



COUNCIL

Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 November 2022

Members:	Eileen Milner (Chair)	Matt Atkinson	Karen Bach
	Karl Bates	Zoe Burns-Shore	Professor Shirley Congdon
	Sally Dicketts	Paul Donovan	Kersten England
	Professor Maryann Hardy	Terry Hartwell	Faiz Ilyas
	Victoria McKay	Sally Neocosmos	Professor Amir Sharif
	Lee Rawlinson	Iqra Tabassum	Professor Vishanth Weerakkody

In attendance: Jacqui Holgate, Assistant Head, Governance
Professor Zahir Irani, Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Andrew Lang, Chief Finance Officer
Gary McFarlane, Deputy Director of People and OD
Riley Power, University Secretary
Paul Watson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Learning Teaching and Student Experience (for items 25, 26 and 27)

Apologies:	Carl Chambers	John Hinchcliffe	Ibrahim Mahmood
	Ahmed Malik	Sanjay Patel	

The meeting was preceded by a presentation from the Associate Director, Engagement, Alumni and Development and the Development Manager on Philanthropy at the University of Bradford. This provided an insightful update on fundraising at the University, including an exploration of the challenges and opportunities associated with this. The positive and constructive nature of discussions during the session were welcomed.

17.22-23 **Report from the Chair**

- 17.1 The Chair of Council welcomed and introduced Matt Atkinson, new lay member of Council to the meeting. The Chair also noted that this was Carl Chambers final Council meeting and thanked him for his service to the Council and the University over the last five years.
- 17.2 The Chair drew attention to the complex and challenging environment in which the University, and the HE sector continued to operate including:
- the uncertainty in relation to international student recruitment. It was noted that any future immigration policy changes by the government to lower migration targets presented an emerging risk for universities.
 - that Sir Michael Barber had been appointed to lead on the implementation of the government's skills reform programme including how it might relate to education, and Lord David Blunkett was advising the Labour Party on its education and skills policy. The University would continue to be cognisant of the thinking that was being undertaken by the two main political parties and how it could respond to these emerging agendas.

18.22-23 **Vice-Chancellor Update Report (Document C14/22-23)**

- 18.1 The Vice-Chancellor provided an update on key matters affecting the University since the last meeting of Council. Among topics highlighted were:
- the new University Chancellor. The announcement had been very positively received both locally and nationally, and discussions were underway in relation to potential dates for the Chancellor's installation.
 - that for the first time, the University had been placed among the top 501-600 universities in the world according to The Times Higher Education World Rankings 2023 which demonstrated the University was a leading global institution.
 - that the Director of People and Organisational Development would leave the University on the 30 November and a communication had been issued to staff.
 - that there were early indications that young people could be showing signs of a decrease in the propensity to study at university and this would continue to be kept under close review.
- 18.2 Points noted in discussion included:
- the high levels of unemployment amongst women in the local authority area. The need to raise skills levels to ensure local women were equipped to take up employment was noted.
 - that further work would be undertaken on the apprenticeship's agenda, aligned to business engagement.
 - the recent delegation to Dubai and Thailand, noting that the Vice-Chancellor and Deputy Vice-Chancellor had hosted an alumni and corporate partner networking event at the British High Commission to mark 25 years of running an Executive MBA in Dubai.

19.22-23 **Report from the Students' Union (Document C15/22-23)**

- 19.1 Council received a report from the UBU Education Officer on current issues and recent activities which included an update on fresher's week; student engagement and volunteering opportunities; UBU council members; UBU campaigns and events; and Sabbatical Officer objectives for the academic year 2022/23.
- 19.2 Points of note included:
- [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - [REDACTED]
 - the importance of having informal and welcoming spaces on campus to support students 'to be themselves'. Joint thinking on how to enhance this would be undertaken with relevant lay members.
 - that a Working Group had been convened, in collaboration with students, to consider how to enhance social spaces in Student Central with a view to a business case being developed in the new year and work being undertaken in advance of the 2023/24 academic year.

- that a visit to Student Central would be arranged as part of the Council strategy day in early February.

Note: part of the above minute has been redacted as it is considered to be exempt information as defined by section 43 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 which covers commercial interests.

- 19.3 During the discussion clarification was provided on academic staff-student ratios (SSRs) noting these provided an indicator of how resources were allocated. The academic workload model also enabled the management and allocation of staff resource to different activities in line with the University’s objectives. Professional Services staffing levels were also monitored to ensure sufficient resource was allocated to the different areas in order to support students and deliver a high-quality student experience. Council was also assured that issues relating to academic misconduct were being addressed. Significant work, and interventions had been put in place by both the Students’ Union and the University to support a reduction in academic misconduct, specifically with international students.
- 19.4 Council thanked the Sabbatical Officers for their uplifting report and commended the excellent work that was being undertaken by the UBU.

20.22-23 **Student Recruitment Update (Document C16/22-23)**

- 20.1 [Redacted]

Note: the above minute has been redacted as it is considered to be exempt information as defined by section 43 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 which covers commercial interests.

- 20.2 [Redacted]

Note: the above minute has been redacted as it is considered to be exempt information as defined by section 43 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act 2000 which covers commercial interests.

20.3 The need for growth in the Undergraduate Home market had been the focus of a detailed discussion at Executive Board, and a range of urgent interventions were being implemented in order to generate additional Home UG applications for 2023 entry, in line with the draft Brand Strategy. This also aligned with the work that was being undertaken in relation to the University's emerging size and shape / growth plan.

20.4 Detailed application and decision data for 2023/24 would continue to be monitored closely by Executive Board and a further briefing would be presented to Council in the Spring.

20.5 **ACTION: share update on student returners (Deputy Vice-Chancellor)**

21.22-23 **KPI Report (Document C17/22-23)**

21.1 The Chief Finance Officer presented an update on the University's KPI dashboard noting:

- the majority of the University KPIs related to annual or bi-annual measures. A review of the KPIs was underway with a view to identifying more frequent 'in-year' measures to assess progress against strategic objectives and enable appropriate intervention where required. Council welcomed the intended approach noting that a revised report would be presented to the next meeting of Council.
- that 14 out of the 43 indicators related the student surveys and league tables and the intention was for these to be consolidated as appropriate.
- the complexities associated with student surveys and league tables were highlighted, with the CFO noting that different methodologies and measures were used to compile the different surveys / league tables. A report on this, including what drives these and how the University's strategic objectives aligned, or not, with the criteria would be presented to a future Council meeting.
- that the KPI status relating to 'sustainability' would be reviewed and this would be discussed with Lee Rawlinson who had significant expertise in this area. It was also noted that a University Sustainability Policy was under-development.

21.2 **ACTIONS:**

- **present revised KPI dashboard to March Council (Chief Finance Officer)**
- **add report on student surveys/league tables to Council schedule of business (Chief Finance Officer)**

22.22-23 **Annual Assurance Reports**

22.1 The Chair reported that Documents C18-22 were part of a suite of annual assurance reports and noted that further thought would be given to how these reports might best be presented to Council in 2023/24 to provide appropriate assurance in relation to these items.

23.22-23 **Annual Report and Financial Statements 2021/22 (Document C18/22-23)**

- 23.1 Council considered the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the University for the year ended 31 July 2022 noting these were compliance with the Office for Students Accounts Direction, and as such **approved** signature by the Chair of Council and the Vice-Chancellor.
- 23.2 Council noted that Financial Statements had been through an iterative process and had been subject to considerable scrutiny and constructive challenge by the Executive Board and a Joint Meeting of the Finance and Audit Committees (which included representatives from the University's external and internal auditors, BDO and RSM) who had endorsed the approach set out in the report.
- 23.3 The financial performance set out in the Statements presented a consistent account of the University's performance compared with the regular reports provided to Finance Committee and Council throughout the year. The audited results demonstrated significant progress in the strengthening of the University's financial position including a strong turnover; a management accounts surplus; a stronger than budgeted EBITDA; strong cash inflow from operating activities; and robust liquidity.
- 23.4 Attention was also drawn to the significant pension related adjustments for the Universities Superannuation Scheme and the West Yorkshire Pension Fund, noting this was an evolving position regarding USS and WYPF. As in the previous year, movements on the University's pension provision were extreme, with liabilities largely influenced by geopolitical events and the finalisation of the USS deficit recovery plan following the 2020 triennial valuation exercise.
- 23.5 The significant work that had been undertaken by the Chief Finance Officer and his team, and the Associate Director, PR and Communications in the preparation of the Financial Statements was commended. These would be published on the University's website in due course. Thanks, were also expressed to the Chairs of Finance and Audit Committees for providing scrutiny and challenge on the Statements during its development.
- 23.6 Council also approved the Letter of Representation the University's external auditor, BDO, and **delegated** signature to the Chair of Council.

24.22-23 **Risk Management Annual Report 2021/22 (Document C19/22-23)**

- 24.1 The Risk Management Annual Report was presented to Council to provide assurance that the University had a framework, policies, and processes in place to effectively managed corporate risks.
- 24.2 The University Secretary confirmed that the University monitored its corporate risk register proactively and that it was subject to considerable and regular scrutiny by the Risk Oversight Group and Audit Committee. An effective process of risk management was embedded at all

levels of the University with horizon scanning of emerging issues being regularly undertaken allowing for preventative and mitigating controls to be put in place.

24.3 Discussion focussed on:

- the importance of risk management for cyber security noting that this remained a key priority for the University with regular updates being provided to Audit Committee. It was also noted that business continuity and incident plans were in place. Links with the West Yorkshire Cybersecurity Group would be explored.
- the intention to connect risk appetite in a more deliberate way to decision making and to align to the ESG framework was noted.
- the residual risk scores associated with 'estates infrastructure' and 'student experience', noting these would be reviewed.
- that the risk associated with student data was reflected in 'organisational effectiveness'. This was an historical challenge and interventions were now in place to address this in an effective way.
- alignment between the University's insurance management and risk mitigation strategy; it was noted that an annual report on this would be presented to Finance Committee in January.
- that the residual risk scores were not static but were iteratively reviewed.

24.4 Council noted that risk management continued to be an integral part of the University management and business activity and as such **approved** Document C19 as assurance that risk management at the University remained effective. The University's risk management had also been confirmed as effective through independent audit review.

24.5 **ACTION: circulate corporate risk register to Council, for information (University Secretary)**

25.22-23 **Modern Slavery Statement 2022/23 (Document C20/22-23)**

25.1 Council considered and **approved** the University's Modern Slavery Statement for the 2022/23 academic year which set out the steps the University had taken and would take to mitigate any risk of modern slavery and human trafficking. Council noted that the Statement would be signed by the Chair of Council and would be published on the University website.

25.2 The University was a value's driven institution and its commitment to the statement was noted. The importance of increasing awareness of modern slavery with the student body was discussed, as was the importance of university policies using language that was accessible to students and staff, noting this would be further considered in the review of the University's Policy Framework that was being undertaken, with emphasis being placed on the use of 'plain English' in all university policies. Attention was also drawn to the Serious and Organised Crime Group, co-chaired by the West Yorkshire Police Force and Bradford Metropolitan Council, noting that it would be useful for the University to link in with this Group.

26.22-23 **Prevent Update and Office for Students Prevent Accountability and Data Return (Document C21/22-23)**

- 26.1 Council noted that the University continued to progress work to show due regard to the Prevent Duty and was committed to working in partnership to support counter-terrorism work.
- 26.2 Council **approved** the University's Prevent Accountability and Data Return for submission to the Office for Students and authorised the Chair of Council to sign the statement of declaration on its behalf.

27.22-23 **Academic Quality and Standards Update (Document C22/22-23)**

- 27.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning Teaching and Student Experience attended the meeting to provide an update on the key changes to B Conditions of the Office for Students 'Regulatory Framework for Higher Education' that came into effect from 3 October 2022 and the University's framework for managing the academic quality and standards as it related to these conditions of ongoing registration.
- 27.2 Council noted that the University was performing well and was able to demonstrate broad compliance with the B Conditions, both against OfS numerical thresholds and 'softer' measures such as regulation, policy, and practice. Whilst there remained work to do to ensure that performance and compliance with the B Conditions was consistent across the academic portfolio, much of this work was in progress as part of the Learning Teaching and Student Experience Strategy delivery plan and the Academic Portfolio Lifecycle. This would further strengthen not only the quality of the University's academic experience generally, but also the mechanisms for monitoring, evidencing, and enhancing that experience in line with the conditions of the OfS regulatory framework.
- 27.3 Discussion focussed on the increasing regulatory burden on institutions by the OfS, and the move from principle-based statements to more rigid OfS-determined definitions and how these would translate into the inspection regime; the parallel with other industries/sectors with regards to regulation was noted. The uncertainty in the sector, and the regulatory landscape more specifically, did continue to present a level of risk which would continue to be closely monitored. The University's commitment to supporting its students to continue to achieve excellent graduate outcomes, as demonstrated by its ranking in the English Social Mobility Index, was also noted.
- 27.4 Following consideration of the report, Council confirmed it was assured of the University's approach and as such **approved**:
- the strength of institutional-level performance against the measures of continuation, completion and progression outcomes used to inform OfS's regulation of condition B3.
 - the robustness of the University's current approach to the management of quality and standards.

- that the risks associated with the University's regulatory obligations, as they pertained to the B Conditions of ongoing registration, were understood and appropriate action was either in progress or planned to sufficiently mitigate such risks.

28.22-23 **Teaching Excellence Framework 2023 (Document C23/22-23)**

- 28.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Learning Teaching and Student Experience provided an update on the Teaching Excellence Framework 2023, with Council noting the measures the University was taking to prepare its submission, and that participation in the TEF was now a mandatory requirement of ongoing registration with the Office for Students.
- 28.2 A TEF Working Group had been convened to oversee, coordinate, and monitor progress towards the institutional submission which would include drafting a compelling overarching narrative and identifying and crafting 'vignettes' of academic excellence whilst providing assurance that the University understood and was addressing its challenges. An independent TEF student submission was being drafted by the UBU, supported by the TEF Working Group.
- 28.3 Council noted that preparing the TEF submission was a resource intensive exercise which would take priority over the next five weeks, and as such other activities would progress on a slower track during this period.
- 28.4 Council was pleased to note Executive Board's collective commitment to being recognised for the excellence of its teaching under the TEF.

29.22-23 **Report from the University Secretary (Document C24/22-23)**

- 29.1 Council received a report from the University Secretary on the ongoing work related to areas of governance pertinent to Council and the University. Following consideration of the report, Council **approved**:
- delegation of authority to the Chair of Council and the Treasurer and Chair of Finance Committee to approve the Office for Students Annual Financial Return, incorporating the feedback from and on the recommendation of Finance Committee, in advance of the submission deadline in December 2022. It was noted that the annual financial return which covered audited data (2020/21 and 2021/22), the current year (2022/23) and four future years (2023–2027) had been subject to detailed, constructive challenge from Finance Committee. The return showed solid steady growth throughout the reporting period, with an improving balance sheet and strong liquidity.
 - the recommendations for Honorary Awards (six Honorary Doctorates and three Outstanding Contribution Awards) as set out in Appendix A of Document C24/22-23).
- 29.2 Council noted:
- the changes to the membership of Council, and thanked Shahnaz Ali, Carl Chambers, and Karen McMahan for their commitment to and work with the University as lay Council members and members of University Committees and their wider commitment to University activity.

- that an externally facilitated Council Effectiveness Review would commence in the new year, noting Matt Atkinson's expertise in this area, and his offer of assistance with this.
- that a new Chair of Audit Committee would be appointed, using an executive search consultant.

29.3 Council was also encouraged to submit nominations for Honorary Awards, especially for individuals in under-represented groups, specifically women.

30.22-23 **Report from Senate (Document C25/22-23)**

30.1 Council received and noted the summary report and the annual report of the business of Senate which provided assurance of the robustness of the University's academic governance arrangements.

31.22-23 **Report from Joint Audit and Finance Committees (Document C26/22-23)**

31.1 Council received the summary report and noted that the Joint Meeting of the Audit and Finance Committees removed the need for duplication of discussion and further enhanced the assurance of the approval of the annual Financial Statements.

32.22-23 **Report from Audit Committee including Audit Committee Annual Report 2021/22 (Document C27/22-23)**

32.1 Council received the summary report and noted the Audit Committee Annual Report which covered the work undertaken by the Committee in its fulfilment of its terms of reference and compliance with Office for Students requirements for the year to 31 July 2022.

33.22-23 **Report from Finance Committee (Document C28/22-23)**

33.1 Council received and noted the summary report

34.22-23 **Report from Remuneration Committee (Document C29/22-23)**

34.1 Council received the summary report and noted that the Annual Remuneration Report had been considered and approved by the Remuneration Committee and would be published on the University's website.

34.2 With regards to the distribution of performance ratings for staff on Grades 11-13, it was noted that it would be useful to include the number of staff who had left the University due to poor performance, and the Deputy Director of People and OD would reflect on how to record this in future reports.

34.3 The recent package of pay and benefits had been well received by staff including the one-off bonus payment and Executive Board was commended for implementing the payment as a thank you to staff for their hard work and commitment to the University.

34.4 The staff pulse survey, which was a key means of gathering feedback and comments from staff on a range of topics (including engagement, satisfaction, and wellbeing) had closed and the results were being analysed. The results would help the Executive to better understand the current perceptions of what was going well, strengths, areas to celebrate and build upon and what needed to be improved. A high-level briefing would be circulated to Council, for information.

34.5 The current strike action which related to the national pay bargaining outcome and changes to the USS pension scheme was also noted. This was the first time in four years that a mandate had been achieved for action at a national level. Plans had been put in place to address and mitigate any impact on students' educational and broader University experience. Participation rates at the University had been low to date.

34.6 **ACTION: circulate high-level briefing on outcomes from the staff pulse survey, for information (Deputy Director of People)**

35.22-23 **Report from Committees (Documents C30-33)**

35.1 Council received and noted the summary reports from Governance and Nominations Committee, Honorary Awards Committee, People Committee, and University Ethics Committee.

36.22-23 **Register of Interests (Document C34/22-23)**

36.1 Council received and noted the register of Council members interests. Kersten England noted her conflict with M28 (Honorary Awards approval) and did not participate in that item.

37.22-23 **Minutes of the Meeting on 21 September 2022 (Document C35/22-23)**

37.1 The minutes of the meetings held on the 21 September 2022 were approved by circulation prior to the meeting.

38.22-23 **Matters Arising and Action Tracker (Document C36/22-23)**

38.1 Council received a report on matters arising from the Council meeting on 21 September 2022 and the actions taken since that meeting to address them.

39.22-23 **Report on Chair's Action (Document C37/22-23)**

39.1 Council received and noted the summary report.

40.22-23 **UBIC Steering Board Annual Report 2021/22 (Document C38/22-23)**

40.1 Council received and noted the summary report.

41.22-23 **Access and Participation Plan Update (Document C39/22-23)**

41.1 Council received and noted the summary report.

42.22-23 **Council Terms of Reference and Membership (Document C40/22-23)**

42.1 Council received and noted the report.

43.22-23 **Draft Council 2 Agenda, November 2022 (Document C41/22-23)**

43.1 Council received and noted the report.

44.22-23 **Council Schedule of Business (Document C42/22-23)**

44.1 Council received and noted the report.

45.22-23 **Any Other Business**

45.1 The next informal Council briefing would take place on 16 December via MS Teams with a focus on the HE regulatory environment to provide Members with an understanding of the context in which the University was operating, and an update on the emerging University's size and shape / growth plan.

Secretary: Jacqui Holgate, Assistant Head, Governance

Date: 6 December 2022