

LANCASTER UNIVERSITY

Minutes of a meeting of the Council  
held on 3 October 2014

**PRESENT:** Pro-Chancellor (in the Chair); Vice-Chancellor; Mr D. Barron; Dr R. Boumphrey; Mr J. R. Carr; Ms L. Clayson; Mr F. Fitzherbert-Brockholes; Professor J. Garside; Mr J. Hadfield; Mr W. Hedley; Mr E. McLaughlin; Baroness Neville-Jones; Mr R. Newman-Thompson; Mr G. Parker; Professor C. Ram-Prasad; Dr B. Szerszynski; Mrs V. Young.

**IN ATTENDANCE:** Miss F. M. Aiken; Professor A. M. Atherton; Mr P. Boustead; Professor S. Bradley; Professor A. G. Chetwynd; Professor S. Decent; Mr S. Franklin; Dr H. Hardie; Professor S. R. A. Huttly; Ms N. C. Owen; Mrs S. J. Randall-Paley; Professor A. Ruckenstein; Mr M. Swindlehurst.

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Mr L. King; Professor E. Ritchie, Dr J. Taylor.

CO.14/65 Welcome

The Chair welcomed the following people to their first meeting of Council: Professor S. Decent, Mr W. Hedley, Professor S. Huttly, Mr E. McLaughlin, Baroness Neville-Jones and Mrs V. Young.

CO.14/66 Declaration of interest

*Ref: CA.1*

Baroness Neville-Jones declared an interest in item CO.14/71(A) as a member of the EPSRC Council.

CO.14/67 Minutes

*Ref: CA.2; documents: SEC/2014/2/0899; SEC/2014/2/0806*

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to approve the minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2014.

CO.14/68 Current Schedule of Future Council Business

*Ref: CA.3; document: SEC/2014/2/0959*

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the schedule of future business.

CO.14/69 Vice-Chancellor's Update and Questions to the Executive

*Ref: CA.4*

The Vice-Chancellor reminded the Council that the first monthly report from the Executive had been circulated to members. This report was intended to act as a timely, comprehensive overview of information on University management issues.

The Council received an oral update on the following points.

- (i) The Vice-Chancellor had attended a recent UUK conference, at which the sector had heard from key Higher Education political leaders regarding their parties' plans following the general election.
- (ii) The student recruitment figures for 2014/15 were similar to those of the previous year, which was disappointing given the University's ambitions for growth. A full report on this measure of success would be brought to the next meeting of Council for discussion.
- (iii) The UKBA had confirmed that Lancaster had successfully maintained its Tier 4 licence for international students, with no points being deducted.
- (iv) The Senate had discussed the University's strategic targets for the next 1-2 years, and had agreed that the student application figure was a more appropriate metric than acceptances, and that this figure should be increased to 15,000. Similarly, the research grant application rate should be increased by 10% per annum.
- (v) There was good news from the second phase of the annual league table cycle, as Lancaster University had been ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in the Guardian, and 131<sup>st</sup> in the Times Higher Education International League Table, which was a considerable improvement within the context of an increasingly competitive sector.

In response to a question from a member, the University Secretary explained that the University had worked closely with the City Council and the Students' Union to ensure that all students would be fully informed of their need to register to vote in the general and local elections, and given every opportunity to do so.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the update from the Vice-Chancellor.

CO.14/70 President of the Students' Union: Report

*Ref: CA.5; document: SEC/2014/2/0960*

The President of the Students' Union, Ms Laura Clayson, introduced her written report and thanked the Deputy Vice-Chancellor for his help and support regarding a postgraduate engagement event and the Future Union project. It was noted that Intro Week had been successful, the Full-Time Officers' priorities had been established for the coming year, and that discussions were ongoing with the Department for Politics, Philosophy and Religion regarding international links.

In response to questions from the Council, Ms Clayson noted that the perception of the University's focus on undergraduates could potentially have a detrimental effect on Lancaster's appeal to postgraduate applicants, and that this was an issue worthy of consideration. It was noted that this was most relevant in Faculties other than the Management School, where there was already a strong postgraduate community.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the report of the President of the Students' Union.

CO.14/71 Strategy

*Ref: CA.6*

(A) **RESEARCH AT LANCASTER**

*Documents: SEC/2014/2/0962; SEC/2014/2/0963;  
SEC/2014/2/0964*

The new Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), Professor Stephen Decent, and Senior Strategic Advisor to the Vice-Chancellor's Office on Research, Professor Andrei Ruckenstein, presented two documents which outlined the proposed strategy for the future direction for research at Lancaster University. These documents had been discussed by UMAG and at an open forum meeting for all academic and research support staff, with positive feedback from both groups.

Two initiatives had been identified as candidates for the first University Level Centres of Research: data science and social science. Both areas were strongly represented across different departments and Faculties, and further collaboration opportunities existed which would boost the reputation and impact of their research.

The Council discussed the documents and made the following suggestions and comments.

- (i) The proposals would lead to a more strategic approach being taken regarding research funding applications, which would potentially reduce fragmentation and increase research excellence.
- (ii) The approach outlined within the documents was welcomed in general, but would require difficult decisions to be made by management, and the Council would expect assurances from senior management that the ideas were being fully considered.
- (iii) An annual report on the progress of implementation, against institutional objectives, should be brought to Council each July.
- (iv) The guidelines contained a high level of detail, as they were intended to provide a level of support and structure which would empower individuals to take risks, through a clear structure of responsibility.
- (v) All faculties and departments involved would need to agree on an institute's governance arrangements and lines of responsibility, from the outset.
- (vi) The short-term disruption of implementing the new strategy should be taken into account by management and Council, when reviewing its effectiveness.
- (vii) A step change would be necessary in order to achieve the University's strategic aim of increasing the research grant income to £45M by 2020.
- (viii) The strategic focus on University Level Centres and Institutes should be balanced with the encouragement and support of smaller research groups who may be able to produce significant results with a smaller amount of risk.

- (ix) In order to reduce the potential of overwork, the strategic approach should be managed in parallel with the University's preparations for the next Research Excellence Framework (REF), expected to take place in 2020.
- (x) Funding bodies were increasingly supportive of applications that demonstrate combined strength through partnerships between different departments, institutions and companies, on a global scale where possible.
- (xi) Projects that promote economic growth were also more likely to be successful in grant applications, and this should therefore be factored into the University's research strategy.
- (xii) Each Centre should communicate its compelling vision as clearly as possible, both to external bodies and to its own staff.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the documents, and to receive a progress report on the implementation of the research strategy in July 2015.

**ACTION: SD**

**(B) DEVELOPING ENGAGEMENT IN CUMBRIA**

*Document: PAS/14/064*

The Chief Administrative Officer presented a report on the University's current and future engagements in Cumbria, which had been raised by Council members and was part of the university's wider review of engagement.

It was noted that an audit had been undertaken, which showed that there were numerous activities ongoing, with both employers and schools in Cumbria, but these currently had relatively low visibility within the University and the local community.

The Council discussed the report and agreed that further discussions should be held with relevant stakeholders in order to investigate further opportunities for engagement.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the report and to create a working group on Engagement in Cumbria, to be chaired by the Pro-Chancellor.

**ACTION: NCO**

Ref: CA.7

(A) **QUARTERLY REPORT ON STRATEGIC RISK**

*Document: SEC/2014/2/0953*

The Council received the quarterly update report on strategic risk. The risk of failure to manage pay and pension cost (SR7A) was highlighted, in regards to the revaluation of the USS pension scheme, and it was noted that the Directors of Finance and Human Resources would report back to Council as soon as the implications for the University were known.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the summary of the Strategic Risk Register.

(B) **PROPOSAL TO AMEND STATUTE 9: THE COUNCIL**

*Document: SEC/2014/2/0949*

The University Secretary reminded the Council that at its previous meeting it had agreed in principle to amend Statute 9: the Council, in order to increase the flexibility and the balance of expertise within its membership.

The Council discussed the proposed amendment and agreed to reinsert the word “lay” or ‘independent’ into paragraph 9.1 (b) where it had been removed.

**ACTION: FMA**

The LUSU President raised a proposal to increase the number of student representatives on Council through the addition of either an elected representative or an alumni position. Following consideration the Council agreed that this would not be necessary, as the LUSU President was an elected representative of the student body, and several current members of Council were alumni of the University and that having alumni representation would continue to be part of the Nomination Committee’s considerations.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED unanimously to:

- (i) approve in principle the amendments to Statute 9 as set out;
- (ii) forward the proposal to Senate for its endorsement;

- (iii) recommend that the Nominations Committee consider including in its criteria for new members recent University graduation, in order to further improve the equality balance of Council members.

**ACTION: FMA**

**(C) REPORT FROM NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE**

*Document: SEC/2014/2/0955*

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to approve the appointment of Michael Dormer as a member of Council for three years from 1 August 2015.

**ACTION: FMA**

**(D) REVIEW OF COLLEGES**

*Document: SEC/2014/2/0968*

The Provost for Student Experience, Colleges and the Library informed the Council that a review of the Colleges would be undertaken in the Michaelmas term, in order to support and enhance the Colleges' role in the student experience at Lancaster. The Council received and noted a document setting out the proposed methodology for the review. The Council welcomed the proposed review, and suggested that the current engagement between Colleges and academic staff should be improved.

Following discussion it was agreed that the LUSU Vice-President Union Development should be added as a member of the review panel, and that the panel should be chaired by the Deputy Pro-Chancellor, Mr Hadfield.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to endorse the proposed review of Colleges, and to receive the recommendations of the panel in the Lent term 2015.

CO.14/73

Finance: Briefing on Memorandum of Assurance and Accountability between HEFCE and Institutions

*Ref: CA.8; document: SEC/2014/2/0943*

The University Secretary presented a report on the new Memorandum of Assurance and Accountability, which had been produced to reflect HEFCE's revised role as a regulatory body. It was noted that this document had previously been discussed by the Audit Committee.

The Council's attention was drawn to section 29 of the Memorandum, regarding the legal responsibility of members of the governing body. Council was invited to consider issues on which they required further assurance, and it was agreed that the nature and content of papers for Council should be reviewed to ensure they fulfil the current governance responsibilities.

**ACTION: FMA**

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the report.

CO.14/74 Estates: Report on Collaborative Technology Access Programme Project (cTAP)

*Ref: CA.9; document: SEC/2014/2/0974*

The Director of Facilities introduced a proposal on the Collaborative Technology Access Programme (cTAP) capital project. It was noted that this proposal had been discussed in detail by the Finance and General Purposes Committee, and was brought here for approval.

The Council raised questions regarding obligations attached to the funding, for which the University would be liable. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor assured the Council that the targets related to the building, jobs and SME engagement, and had been fully analysed by senior management and were considered to be achievable. It was felt that this project would provide an opportunity to enhance the Chemistry Department's outreach work and commercial impact.

Members suggested that the project design should include at least one collaborative space within the building, where SMEs could meet with Lancaster staff and each other, and discuss collaborations on an informal basis. It was further noted that the process for delegation of authority regarding the commitment of University funds should be referred to in future projects of this type.

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to:

- (i) note the contents of this paper;
- (ii) approve the building scheme for the Collaborative Technology Access Programme (cTAP) project within a funding envelope of £4.026M as part of a wider grant of £9M including equipment.

CO.14/75 University Appointments

*Ref: CA.10; document: SEC/2014/2/0975*

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

CO.14/76 Review of Current Meeting

*Ref: CA.11*

Council members expressed themselves satisfied with the arrangements.

CO.14/77 Chair's Action

*Ref: CA.12; document: SEC/2014/2/0976*

THE COUNCIL RESOLVED to note the decisions taken by the Chair since the last meeting as set out.

CO.14/78 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, meeting held on 6 June 2014 (*SEC/2014/2/0978*)
- (ii) Finance and General Purposes Committee, meeting held on 12 September 2014 (*SEC/2014/2/0981*)
- (iii) Senate, meeting held on 18 June 2014 (*SEC/2014/2/0944*)
- (iv) University and Students' Union Joint Committee, meeting held on 17 June 2014 (*SEC/2014/2/0979*)