

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

Minutes of a meeting of the Council
held on 24 March 2006

PRESENT: Mr B. M. Gray (in the chair), Vice-Chancellor, Dr L. J. Banton, Mr D. Branch, Councillor A. C. Bryning, Professor A. G. Chetwynd, Mr J. C. Dunning, Mr P. R. Elliott, Mr J. Hadfield, Professor S. Henig, Mr G. Johnson, Professor M. W. Kirby, Dr M. M. Lee, Mr S. A. J. Leyton, Mr G. Middlebrook, Mr H. Morris, Ms V. Robertshaw, Mr K. Royales, Professor A. Siewierska, Ms C. Smith, Professor K. J. Stringer, Mr R. Turner.

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss F. M. Aiken, Mr J. D'Souza, Mrs M. E. McClintock, Professor R. D. McKinlay, Professor T. J. McMillan, Mr A. C. Neal, Mr R. O'Brien, Ms P. Rowell, Professor D. W. Seward, Mr M. Swindlehurst, Ms V. Tyrrell, Ms V. C. Walshe.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Sir Christian Bonington, Professor C. L. Cooper, Mr A. Dick, Mr R. Emslie, Ms E. Lomax, Professor C. C. Park, Professor D. B. Smith.

CO.06/18 Presentation: Director of Regional Outreach

Document: AR/2006/195

Professor Derek Seward, Director of Regional Outreach, drew attention to the expectation in the 2003 White Paper on the Future of Higher Education that institutions would be increasingly embedded in their regional economies, and noted the current volume and scale of Lancaster degree awards in the region. Existing activity included the validation of degrees at Blackburn, Blackpool and The Fylde, and Furness colleges, through the Office for Associated Institutions, extensive credit-based adult learning via the School of Lifelong Learning and Widening Participation, social and historical research and teaching via the Centre for NW Regional Studies, provision of cultural activity through several offices, and installation of a regional broadband computer network by ISS. Areas of particular current activity included East Lancashire, Blackpool and Cumbria, and the future strategy included the means of widening participation and student

progression from the region to the university, and support by the university to regional regeneration and economic growth.

In discussion the following points were amongst those made:

- (a) employers were increasingly being involved in the development of curricula and the design and implementation of programmes of study;
- (b) the most critical level at which to engage the interest of potential students was at the secondary schools;
- (c) the University of Cumbria would include a distributed learning network where there was strong potential for benefits down the line to the university;
- (d) the strategic development fund bid by Blackpool and The Fylde would be regarded by the HEFC(E) as Lancaster's bid, and would seek to draw on funding ear-marked for collaborative provision;
- (e) the involvement of the Adult College, Lancaster in the plans developed by the university should be considered.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to receive Professor Seward's report and thank him for it.

CO.06/19 Minutes: 10 February 2006

Document: AR/2006/196

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2006.

CO.06/20 Matters arising: rolling schedule of business

Documents: AR/2006/197; AR/2006/207; AR/2006/206

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to receive and note:

- (a) the record of matters arising, including the action taken to populate the revised Nominations Committee;
- (b) the rolling schedule of business, including the means by which the student residential accommodation project would move forward. A presentation of the Estates Masterplan would be made before the Council meeting on 28 April 2006.

CO.06/21 Vice-Chancellor's report

Document: VC/06/R031

The Vice-Chancellor drew attention to the written report already circulated and noted in particular the following items:

- (a) the continuing discussion between the university and NERC about the relocation of its CEH laboratories to four sites, one of which was Lancaster. The university's earlier decision to involve itself with NERC laboratories was paying dividends;
- (b) the AUT strike on 7 March and the continuing action short of a strike that was continuing. Some parlaying about AUT involvement in a UCEA pay bargaining meeting on 28 March was proceeding. The Vice-Chancellor noted that the claim for 20% over three years should be seen in the context of Lancaster's payroll growth of 15% to 18% over the last triennium, and in the potential impact on the institution's financial forecasts;
- (c) the Ideas Festival: see CO.06/31;
- (d) the Vice-Chancellor's recent involvement in a meeting with David Bell, the new Permanent Secretary at the DfES, and the emphasis in his presentation on widening participation, social mobility, higher education coverage across the regions and continuing professional development, as well as comments about the possible model of research funding post-RAE 2008 and the implications of the forthcoming Comprehensive Spending Review.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to receive and note the Vice-Chancellor's report.

CO.06/22 LU Students' Union: President's report

Document: AR/2006/199

The President, Mr Branch, drew attention to his written report and especially to the success of One World Week, including the campus clean-up.

Ms Rowell, Education and Welfare Officer, reported on the academic representation project, whereby LUSU was drawing up a database of departmental representatives and contacts, in order to extend LUSU support and training for all students involved in this valuable aspect of institutional life. It was hoped that proposals from the project would go to the Senate in May.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to receive and note the above reports.

CO.06/23 Corporate governance

Document: VC/06/R032

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED, with two votes against, to approve the Special Resolution for a second time, for submission to the Privy Council.

CO.06/24 Finance

Documents: FO/06/28; FO/06/26; FO/06/19; FO/06/30; FO/06/17; FO/06/27; FO/06/23; AR/2006/191

The Director of Finance and Resources reported as follows.

(a) *Director's report*

Attention was drawn to the report as set out.

(b) *HEFC(E) grant announcement for 2006-07*

The Council noted that the news for Lancaster was positive, principally because of the settlement in relation to QR funding, thus underlining the importance of RAE 2008.

(c) *The proposed structure of the budget-setting process, and the institutional context for the 2006-07 financial year*

Particular attention was drawn to the impact of the new pay framework, where a relatively good understanding of costs and benefits had been achieved. The particular issue for 2006-07 was that the full impact of the framework would be felt but the university would receive only the first of three cohort years of the variable tuition fees. The Finance Committee had agreed to recommend the attached document as set out.

(d) *Phase 4 of the student residential accommodation project*

The university was moving towards a decision of significance at the June meeting of the Council. The present document was intended to give an update on the process, and to set out the preferred option, as well as to show what activity would take place between the present meeting and the one in June. Mr Neal was glad to have received informal

contacts from lay members of the Council about the document. The present meeting was also the last point at which the decision to demolish the existing Grizedale buildings could have been reversed, but he believed there was no case to alter that choice. Other elements included the scope for a new type of student residence unit that would be more flexible and well-suited to variable student demand, and the scope for benefits of space for the Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts. He reminded the Council that the risks of the project were shared with UPP (Lancaster) Limited and that there were risks both in taking no action as well as moving forward. The Council, in reflecting how to proceed, should consider what the initial motivation for the project had been, and bear in mind the marketing reasons for Lancaster to make itself attractive to potential applicants.

Points made in discussion included the following:

- (A) the relationship between the accommodation at the university and in the city of Lancaster had to be borne in mind, including the considerations of relative cost at both locations;
- (B) the form of the additional residential building, including the exploitation of new building technology, would be critical to the rental levels and hence to student choice;
- (C) the green space in the vicinity of The County College would largely be retained but would be differently configured;
- (D) the Council should be aware that students based their choice of accommodation after the first year not only on cost but also on where their friends were.

(e) North Campus Project, Phase 1: Bowland North refurbishment

The Council was reminded that the project represented the shift in the university's focus from new buildings to refurbishment, and there was a strong drive to improve the style, quantity and nature of the teaching accommodation at the northern end of the university for arts and social sciences.

In answer to questions, the Council was told that the consultation process had been extensive and was still continuing, especially about the transition arrangements for users of the space, and that the complexity of the decant process was fully accepted.

(f) Clinical Anatomy Learning Centre

The Council noted that the change in use of part of the Faraday complex for the Centre for Medical Education was a key element in its success. The project was straightforward but had to be completed to an exceptionally tight timescale.

(g) Management accounts as at 28 February 2006

The Council was told that the current report showed the university was on track to complete the year in line with the predicted out-turn.

(h) Finance Committee, 17 February 2006

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED:

- (i) to receive and note the reports under (a), (b), (g) and (h);
- (ii) to approve the budget-setting process as set out;
- (iii) to receive the report on Phase 4; to confirm the decision to demolish the existing Grizedale buildings; to proceed with further work on the preferred option; to ask that the liaison group with the City of Lancaster and S. Martin's College confirm the current position on accommodation offered by private landlords; and to bring recommendations on the option preferred after the further view to the Council in June 2006;
- (iv) to approve the Bowland North refurbishment within a funding envelope of £9.211 million;
- (v) to approve the Clinical Anatomy Learning Centre within a funding envelope of £1.6 million, for use by the first cohort of medical students in mid-September.

C0.06/25 Pay framework agreement

Document: VC/06/R026

The University Secretary drew attention to an attached report on progress with the pay framework negotiations. The discussions had been continuing for three years and the new structures were to be part of a new nationally agreed framework. Compromises

had been reached between the parties, and the current plan was to bring firm proposals to the Council in April, so that the trade unions could conduct ballots and a report be made back to the Council in June.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to receive and note the report.

CO.06/26 Estates Committee: 9 February 2006

Document: AR/2006/186

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to receive and note the report of a meeting of the Estates Committee held on 9 February 2006.

CO.06/27 Key performance indicators

Documents: AR/2006/209; AR/2006/183; AR/2006/211; AR/2006/212

(a) *Student academic experience and quality*

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor drew attention to the positive features of the attached summary report, especially the outcome at Lancaster of the first National Student Survey.

In a discussion of the completion rates of Lancaster doctoral research students, the Council was invited to note that the subject mix at Lancaster, including a smaller science proportion than was the norm, tended to depress the rates of completion. The application of the admission requirements, including of language skills for overseas students, was rigorous. Nevertheless, the university was expecting to see benefits from its revised training programmes and the tightening of procedures for student supervision and the submission of theses.

(b) *Student recruitment, 2005-06*

The University Secretary drew attention to the downward trend in applications to Lancaster, and the increasing importance of improving the quality of applicants and the conversion rates from applicants to entrants. The university had a critical mission to maintain its market share of potential students.

(c) Third Mission

The Director of Enterprise and Commercialisation drew attention to his report.

(d) Equality and diversity

The University Secretary indicated that the current data showed Lancaster to be in a steady position, with indications of improving performance. In response to a question, she confirmed that the university was complying with the targets in its Access Agreement.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED:

- (i) to receive and note the above four reports of key performance indicators;
- (ii) to note that revised key performance indicators would form part of the revised strategic plan.

CO.06/28 Key institutional risks

Document: FO/06/25

The Director of Finance and Resources, in drawing attention to the current schedule, noted that UMAG would be considering functional risks at a meeting in April. In the meanwhile, the risks identified as meriting a high profile matched those covered in other parts of the Council agenda.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to receive and note the report.

CO.06/29 Audit Committee: 24 February 2006

Document: VC/06/R028

The chairman of the Audit Committee, Mr Hadfield, reported that the committee was taking a particular interest in the following areas of risk: (a) employer interest in recruiting from Lancaster; and (b) IT governance and skills. In the meanwhile UMAG would be receiving regular reports on these matters.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to receive and note the report of the Audit Committee.

CO.06/30 Senate: 22 February 2006

Document: AR/2006/192

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to receive and note the report of the meeting of the Senate held on 22 February 2006.

CO.06/31 Review of the present meeting

The Vice-Chancellor and the Pro-Chancellor noted that the inaugural Ideas Festival, held on 17 March 2006, had been a worthwhile occasion and one that should be repeated. The overview of the research activity of the university that the day offered was both efficient and beneficial and the day had been well organised and run. Changes for future days might include more and earlier publicity, more targeting of specific groups inside and outside the university, and perhaps the choice of a different part of the academic year.