

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

Minutes of a meeting of the Council
held on 4 October 2013

PRESENT: Pro-Chancellor (in the Chair); Vice-Chancellor; Mr A. Baker; Mr D. Barron; Dr R. Boumphrey; Mr J. R. Carr; Mr C. Edwards; Mr F. Fitzherbert-Brockholes; Ms G. Gardner; Professor J. Garside; Mr J. Hadfield; Mr G. Parker; Ms C. Powne; Mr J. Pullan; Professor E. Rose; Dr B. Szerszynski; Dr J. Taylor; Professor H. Thomason; Mr J. Thornberry.

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss F. M. Aiken; Ms J. Anstee; Professor A. Atherton; Professor A. G. Chetwynd; Mr A. Clarke; Professor T. J. McMillan; Ms N. C. Owen; Mrs S. Randall-Paley; Ms V. Tyrrell.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE: Councillor P. Aitchison; Mr L. King; Ms L. Willis.

CO.13/53 Welcome

The Pro-Chancellor expressed his pleasure in being appointed to the role. He stressed the importance of Council to the University, in setting the strategy and retaining responsibility for monitoring its successful outcome; this would require some major, and probably difficult, decisions in the years ahead. It, and its members, needed to be well-informed. He reported that Nominations Committee would be considering what the Council should be like in 10 years' time, and Council would have a chance to discuss this in the spring.

The Pro-Chancellor welcomed new members elected by Senate, Claire Powne and Dr Bron Szerszynski, to the meeting and congratulated Professor Emma Rose on her re-election. He recorded Council's thanks to Professor Ram-Prasad, who was no longer a member, for his service on Council over the past three years.

CO.13/54 Declaration of interest

Ref: CA.1

There were no declarations of interest.

CO.13/55 Minutes

Ref: CA.2; document: SEC/2013/2/0798

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2013.

CO.13/56 Current Schedule of Future Council Business

Ref: CA.3; document: SEC/2013/2/0799

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the schedule of future business.

CO.13/57 Vice-Chancellor: Report

Ref: CA.4; document: SEC/2013/2/0824

The Vice-Chancellor presented a verbal update on his written report and answered a number of questions.

- **Implementation of the Strategy.** Implementation of the Strategy had now commenced with the special meeting of Senate in September to discuss the near and medium-term future for the University. The four key goals for 2013-14 were identified in the report. Implementation of the Strategy would be facilitated through the new planning process, which was now operational.
- **Admissions.** Final numbers of students admitted would be available within a week or two after registration and enrolment processes had been completed; however the Vice-Chancellor was able to report that the University was on target for a record intake of undergraduate students admitted against the planned budgetary total of 3,200. This had been achieved without any material effect on the overall 'A'-level tariff score which, taking adjustment and clearing processes into account, had only moved from 327 to 326. Whilst the national picture was variable in the detail, overall the sector had recovered from the decline in admissions in the previous year and Lancaster's comparative position was very good.
- **Ghana.** The National Accreditation Board in Ghana had approved the plans for Lancaster University in Ghana and the University would now be launched at an event there during the week commencing 20th October, which the Vice-Chancellor would be attending. The strategy for the Ghana partnership was embedded in the University's internationalisation strategy and would be informed by local needs.

The partnership also contributed to the University's drive to diversify its income stream through increasing the numbers of international students.

- **League tables.** There was positive news on the University's position in the league tables. Following on from the rise of seven places in the QS World Universities Ranking for 2013 from 163 to 156, last year's 12th position in the *Sunday Times/Times* amalgamated league table had been held, and there had been a rise of eight places in The Times Higher Education World University Rankings 2013-14 table from 145 to 137.
- **National funding and pay policy.** There was no sign that the government was intending to lift the ceiling on the £9k tuition fee, which reflected the fact that the current method of student funding was unsustainable. This would inevitably begin to erode the funding base for institutions over a period of time. It was not yet clear what impact any negotiated national pay settlement might have on the sector's financial position as a whole, but there was now a formal dispute with the trade unions sector wide, as they had not accepted an offer of 1%. In response to a query, the Vice-Chancellor suggested that JCC have a discussion about pay, pay structures and the roles of various committees internally.
- **"Thinking Differently".** Work had already started on implementing this strand of the Strategy, which aimed to raise the international profile of the University by developing broader partnerships centred around research with a small number of key individual institutions. A full report on this would be made available to Council in 2014.
- **Innovation campus.** Phase one (approval of the high level case for the development of a science campus) had now been approved and Phase two, involving the development of the business plan, was now under way. A report on progress would be brought to Council in the New Year.

The Vice-Chancellor also reported on the following additional matters:

- the award of a £3.4M grant from HEFCE to develop SME interaction between the UK and China (congratulations were extended to all concerned);
- the appointment of Professor Mandy Chetwynd to the steering group of the new national Student Engagement Partnership Unit, which will work to support students' engagement with core academic processes in their institutions;
- the resignation of Professor Trevor McMillan, PVC Research, who was leaving the University to take up the post of Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost of the University of Keele. The Vice-Chancellor formally

recorded his personal thanks to Professor McMillan for his support and for his tremendous work in leading the University's submission for the REF. Best wishes were extended to Professor McMillan, whose work would be recognised formally by the University.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the report of the Vice-Chancellor.

CO.13/58 President of the Students' Union: Report

Ref: CA.5; document: SEC/2013/2/0842

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the report of the President of the Students' Union, including an update on Introductory Week which had been challenging but successful.

CO.13/59 Strategy: Update on preparations for the 50th Anniversary

Ref: CA.6; document: PAS/13/017

The Chief Administrative Officer presented a report and answered questions on the University's preparations for the 50th Anniversary. The following matters were noted in particular.

- Whilst the report set out a programme of high-level events scheduled to take place over a 15-month period, the Steering Group was seeking ideas for other events and activities to take place in departments, colleges and the Students' Union, with the final programme incorporating as wide a range of stakeholders as possible.
- The anticipated outcomes of the Anniversary programme were: increased funding; a higher profile for the University; increased engagement with the University amongst alumni and stakeholders; and the promotion of the University's importance to the region.
- A core part of the plan was a focus on international communications via the creative use of digital media, and any ideas from members on this would be very much welcomed.
- In looking back at its achievements over the last 50 years, the Anniversary also provided an opportunity for the University to promulgate its vision of, and contribution to, the future of higher education generally.

The Chair requested that members make themselves available as far as possible for anniversary events.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the arrangements for the 50th Anniversary as presented in the report.

CO.13/60 Governance

Ref: CA.7

(i) **RISK ISSUES**

Document: FIN/13/60

In discussion, the following matters were noted.

Full Risk Register. It was noted that the Risk Register presented was an extract and that some risks were dealt with in more detail in the full Risk Register. It was noted that this was not commercially sensitive and could be made available to members on request (members who wished to receive a copy of the full Risk Register should contact the Secretary).

Security of IT systems. This was an important aspect and the University had targeted specific high risk areas for attention, whilst adhering to legal requirements for access to data. The government was actively working with a number of universities on cyber security, and at the University's invitation the project leader would be visiting Lancaster later in the year. In addition, the University's auditors had been tasked to review this area as part of its schedule of work for the year.

Student numbers. The risks associated with targets for student numbers in relation to both under and over-recruitment were noted.

Financial strategy. The Chair noted a potential risk issue in how much the University felt it could borrow to support strategic developments without impacting adversely on its financial position.

THE COUNCIL NOTED that the Chair would consult on making the full Risk Register available to Council as a matter of course.

THE COUNCIL AGREED a discussion on risks associated with the University high-level financial strategy should be brought to a future meeting.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to:

- (a) approve the updated Risk Policy;
- (b) agree that the current risk profile of the University as presented was appropriate and in line with Council's risk appetite;
- (c) note an extract from the latest University Risk Register update;
- (d) note further work planned during 2013/14.

(ii) **DATE OF COURT MEETING 2014**

Document: SEC/2013/2/0826

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to agree the date of the next Court meeting (1 February 2014).

(iii) **REPORT ON CHAIR'S ACTION (CHEMISTRY 'TASK AND FINISH' GROUP)**

Document: SEC/2013/2/0777

Congratulations were extended by Council to the University on its success in recruiting students to the new Department of Chemistry.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the report on Chair's Action taken by the previous Chair in relation to the recommendations of the Chemistry 'Task and Finish' Group.

CO.13/61 Chief Administrative Officer: Report

Ref: CA.8; document: SEC/2013/2/0830

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the report of the Chief Administrative Officer.

CO.13/62 Finance

Ref: CA.9

(i) **DIRECTOR OF FINANCE: REPORT**

Document: FIN/13/64

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the report of the Director of Finance.

(ii) **LANCASTER'S 2014-15 OFFA ACCESS AGREEMENT AND SECTOR OUTCOMES**

Document: PSU/2013/0124

Lancaster's strong performance in widening participation measures was noted. Whilst there was an inevitable tension between widening participation activity and policy on target grades, currently this was not a significant problem for the University. The Chair highlighted the importance of outreach work with the less well-performing state schools. It was noted that the Head of Offa, Professor Les Ebdon, would be visiting the University in January 2014 and that a report of the visit would be made available to Council.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the report.

(iii) **MONTHLY FINANCIAL REPORTING PACK**

Document: FIN/13/54 (previously circulated)

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the Monthly Financial Reporting Pack as at June 2013.

CO.13/63 Human Resources: Redundancy Report

Ref: CA.10; document: SEC/2013/2/0833

The University's processes for supporting members of staff who came into the category of potential future redundancy, and the measures taken to support researchers on fixed-term contracts, were noted. In discussion it was reported that the proposed University Redundancy Procedure had not yet been agreed with UCU.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to confirm a continuing need for redundancies and remit the detailed consideration of potential cases involving academic staff to the Redundancy Committee.

CO.13/64 University Appointments

Ref: CA.11; document: SEC/2013/2/0835

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to approve the continuing membership appointments as set out.

CO.13/65 Review of Current Meeting

Ref: CA.12

Council members expressed themselves satisfied with the arrangements.

THE COUNCIL NOTED the following items for future Council briefings and discussion:

- cyber security;
- the University's high-level financial strategy (with reference to the University's Risk Register);
- The Work Foundation;
- widening participation policy and activities (with reference to the forthcoming visit of Professor Ebdon);
- how international partnerships contributed to financial sustainability.

THE COUNCIL ALSO NOTED it would be helpful to receive a regular briefing on progress made with the implementation of the University's Strategic Plan beyond the objectives for the current year. The Vice-Chancellor agreed this would be useful and that a more detailed implementation plan which could be used to track progress would be brought to the February meeting of Council.

CO.13/66 Standing Committees and Reports

Ref: CA.13

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to receive and note the reports, and confirm the actions taken on its behalf.

- (i) Estates Committee, meetings of 26 April 2013 (*SEC/2013/2/0846*) and 11 June 2013 (*SEC/2013/2/0847*)
- (ii) Finance Committee, meeting of 13 September 2013 (*SEC/2013/2/0853*)
- (iii) Knowledge Exchange and Commercial Affairs Committee, meeting of 25 July 2013 (*SEC/2013/2/0849*)
- (iv) Senate, meeting of 5 June 2013 (*SEC/2013/2/0848*)