



Minutes Meeting of the Council

Date: 29 April 2024

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), Lily Byrne, Professor Graham Gee, Professor Sue Hartley, Dr John Hogan, Varun Kabra, Alison Kay, Professor Janine Kirby, Frances Morris-Jones, Dr Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, Phil Rodrigo, Dr Phil Tenney, Professor Mary Vincent

Secretary: Jeannette Strachan

In attendance: Anna Campbell (items 4-14), Jo Jones, Dr Edward Smith, David Swinn, Aaron Porter (AdvanceHE), Dr Malcolm Butler (Items 8 and 9), Professor Dave Forrest and Ellie Reynolds (Item 10)

Apologies: Dr Brian Gilvary, Gemma Greenup

1. Welcome and Introductions

1.1 The Chair welcomed Members and attendees to the meeting, including Aaron Porter, Associate Director (Governance), AdvanceHE, who was attending as an observer as part of the ongoing Council Effectiveness Review.

2. Declaration of Conflict of Interests

2.1 No conflicts were declared.

3. Approval of Category C Business

3.1 Council considered Category C business, which is covered in Minutes 15-26, below.

4. President & Vice-Chancellor's Report

4.1 Council received and discussed 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 with additional information provided as follows:

(a) Schools Structure

Council received and noted an update on the new Schools Structure as preparations continued for the implementation of Phase 1 in 2024/25. There had been welcome progress in the Leadership Workstream, one of the four cross-cutting strands of work required to deliver the School Structure, the principal objectives of which were to ensure a consistent approach to school leadership and to support the transition to the new leadership arrangements through policy, guidance, and development. The Working Group that oversaw the workstream had been stood down on completion of all outputs a month ahead of schedule. Among these outputs were the drafting of new Head of School and School Director job descriptions; reward mechanisms for School Executive Team roles and the process for appointing staff to these positions; updated Academic Career Pathways (ACP) criteria; and guidance for key annual processes such as the Staff Development and Review Scheme and promotion panels. The recruitment of all Heads of School was now complete, with further information provided in the report, and the appointment of all School Director roles was now in train in all faculties.

Further updates were reported on the work of the Schools Governance Group Workstream, for which the remaining outputs and an associated work plan had been agreed. The consultation with existing Department Managers was ongoing, including engagement with Trade Unions. In relation to communications, the Marketing and Communications Working Group had devised a plan for completion of Priority A web content for all new schools included in Phase 1. Work was also ongoing with regard to defining consistent policies and procedures across new schools in areas such as health and safety, information security, and business continuity planning. With respect to IT, new School codes had now been communicated to all relevant staff, and faculties were reviewing local systems for impact in advance of further guidance.

(b) Student Recruitment Position

Council received and noted an update on the latest available student recruitment figures for 2024 entry, recognising that the potential financial implications would be discussed under agenda item 6 (see Minute 6, below). With respect to the undergraduate (UG) position, UG Home applications continued to trend above 2023 levels, with a 4% increase on the equivalent point in last year's cycle. This increase had remained consistent following the UCAS Equal Consideration Deadline in January 2024, and its major drivers were uplifts in applications in the Faculties of Engineering (+11% on 2023) and Social Sciences (+13%). In distinction, UG Overseas applications sat 11% behind 2023, a downturn that was attributable in large part to a reduction in numbers from mainland China (-37% on 2023). Encouraging applications increases in growth markets such as Malaysia (+16%) had offset the China position to an extent, but the numbers involved were small in comparison.

It was reported that the latest in-cycle UCAS data for both UG Home and Overseas applicants indicated that the University was performing marginally ahead of both the sector in general and the University's competitor group. Particular attention was drawn to the University's relative success in securing a high percentage of conditional offer holders who had made Sheffield their Firm choice. The University had organised a number of Offer

Holder Open Days in support of applicants and their choices. These had been well attended and had garnered positive feedback from applicants and their influencers.

Postgraduate (PG) Home applications had seen a 4% rise on 2023 levels and the rate of offers and acceptances was much higher, which gave a strong basis for confidence at this stage in the recruitment cycle. The bulk of PG Home applications were expected to be submitted during the summer. In a continuation of the trend reported earlier in the year, the PG Overseas position was static and sat 37% below 2023 levels, which was reflected across all faculties. Significant declines in all three of the University's major PG international recruitment markets (mainland China, 38% below the equivalent point in 2023; India, 40% below; and Nigeria, 55% below) had been major contributors to the expected shortfall.

In response to the challenging cycle, the University had been proactive in expanding its offer-making approach such that, despite the overall application deficit, the number of offers made was just 13% below 2023. There remained significant challenges in forecasting the final intake due to the number of local, national, and global uncertainties involved. This included the UK Migration Advisory Committee's review of the Graduate Visa Route (see Minute 4.1(d), below) and the University's ranking in the 2024 iteration of the QS World University Rankings, which exerted a particular influence on applicant behaviour in China.

During discussion, Members noted that Russell Group and other universities were reporting declines in PGTO applications due to a combination of negative government rhetoric, aggressive competition from other study destinations, and geopolitical change in key markets. In respect of the QS World University Rankings, the University had been taking every available action to regain its place in the Top 100, particularly by actively promoting the academic reputation survey amongst all academic colleagues.

(c) Research Security

Council received and noted an update on the P&VC's attendance at a Research Security Roundtable event at Whitehall, which had involved attendees from several other universities; the Deputy Prime Minister; and senior figures from the National Cyber Security Centre and MI5. The Roundtable involved a briefing on security issues and discussion of potential policy options, and there was mutual agreement about the reasonable success of government and sector collaboration to mitigate the risk of exposure to foreign interference and other forms of attack. Clarification was provided that, against prominent media reporting, all parties were agreed that the immediate next steps were to reflect on what was working and what needed to be expanded, which would be carried forward via ongoing discussions.

Assurance was provided that the University recognised the security threat posed in the area of research, having taken a range of actions to date and renewing its commitment to maximise the benefits of working collaboratively with partners. At a sector level, the Deputy Prime Minister would consult on a package of measures in response to the threat. Based on the Roundtable discussion and subsequent press release, the University was reasonably comfortable with the expected proposals.

(d) Migration Advisory Committee Review of Graduate Visa Route

Council received and noted an update on the Migration Advisory Committee's (MAC's) Review of the Graduate Visa Route, which was occurring in a political climate in which the government had declared a renewed effort to reduce net migration to the UK to below 100,000 per year. In conjunction with Sheffield Hallam University, the University had submitted joint evidence about the work undertaken with local authorities to accommodate inbound international students in the region. The joint submission had emphasised the activities of both universities and local authorities to attract students and plan for their needs.

At sectoral level, Universities UK (UUK) was also seeking positive engagement with the MAC, including reiteration of the original purpose of the Graduate Visa Route, which was to support the sector and graduate recruitment rather than attracting the brightest or best students to the UK.

The MAC was scheduled to report on 14 May 2024 ahead of the publication of the latest net migration statistics on 23 May 2024. It was not anticipated that the report would contain extensive recommendations; rather, the expected focus of the MAC's overarching message was any abuse of the system among international students with respect to their visa requirements. Although such a focus would not lend direct support to UK government concerns that the Graduate Visa Route had caused higher overseas enrolment for immigration purposes, there was nevertheless a risk that Ministers would utilise the report for populist political messaging and to catalyse the potential curbing or cessation of the route. The University, in collaboration with the sector at large, was countering this threat through a range of political, PR, and press engagement making a strong case for the benefit international students brought to their local communities. Another potential stakeholder to engage in the matter was the Chamber for Business and Industry (CBI), given the proven financial contribution made to local and national economies in the UK.

During discussion, Members acknowledged that, to date, the Labour Party had not indicated it would reverse any decision made by the government in this respect, and was not liable to make its position explicit until after the General Election due to the political sensitivities around immigration. A prospective curtailment of the Graduate Visa Route could include a shortening of its timespan or a differentiation or tiering of the offer to international graduates on the basis of fee level or type of provider. Council agreed it was important to continue institutional engagement with the matter in the local and national contexts.

(e) International Student Recruitment Media Coverage

Council received a further update on the recent Sunday Times "expose" of Russell Group admissions practices. The original article claimed that Russell Group providers in particular followed admissions processes that favoured international students at the expense of their UK counterparts; that there were issues of grade equivalence between home and international students; and that there were broader issues around international students in need of remediation, e.g. total numbers and housing. One particular area of focus had been a comparison of entry programmes for standard degree programmes and foundation

programmes, which had prompted the government to announce an investigation into entry requirements for home and international students.

Attention was drawn to recent activities in the sector to counter these claims. The Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education's (QAA's) review of international foundation programmes, involving 26 providers, was scheduled to report in June. In advance of this report, the Russell Group and UUK were working on associated scenario planning and communications. Related work was in train to assess the extent to which UUK's Fair Admissions Code of Practice could be applied to international student admissions. In addition, the University was one of 125 providers in the UK that subscribed to the Agent Quality Framework. This was a charter designed to promote shared best practice in agent management, including the provision of robust training and utilisation of standardised processes. The Quality Framework would be of particular importance in the context of the government response to the report of the MAC (see Minute 4.1(d), above).

(f) WhatUni Student Choice Awards Winners

Council received and noted an update on the University's excellent performance at the WhatUni Student Choice Awards 2024. The awards were the largest annual university awards in the UK voted for exclusively by students. More than 39,000 student reviews from across the nation had contributed towards the awards, which celebrated HE providers. It was therefore particularly pleasing that the University was voted University of the Year and had won the Best Students' Union award for the seventh consecutive year. The University was also awarded the Best Student Life award and was shortlisted in the Facilities, Student Support, and International awards categories.

Common denominators among students' reviews of the University were (i) their recognition that the University cared deeply about the offer it made to its student community, and (ii) the University's balance between quality of education, student experience, value, opportunity, and the quality of its academic programmes and research.

The Vice-President for Education had communicated these achievements to all staff, recognising and thanking colleagues for their contributions to this significant success. Wider communications had also been shared to celebrate the University's success with external audiences, including via web page updates and press releases.

Members noted in discussion that the University had significantly outperformed all except one of the Russell Group competitors in its awards outcomes.

(g) Education

Council noted recent activities and achievements under the Education Strategic Pillar. Particular attention was drawn to an Education Town Hall session to update colleagues on the University's progress in delivering the Education Strategic Delivery Plan, and help to define the institutional priorities for 2024/25. The overarching theme for the session was student-centred education, with a core focus on assessment and the level of challenge within the University's programmes.

In total, the session had attracted more than 200 attendees, including student representatives. There were productive discussions around the potential of co-creation with students to build additional academic challenge into programmes. The feedback would be collated and used to inform the next phase of delivery.

(h) Research and Innovation

It was reported that an equivalent Research and Innovation Town Hall session was due to be staged in May 2024, the focus for which would be research culture. Given the expected priorities of the 2029 iteration of the Research Excellence Framework, this was a significant strategic area on which the ideas and expertise of colleagues would be sought.

In wider developments, the University had been selected as the Delivery partner for the UK's Sustainable Aviation Fuel Clearing House, funded by the Department for Transport. It would be led by the University's Energy Institute and supported by the engineering and environmental consultancy, Ricardo plc. The Clearing House was intended to position the UK at the forefront of decarbonising the global aviation industry.

The University had also announced the appointment of Professor James Marshall to lead its new Centre for Machine Intelligence, which sought to transform institutional research, innovation, and teaching around Artificial Intelligence (AI). Professor Marshall was one of the world's leading innovators in bio-inspired AI and had co-founded Opteran Technologies, which was developing the next generation of autonomous machines by reverse engineering the brain of a honeybee. Members welcomed the fact that Opteran's success was attributable in part to £3m investment from Northern Gritstone in 2022. Northern Gritstone was the investment business founded in partnership with Manchester and Leeds to boost commercialisation in the North.

(i) Customer Relationship Management

During broader discussion, Council considered the update that the University had contracted with SalesForce and an additional partner to deliver a new and enhanced Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. Details of the contractual requirements and nature of the partnership would be shared with Members after the meeting via correspondence. **[Action: RS]**

5. Student Experience Report

- 5.1 Council received and noted the report from the Student's Union, which was the second iteration of this standing item. Council noted the Returning Officer's report on the SU Officer elections 2024, which had seen an increase in the number of candidates and a turnout of 21%, a 1% increase on 2023. Clarification was provided that, whilst the turnout appeared relatively low, this compared favourably to other students' unions and Sheffield was often approached by others for insight on how to encourage participation. Council also noted the SU's work to respond to the provisions of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 insofar as they applied to students' union and influencing local and national policy discussions on issues of relevance and importance to students. Council welcomed the report

and the additional insights it provided. Members were invited to provide any further feedback to the University Secretary.

6. Financial Matters

6.1 Student Recruitment Scenarios

6.1.1 Council received and discussed a presentation that detailed the financial impacts of prospective shortfalls in student recruitment without mitigating actions in relation to (i) available cash balances, (ii) bank covenant compliance, (iii) USS debt monitoring compliance, and (iv) the going concern requirements of the external audit. Particular attention was drawn to the following:

- The key assumptions informing the scenarios modelled, including the continuation of the tuition fee income reduction projected for 2025/24 into future years at the same level, adjusted for fee inflation.
- The base case forecast assessed against each of (i)-(iv) in Minute 6.1.1, above, alongside Low and High Impact scenarios to which the same criteria were applied. Members noted the range of fee income reductions in each scenario and the impact on USS debt monitoring and bank covenant compliance with no mitigating action.
- Proposed mitigations that would enable the University to adjust its cost base while safeguarding quality across the strategic pillars of the University Vision and Strategy (Education, Innovation, Research, One University). It was noted that, while the University could choose to utilise broadly applicable measures, it would be preferable for mitigating action to be focussed on particular areas in a strategic manner rather than across the whole University unless absolutely necessary.

6.1.2 It was reported that the Council Finance Committee had discussed the relative strength of the University's balance sheet in addressing any challenges posed by the actual student recruitment position but recognised that an already constrained budget was likely to be placed under additional pressure. As a result, the University's approach to scenario planning and budget setting was appropriately prudent such that any action that was required could be deployed strategically. Members also noted that mitigation would consider opportunities to maximise income as well as reducing expenditure.

6.1.3 During discussion, Council emphasised the importance of work to plan potential mitigating actions, and the deployment of any of them if required, not being conflated with the implementation of the new Schools structure, which was not financially driven and intended to support the delivery of academic objectives. Members also noted the importance of ongoing work to increase the accuracy of the University's financial forecasts in general. Council recognised the importance of the University's strategic approach to student recruitment and its overall student population, which was helping to drive improved home student recruitment at high quality and was beneficial in offsetting in declines amongst other cohorts. A further challenge was that this was the first recruitment cycle in which the University was not ranked in the QS World Top 100, thereby removing the ability to model overseas student recruitment based on historic performance even without

the wider uncertainty and volatility, and longer term questions about the level of demand for UK HE from overseas applicants. Clarification was provided about the approach to developing mitigating actions, which would be led by UEB on the basis of agreed principles and processes and informed by financial modelling.

6.2 2024/25 Budget

- 6.2.1 Council considered the proposed baseline budget for 2024/25 which had been approved by Council Finance Committee subject to parallel work to further evaluate the potential student recruitment scenarios' impact on the financial position, possible mitigating actions and timescales, which would then be overlayed on the baseline budget before the updated position was presented to the Council Finance Committee and Council in June and July respectively.
- 6.2.2 During discussion, attention was drawn to an overview of the key financial metrics for the period 2022/23 to 2026/27, which were already challenging and would mean that the University would not achieve its corporate KPI target EBITDA. It was also reported that the budget included a maximum capital expenditure envelope but this would also be reviewed and revised as part of the scenario planning and mitigation work. Members also noted an analysis of the movements from the November 2023 OfS forecast to the baseline budget and an overview of the key underlying assumptions applied in the budget setting process.
- 6.2.3 Having discussed the related paper and the presentation set out in Minute 6.1, above, Council approved the baseline budget subject to further consideration in July taking into account further work on scenarios and mitigating actions. Council agreed with a proposal that, based on the latest student recruitment indicators, the University would develop plans against the mid-range scenario pending further clarity on the actual position in due course.

7. USS Consultation Response

- 7.1. Council considered and approved the University's proposed formal response to the USS Trustee consultation on changes to the Statement of Investment Principles following the 2023 valuation. It was noted that the response had been developed by the University's USS Working Group and UEB, which had endorsed the draft response prior to submission to Council.

8. International Strategic Partnerships (Malcolm Butler in attendance for this item)

- 8.1 Council received and discussed an update on the University's international strategic partnerships, following recent work by UEB International Steering Group (ISG) and UEB to identify the key partnership opportunities that the University would pursue. The related paper detailed the importance of strategic partnerships to the University's broader internationalisation agenda; highlights from the University's current partnership engagements; the criteria against which prospective investment opportunities would be assessed; and the rationale behind the decision to focus the £405k allocated to partnership-building on a smaller number of partners, with the aim of realising maximum value from the

investment made. From an initial list of eight partners, ISG had undertaken a process of rationalisation and decided to concentrate the available resource on four institutions.

- 8.2 During discussion, Members noted the intention for the strategic partnership funding to become self-sustaining over time. Clarification was also provided that the resources could be utilised on an agile basis and that the University expected to be able to balance investment in the four partners identified with funding for other partnerships that had the potential to deliver a strong impact. Council noted the research priorities of the four partners and their alignment with those of the University, including AI, data, and environmental sustainability.

9. Global Reputation Plan

(Malcolm Butler in attendance for this item)

- 9.1 Council received and discussed an update on the University's plans and activities for enhancing its reputation with key national and international stakeholders, including applicants and their influencers, academic staff, and research bodies. Attention was drawn to notable recent successes in this area, chief among which were the University's brand development work and strengthening of its visual identity, and the City Campaign undertaken in collaboration with Sheffield City Council and Sheffield Hallam University to raise the profile of Sheffield as a place. There was recognition that further activities would be needed to improve the University's reputation and reach such that it had a focussed and bold brand that could compete better with sector peers in the Russell Group. To this end, the related paper set out the principles and objectives underlying the University's Global Reputation Delivery Plan and outlined the workstreams in progress under the Global Reputation Oversight Group, which included a campaign to promote reputation survey sign-ups that contributed to the QS World University Rankings. Members noted that the World University Rankings would remain a core area of focus for the foreseeable future as the University sought to regain a place in the Top 100.
- 9.2 Council welcomed the update and the range and breadth of work in train to improve the University's global standing and influence.

10. Access and Participation Plan Update

(David Forrest and Ellie Reynolds in attendance)

- 10.1 Council received a presentation on the University's approach to the Access and Participation Plan and its work to develop a new draft APP for submission to the OfS by 31 May 2024, which would take effect in 2025/26 following OfS approval in the autumn 2024. It was noted that the development of the new APP had included positive engagement with the Students' Union, which was to be welcomed. Particular attention was drawn to:
- The regulatory context and related requirements.
 - APPs contribution to Widening Participation, from access to attainment.
 - An overview of the University's targets and progress under its existing APP, including related explanation and commentary and areas of particular success.
 - The new approach for the new APP, with reference to the Equality of Opportunity Risk Register, and the key risks at the University.

- Specific areas that had been identified as requiring consideration and action following internal analysis.
- The intervention strategies which the University would deploy to address the gaps and risks that were identified.
- The financial commitment, of which the majority was direct student support through bursaries, scholarships and hardship funds.
- The principles the OfS would use to assess APPs.
- Key dates.

10.2 During discussion, Council commended the University's approach and noted the importance of such initiatives to the local and regional workforce and employers. Clarification was provided that the OfS had identified twelve national level risks, from which the University had identified the six key risks locally. Part of the OfS' assessment would be progress against these risks in contributing to the national agenda. With respect to direct financial support for students, it was noted that part of the University's offer was targeted at students with particular characteristics but that there was a general need to review the support available to facilitate a whole University approach, thereby enabling resource to be directed more effectively according to student need in a way that was more accessible for applicants and students.

10.3 It was also reported that the OfS' stated intention to update its APP dashboard on a more regular basis, together with iterative internal evaluation, was expected to enable the University to undertake more regular evaluation of its progress while also learning from the approaches and good practice elsewhere in the sector. The importance of both qualitative and quantitative data was also noted given that not all students declared relevant characteristics and these could change during their time at university. Further clarification was provided that the amount of funding directed towards APP targets was no longer prescribed by the OfS but the University intended to maintain the current level of funding.

11. EDI Governance

11.1 Council considered proposals for reforming the governance structure in place for Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) at the University. The recommendations followed work undertaken in response to an internal audit and the separate review of faculty and department/school governance by the Halpin Partnership earlier in 2023/24. That work had identified a need to review both the purpose and membership of the Council Equality, Diversity, & Inclusion Committee (EDIC) and the reporting line into UEB for matters concerning EDI. The related paper outlined the case for change, which would involve the formation of a new UEB EDI Sub-Group that would oversee the management of EDI and report to UEB. The existing EDIC would be rationalised and repurposed so that it had a more focused and strategic remit in order to provide assurance to Council on the robustness and effectiveness of the University's EDI initiatives and outcomes. It was intended that the model would promote a 'One University' approach and help to socialise EDI into mainstream University processes and procedures.

11.2 During discussion, it was reported that the proposals were consistent with sector good practice, which was affording increased focus to the holistic assessment and management of EDI. The internal audit had identified a need to tighten the University's EDI processes and

controls, and Members expressed confidence that the arrangements outlined would fulfil this requirement. Whilst a reformed governance structure for EDI carried some risks, not least the prospect that staff would regard the changes as a 'downgrade' of EDI in the University's strategic priorities, which was not the case, similar governance arrangements had been implemented with success for other core areas of the University's business, such as health and safety.

11.3 Following discussion and having welcomed the proposals as a positive development, Council:

- (a) Approved the proposed new EDI Governance Framework, which would create a new UEB EDI Sub-Group and streamline the membership and remit of the existing EDIC.
- (b) Noted that UEB had approved the proposal and that its advice and steer was reflected in the related paper presented to Council.

12. CLOSED MINUTE

13. Capital Report

13.1 Council received and noted an update on progress of ongoing and pipeline projects in the capital programme, including projects recently considered and approved by ECSG, UEB and Finance Committee in accordance with the Council Scheme of Delegation. Particular attention was drawn to plans to make the structure and format of future iterations of the report more strategic in nature. Members of the Council Finance Committee would also be offered a briefing on the overall capital governance and related processes. Members noted that there had been greater slippage in projects in 2023/24 compared to previous years, due to both a degree of over-optimism in the University's capacity for delivery and several changes in key senior leadership positions, and the capital programme would be scrutinised to ensure that plans and associated budgets were realistic and achievable for 2024/25. Attention was also drawn to an overview of the recent work of the UEB Complex Projects Oversight Groups.

14. Corporate Risk Register

14.1 Council considered and approved the 2023-24 Corporate Risk, noting an accompanying report from the UEB Risk Review Group. Particular attention was drawn to the residual risk rating of very high likelihood and very high impact for the risk relating to cyber and information security and to very high impact for the student recruitment risk. Clarification was provided about a Faculty risk register's reference to the condition of estate owned by a third party, with respect to which the University was developing solutions as part of the capital programme.

15. Minutes of the Previous Meetings

15.1 Council approved the Minutes.

16. Action Log and Matters Arising on the Minutes

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

17. Minutes of the Senate

17.1 Council received and noted the Minutes, which included information that had been considered by Council previously in its deliberations about the new structure and School names. Attention was also drawn to Senate's discussions in relation to the related Governance review and School Governance arrangements; Freedom of Speech and the University's new Code of Practice, which Council had now approved; Mental Health; the QS World Rankings. It was also noted that Senate had approved a new Code of Conduct for members as well as amendments to its Standing Orders. Amongst the matters presented from Senate's Committees, Members noted Senate's approval of the University's Degree Outcomes Statement and amendments to the Senate Education Committee's terms of reference.

18. Minutes of the Council Audit and Risk Assurance Committee

18.1 Council received and noted the Minutes, in particular the Committee's intention to seek assurance on how the Schools restructure had worked towards the end of the implementation of Phase 1 in 2024/25, which would be discussed at the June meeting, and the Committee's view that the role of the UEB Complex Projects Oversight Group in the coming years would be crucial in ensuring that complex projects were subject to scrupulous governance and that significant risks were escalated through the appropriate channels in a prompt manner. A standalone internal audit on the operation of the CPOG was also being considered for 2025/26.

19. Minutes of the Council Finance Committee

19.1 Council received and noted the Minutes, which contained updates on discussion of various matters which had or would be covered as substantive Council agenda items.

20. Minutes of the Senior Remuneration Committee

20.1 Council received and noted the Minutes.

21. Report of the Honorary Degrees Committee

21.1 Council received and noted the report.

22. Office for Students Update and Conditions Compliance Register

22.1 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 OfS' request for further information about the changes in the delivery of anatomy teaching in the Medical Teaching Unit, which would

modernise the University's approach in line with the sector, and the University's deployment of the Student Protection Plan. It was reported that the University was confident that students' learning outcomes had all been met. Further attention was drawn to the recent launch of consultations in relation to the new freedom of speech obligations and the related complaints scheme, and concern from the sector at the lack of recognition for the inherent nuances in such a complex and potentially contentious area. Members also noted the critical House of Lords committee report on the OfS and the forthcoming independent review of the OfS under the Government's Public Bodies Review programmes, though any resultant changes to the OfS were likely to be relatively minor.

23. Report on Action Taken

23.1 Council received and endorsed the report on action taken by or on behalf of Council.

24. Council Business Plan 2023-24

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

25. Application of the University Seal

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

26. Public Availability of Council papers

26.1 Council received and approved recommendations concerning the publication on the web of papers presented at the meeting, in accordance with previously agreed proposals on the disclosure of information. It was noted that a number of papers were confidential and would not be made publicly available.

27. Any Other Business

27.1 There was no other business.

28. Feedback on the Meeting

28.1 Members welcomed the approach to dealing with Section C items, whereby particular matters of importance and interest were actively drawn to Council's attention before the items were moved *en bloc*.