

GAP/2007/0896r

THE UNIVERSITY OF LANCASTER

Minutes of a meeting of the Council
held on 5 October 2007

PRESENT: Mr B. M. Gray, Vice-Chancellor, Dr L. J. Banton, Mr A. Dick, Professor G. Johnes, Mr J. Hadfield, Professor S. Henig, Mr G. Johnson, Dr M. M. Lee, Councillor G. Marsland, Mr G. Middlebrook, Mr H. Morris, Mr M. Payne, Mr T. Roca, Professor A. Siewierska, Professor K. J. Stringer, Mr R. Turner.

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss F. M. Aiken, Professor A. G. Chetwynd, Mr P. M. Graves, Professor R. D. McKinlay, Mr A. C. Neal, Ms V. Tyrrell.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Mr A. McCarthy, Mr B. Scowcroft, Professor H. Thomason.

CO.07/57 Declaration of interests

No Council members declared any interests in the agenda items for the current meeting.

CO.07/58 Welcome to new members

The Pro-Chancellor welcomed Geraint Johnes and Geoffrey Marsland as new Council members.

CO.07/59 Presentation: Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Academic Development

Document: GAP/2007/0818

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Academic Development, Professor McKinlay, gave a presentation on the future academic development of Lancaster University. He commenced by drawing attention to the cluster of interrelated issues that fell under the heading of academic development, which included:

- pedagogical issues
- student recruitment
- course portfolios
- student experience

He stressed that it was essential to consider these issues in the context of the University strategies in areas like finance and estates and to have a planning process that fully integrated the academic and non-academic. He drew attention to the following considerations that he believed needed to frame the University's academic strategy:

Firstly, it was realistic to accept that there were a number of external drivers that the University could not afford to ignore, which included:

- Government policies
- HEFCE targets and monitoring
- Monitoring of academic standards by the Quality Assurance Agency
- External assessment of research.

Secondly, higher education provision increasingly had to be seen in the context of a major expansion of mass higher education taking place across the world, with the United States in the lead. In this context he believed it sensible to look to the US for possible lessons about the future development of H.E. in the UK. This suggested that there would be increasing differentiation of universities, with separate groupings (often crossing national boundaries) with their own distinct missions. It was therefore very important for Lancaster to have a clear view of its own identity and optimum placing within the international H.E. sector and to ensure that its strategic objectives and development plans were determined in this context.

Thirdly, the University needed to take account of the size and the nature of its campus, both of which were important factors in determining the range and number of areas in which Lancaster should seek to be excellent.

He believed that the above factors required the following responses from Lancaster.

Alignment of research and teaching

Ensuring that research and teaching were in alignment would maximise the efficient use of resources (particularly in staffing) and give Lancaster a distinct identity in its teaching provision.

Student focus

There should be strong emphasis on the quality of the overall student experience at Lancaster.

Portfolio development

Undergraduate and postgraduate portfolio development should be considered separately: in his view Lancaster should continue with its broadly traditional range of undergraduate subjects (whilst being alert to opportunities for new developments), but that postgraduate provision needed to be considered in the context of the major changes that had taken place in this area in the H.E. sector over the past 10-15 years. He believed that the demand was now for taught postgraduate courses which offered graduates opportunities to study in new subjects areas (often multidisciplinary and with a significant vocational element), rather than the traditional additional year of specialist study directly following on from a student's first degree.

Centres of Excellence

The University should aim set up new interdisciplinary centres of excellence, with an applied focus, and reduce the number of traditional academic departments.

Partnerships

A high priority should be given to establishing collaborative national and international partnerships that offered the University opportunities to be involved in activities from which its size might otherwise exclude it.

He concluded by drawing attention to a number of major transformational projects currently in train, including the new Lancaster Institute for the Creative Arts, a new School of Health and Medicine and the proposed explanation of the Management School.

The following points were made in discussion and in response to questions from Council members.

- (a) Centres of Excellence were intended to give a distinctive framework and identity to academic subject areas at Lancaster and would not have a narrow focus on niche specialist areas.
- (b) Although the University faced major challenges in establishing a clear identity and role within the H.E. sector, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor was optimistic that strong foundations were being laid for the achievement of this aim. He believed that the strong links that had been established between academic and financial planning at the University were a major area of strength.
- (c) Raising undergraduate entry grades would be an important element in improving the University's performance according to some of the key indicators taken into account by league table compilers.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to receive the report and to thank the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for his presentation.

CO.07/60 Minutes: 18 June 2007

Document: GAP/2007/0816

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to approve the minutes as set out.

CO.07/61 Rolling schedule

Document: GAP/2007/0817

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the rolling schedule of business, subject to some corrections reported at the meeting.

CO.07/62 Vice-Chancellor's report

Document: VC/07/R105

The Vice-Chancellor drew attention to his written report and highlighted the following items.

Student recruitment and accommodation

He reported on the latest registration figures for 2007 entry, which were still being finalised. The University had met all accommodation guarantees for new students, but (because of a temporary reduction in the number of available rooms for 2007-8, and an increased number of continuers staying on campus) there were more first year students without accommodation guarantees being housed off-campus than had been the case in recent years.

Fund raising

He was pleased to report that a private donation of £1.3m had been received towards a Centre for Evidence-Based Mental Health Research and, with the Lloyd's Register Educational Trust, for a Professorship in Nuclear Decommissioning.

League tables / National Student Survey

Since the last Council meeting Lancaster had improved its position in a number of league tables, including the Mayfield Good University Guide and the Sunday Times University league table. The 2008 results of the

National Student Survey had again confirmed the high levels of satisfaction among Lancaster's undergraduate students.

UUK Residential Meeting

The annual UUK residential meeting, which had been attended by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research, Professor McMillan, had included extensive discussions of the implications of the government's recent announcement that funding would no longer be provided for students taking qualifications at an equivalent or lower level to ones they already hold. This had the biggest potential impact on institutions like the Open University and Birkbeck, but did have possible implications for courses offered through Lancaster's Department of Continuing Education.

Science Park

Proposals for the development of a Science Park adjacent to the Lancaster campus were shortly to be considered by the local planning committee. The Vice-Chancellor stressed the importance of this development, both for the University and the creation of jobs for local community.

Research Assessment Exercise

The University was now finalising its submissions for the 2008 RAE: the proportion of academic staff submitted would again be very high, and he was confident that the quality of submissions would be as good as or better than the last assessment exercise.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to receive the report.

CO.07/63 LUSU President's report

Document: GAP/2007/0819

The LUSU President, Mr Tim Roca, drew attention to his written report and the following items.

- (a) Freshers' week had gone well and thanks were due to the Junior Common Rooms for their efforts in welcoming new students.
- (b) The first 2007-08 issue of Scan had been published.
- (c) LUSU had successfully worked with the University in helping provide off-campus accommodation for students without accommodation guarantees. As part of efforts towards meeting the challenge of ensuring first-year students living off-campus were fully integrated into college and campus life, accredited houses had been grouped according to college affiliation. Although

he did not think it constructive to apportion any blame for the shortage of available on-campus rooms in the current year, it did think it important to establish whether there were any lessons that could be learnt for future years. He hoped that the number of students with guarantees being accommodated in guest or double rooms would soon be reduced.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to receive the report.

CO.07/64 Finance

Documents: FO/07/85; FO/07/86

(A) REPORT OF DIRECTOR OF FINANCE AND RESOURCES

The Director of Finance and Resources drew attention to his written report and highlighted the following points:

- (a) the draft accounts for 2006-7 (which showed a surplus of 3.7% of turnover) had been cleared by the auditors;
- (b) a submission had been made to HMRC concerning the Library Company's VAT liabilities which, according to the University's calculations, should lead to a £90k reimbursement to Lancaster;
- (c) the University had £9.9m on deposit with Northern Rock (with fixed maturity dates), but, given recent announcements from the Treasury concerning guarantees to depositors, there was no reason to assume there were any risks to the University's investments;
- (d) with regard to student residences he reported that the number of students being accommodated in guest and double rooms was expected to reduce rapidly, and that substantial additional accommodation would be available for 2008-09.

(B) ISS BUILDING

The Director reported that all of the bids received after the ISS building project had been put out to tender had been significantly in excess of the originally approved cost envelope of £8.4m. This was the first time in four years that such a situation had arisen and it was thought to result from the specialist mechanical and electrical components of the build, which involved complex technical issues that increased the risks for the contractors. However, he did not believe that the outcome reflected any fundamental flaws in the University procedures for costing projects, and he reminded the Council of the importance of the new building for the future integrity of the University's IT

infrastructure. After considering all the available options (including not going ahead with the project) the Finance Committee had recommended that the budget be increased up to a maximum of £9.9m.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED:

- (i) to receive the report of the Director of Finance and Resources;
- (ii) to approve an increase in the budget for the ISS Building up to a maximum of £9.9m.

CO.07/65 Key Performance Indicators

Documents: GAP/2007/0830; GAP/2007/0826; GAP/2007/0827

(A) **BALANCED SCORE CARD**

The Director of Governance and Planning introduced the latest balanced scored card of KPIs and drew attention to some new financial data and estates information that had been added to the score card since the Council had last met.

(B) **THEMATIC KPI REPORT: ESTATES**

The Director of Finance and Resources spoke to the report and drew attention to the following points:

- the figures given for the proportion of the estate currently categorised as needing repair or replacement did not include the student residences and should not be taken as indicating an unduly negative position;
- work was continuing on surveying the condition of the estate, which could lead to a reduction of the proportion categorised as problematic;
- further reductions in the University's energy costs were expected for 2007-08 (following on from the improvement already achieved in 2006-7).

In discussion it was suggested that the dissatisfaction expressed in the Staff Survey regarding the allocation of space within the University could reflect a shortage of suitable working space for staff. In response the Director of Finance stated his belief that the overall amount of space available for staff in the University was probably sufficient, but that work was needed on ensuring this was all of a suitable standard and that staff had easy access to any equipment they required to carry out their duties.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to receive and note the latest balanced score card and the thematic report on estates.

CO.07/66 Risk Register

Document: FO/07/83; FO/07/84; FO/07/85

The Director of Finance and Resources introduced the latest risk register and reminded the Council that this was in a new format that aligned the risks listed with the aims in the University's strategic plan and identified who had 'ownership' of each risk.

In response to questions from Council members, he explained:

- (a) that UMAG would be responsible for reviewing the register and ensuring that the risks were properly monitored;
- (b) that more work was needed with the faculties to ensure there was clarity on their role in managing the identified risks;
- (c) that although Lancaster's overall staff-turnover was low, the risk of losing key individuals was always present.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the key institutional risks as set out.

CO.07/67 Audit: meeting of 10 September 2007

Document: VC/07/R107

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED:

- (i) to receive a report of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 10 September 2007;
- (ii) to approve the recommendation of the Audit Committee that KPMG be appointed as the University's internal auditors with effect from 15 October 2007 for a period of three years (with the possibility of an extension for up to two further years).

CO.07/68 Governance

Documents: VC/07/R103; GAP/2007/0831; VC/07/R057

(A) **SENATE EFFECTIVENESS: CHANGES TO STATUTES**

A special resolution to amend the University Statutes in line with the recommendations of the Senate Effectiveness Review was before the Council.

(B) **PROPOSED ORDINANCE COVERING THE CONDUCT OF STUDENT DISCIPLINARY HEARINGS**

A new Ordinance 11, detailing the procedures to be followed in Summary Disposal of cases by either a College Dean or the University Dean (and also by the University Tribunal), was before the Council.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED:

- (i) *nem. con.*, to approve the Special Resolution for a second time, for submission to the Privy Council;
- (ii) that the new Ordinance be approved, subject to the following amendments:

Paragraph 1.18 to read:

'The Dean should keep a note of his or her reasons for the finding and penalty, and give the reasons orally to the student, if requested. Reasons will be provided in writing only if the student wishes to appeal.'

The second paragraph in 2.1 (f) to read:

The student may, if they wish, in any case appoint legal representatives at his or her own expense ...'

CO.07/69 Appointment: Pendle College Principal

Document: GAP/2007/0823

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to approve a proposal that Mr Peter Scullion be offered appointment as Principle of College Principle for the period 1 August 2007 to 31 July 2010.

CO.07/70 Review of current meeting

Council members expressed themselves generally happy with the arrangements made for the meeting, although some concerns were expressed about the variable temperature in the John Welch Room.