

**LANCASTER UNIVERSITY**

Notes of the Council Awayday  
held on 22 May 2015

**PRESENT:** Pro-Chancellor (in the Chair); Vice-Chancellor; Professor A. M. Atherton; Mr D. Barron; Dr R. Boumphrey; Ms L. Clayson; Professor J. Garside; Mr L. King; Baroness Neville-Jones; Professor J. F. O'Hanlon; Mr G. Parker; Professor C. Ram-Prasad; Professor E. Ritchie; Dr B. Szerszynski; Dr J. Taylor; Mrs V. Young.

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

**APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE:** Mr J. R. Carr; Mr F. Fitzherbert-Brockholes; Mr C. Mang; Mr E. McLaughlin.

CO.15/24 Awayday

The Council met for a series of discussions relating to the University's Strategy, and other issues of current importance to the University. It was noted that the outcome of these discussions would be considered at the joint meeting between Senate and Council, and would inform the operational decisions made by the University's senior management team, in planning medium term implementation of the Strategy.

24.1 Implications of the General Election for Higher Education

*Document: PAS/15/035*

The Vice-Chancellor presented a briefing document on political news relating to the Higher Education sector, following the recent general election. He noted that the situation was still changing rapidly, but that several key themes were emerging, including the possibility of further rises in tuition fees, and the development of a "Northern Powerhouse" model, which would include concentrated research funding.

The Council discussed the document and agreed that the University should continue to remain abreast of ongoing developments in the sector, in order to be as prepared as possible for any opportunities or threats. It was also agreed that the Northern Powerhouse would be of key importance to the University's future strategy.

#### 24.2 Lancaster Staffing Analysis

*Document: PSU/2015/0043 (Restricted and Commercial in Confidence)*

**[RESTRICTED AND COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE MINUTE]**

#### 24.3 New Models of Collaboration and Interaction

*Document: PAS/15/028*

The Chief Administrative Officer presented a report from the Future LU Partnerships working group, which had been tasked with finding and analysing methods of collaboration and interaction that would help achieve the University's strategic goals.

The Council discussed the paper and raised the following key points

- (i) The current pace of organic growth would not provide sufficient scale for the University to meet its strategic ambitions.
- (ii) The University should seek to establish bi-lateral partnerships with prestigious, top quality institutions in key geographic areas such as the US, China and Brazil.
- (iii) Partnerships and collaborations on a departmental level should continue to be encouraged, while freedom and support should be given to academics with plans to expand their departments in innovative ways.
- (iv) The Northern Powerhouse could be seen as both an opportunity and a threat to the University's future sustainability, and a strategy for engagement with other institutions in the North of England should be developed and implemented as quickly as possible.

**Action: Vice-Chancellor**

- (v) The existing annual planning process might be restricting the University's growth, and it might be more appropriate to move to a longer cycle for departmental planning.

- (vi) The non-hierarchical nature of the HE sector in the UK could be seen as attractive to researchers and academics, despite the relatively low governmental investment (as a % of GDP) in Research, and Lancaster should seek ways to use the UK's strengths to its advantage.

Following extensive discussion, the Vice-Chancellor thanked Council members for their views, and agreed that the executive team would develop an institutional SWOT analysis for consideration at the Joint Council and Senate meeting in July.

**Action: Vice-Chancellor**

#### 24.4 Updated Strategic Risks Register

*Document: SEC/2015/2/0559*

The University Secretary introduced the latest version of the Strategic Risks Register, for the Council's comments and approval. The Council agreed that the risks around the Northern Powerhouse and the failure to grow the University should be included in the Register.

It was noted that the Strategic Risks Register was helpful in providing a framework for management decisions, and as a checklist to aid UMAG to monitor certain risks.

The Council discussed the Register, and suggested that it should indicate two different categories of risks: those which were generic to the entire UK HE sector, and those which were Lancaster-specific. It was noted that some risks were outside of Lancaster's control, but that actions could be taken to mitigate their impact, or to prepare an institutional response.

It was agreed that the University Secretary would take note of the Council's comments, and review the Strategic Risks Register accordingly. The Register would continue to be brought to Council for information on a biannual basis, with commentary on any changes since the previous version.

**Action: University Secretary**

#### 24.5 Environmental Sustainability: an Institutional Priority?

*Document: SEC/2015/2/0545*

The Council received a document from the President of the Students' Union regarding the institutional commitment to environmental sustainability, from the perspective of key stakeholders. Council members were asked to consider whether the University should adopt sustainability as part of its reputational identity.

The Director of Facilities informed the Council that the University currently had a substantial commitment to environmental sustainability, as demonstrated by the institution having been awarded two Green Gown Awards, and two Gold Awards for the Food for Life initiative, among others. It was agreed that there should be greater synergy and promotion across the institution in order to engage the wider community with the key issues and achievements.

The Council noted that the University's environmental sustainability strategy was currently managed on an operational level by the Director of Facilities, and overseen by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) as the chair of Green Lancaster.

The President of the Students' Union thanked the Council for their comments, and noted that there was a higher level of commitment to sustainability than many students were aware of. It was agreed that the University's annual environmental report would be brought to a future meeting of Council.

**Action: Director of Facilities**