levy and continued to engage with its advocates in Parliament and beyond to highlight the impact this move will have on the roles universities have in supporting economic growth. Messaging on the shared beneficial impact of international students appeared not to have been effective over recent years. As more information became available on the levy on international student fee income Council would be kept informed.

(e) League Tables:

The report set out the detail of positive developments regarding QS world rankings, the Guardian league table, and the Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide. The University had been informed that it had dropped to 108 in the THE World University Rankings down from 98 last year. This was against the trend seen in every other UK and global ranking, where the University was moving in a positive direction. The University will receive a full breakdown of its results and will do an analysis as is done for all league tables to understand the movement. It was reassuring that nationally, the University's rank in the UK remained 12th. The rankings will be made public on 9 October.

- 10.2 During discussion, the SU was keen to support the University's work on the benefit of international students. The University had been the originator of a campaign on the benefits of international students now led by UKCISA. The debate had changed as immigration became more important politically, and there became an increasing focus on international students. Alongside celebrating the positive benefits of international students, the University's messaging into Government also covered the significant local economic impact if international student numbers were to reduce. The University had not investigated how to optimise its position regarding information provided to potential applicants by artificial intelligence (AI). The University would need to consider how to present information in a way that made its consumption by AI as easy as possible.

11. Student Experience

- 11.1 Council received and noted the report. The report provided an update on the SU's work since the last meeting of Council, with a particular focus on how the SU is developing the 'Student Influence' strand of the new SU strategy. The report also explained the SU's guidance relating to freedom of speech legislation.
- 11.2 During discussion it was explained that welcome week had gone well with significant number of students attending the fresher's fair. The targeted response rate to November's Big SU Survey was 10%. There were different levels of engagement from students with the SU and work could take place to explore how representative the respondents were in terms of their engagement with the SU.

12. Code of Practice on Free Speech and Academic Freedom

- 12.1 Council considered and approved amendments to the Code of Practice to address areas where the Code could be strengthened, and thereby reduce risk, based on the OfS guidance and legal advice. The majority of the amendments expanded existing provisions using formal legal language and definitions. In some cases, amendments reflected changes in the final legal position.
- 12.2 During discussion it was clarified that there was not a legal definition of non-violent extremism and that would be for the courts to determine. The OfS had been clear that preventing reputational risk would not be an adequate defence for an institution. The SU had drafted their equivalent Code to work alongside the University's Code.
- 12.3 Council approved:
- (a) The updated Code of Practice on Free Speech and Academic Freedom.
 - (b) Formally standing down and retire the 2002 Senate Statement on Religious Activities on Campus, with any updated or replacement content that is deemed necessary to be developed under the oversight of the UEB EDI Sub-Group and EDIC.

13. Streamlining Governance around use of University Endowment Funds

- 13.1 Council considered and approved proposals to streamline the governance process through delegating more decision-making around individual endowments to Faculties and/or other

University committees with UEB representation, with Council retaining power to grant final approval for change as required by Charity Law.

13.2 Council approved the process for approving changes to University endowment funds with effect from 6 October 2025.

13.3 Council also noted that the possibility of retaining the name of an endowment fund when an endowment was closed or merged would be explored.

14. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

(Meeting Held on 14 July 2025)

14.1 Council approved the Minutes as an accurate record.

15. Action Log and Matters Arising on the Minutes

15.1 Council approved the updated Action Log.

15.2 Council received and approved a verbal recommendation from the Council Nomination Committee (CNC), from the Chair in his capacity as Chair of the CNC, that Professor Janine Kirby (currently a Class (4) member of the Council) be appointed as a member of the Council Finance Committee with immediate effect until 31 July 2028, subject to their continued membership of the Council. It was noted that the rationale for the verbal request to Council was to seek full Council approval to enable Professor Kirby to attend the next Finance Committee meeting on Thursday 9th October.

16. Report of the Honorary Degrees Committee

(Business conducted via correspondence)

16.1 Council received and noted the report.

17. Returning Officer's Report

17.1 Council received and noted the report

18. Report on Action Taken

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

19. Council Business Plan

19.1 Council received and noted the latest iteration of the business plan.

20. Public Availability of Council Papers

20.1 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.

21. Any Other Business

- 21.1 Farewells: On behalf of Council, the Chair thanked Alision Kay, who had notified the Chair of her intention to step down, for her contributions and offered good wishes for the future.

22. Feedback on the Meeting

- 22.1 The Chair asked members whether they felt any element of the meeting was unclear or felt they had not had the opportunity to speak. No concerns were raised by members.