

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 8 OCTOBER 2021

Present: Lord Keith Bradley (Chair), Angela Adimora, Professor Dame Sue Bailey, Councillor Phil Cusack, Garry Dowdle, Ben Gallop, Philip Green, Merlyn Lowther, Professor Helen Marshall, Councillor John Merry, Ian Moston, Sean O'Hara, Akeem Ojetola, Sam Plant [until COU.21.91], Festus Robert, Alan Roff, Helen Taylor, Professor Mike Wood and Dr Elsa Zekeng.

Apologies: Dr Tony Coombs, Micheal Omoniyi and Rik Sterken.

In attendance: Julie Charge (Deputy Chief Executive and Executive Director of Finance), Professor Karl Dayson (Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise), Peter Gregory (Interim Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development), Dr Sam Grogan (Pro Vice-Chancellor Student Experience), Alison Jones (Interim University Secretary), John McCarthy (Associate Chief Operating Officer), Jackie Njoroge (Director of Strategy), Jo Purves (Pro Vice Chancellor Academic Development) Huw Williams (Chief Operating Officer) and Elaine Pateman Salt (secretary).

By Invitation: Ibifuro Douglas, Abdul Mohammed and Kabir Olayiwola (students) [COU.21.80]; Ed Moloney (Chief Executive Officer, University of Salford Students' Union) [COU.21.80; COU.21.90] and Ian Dempsey (Head of Financial Accounting) [COU.21.85; COU.21.86].

COU.21.74 **WELCOME**

Noted: that the meeting was being held via video-link utilising the encrypted software technology of Microsoft Office365 Teams.

COU.21.75 **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Reported: that Professor Mike Wood declared an interest in Item 11: Universities UK/ Universities Superannuation Scheme, being an employee of the University and an individual member of the pension scheme.

Noted: in the interests of transparency, that several attendees were also members of the pension scheme but that the update report did not require any action from members or attendees, and they were free to comment on the details therein.

COU.21.76 **MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING**

Confirmed: the minutes of the previous meeting held on 9 July 2021, subject to correction of a minor typographical error on page 12 (COU/21/59).

COU.21.77 **MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES**

Reported:

- i) for minute reference COU.19.70 – *to request the Executive to consider the development of a single mental health and wellbeing strategy* – that a draft version was being presented to a number of stakeholder groups and the recognised trade unions before final consideration by the Executive, with the intention being that the action would be concluded by the end of the calendar year;
- ii) for minute reference COU.20.46 – *student engagement task and finish group* – that the recommendations of the group had been deferred whilst national policy was confirmed, but that it was the intention to revisit and progress this action as soon as possible alongside the work of Professor Karl Dayson and the refresh of Senate's focus and business;
- iii) for minute reference COU.21.12 – *consideration of a declaration of climate emergency* – that the Environmental Sustainability Plan had been approved by members but that the Executive would review the position and discuss further with the new University of Salford Students' Union (USSU) Sabbatical Officers.

Noted:

- i) the view that the University should be mindful of the language used to describe actions versus the level of commitment it appeared to show, for example, 'emergency' suggested an immediate response and the potential for significant deployment of various resources;
- ii) that in this instance the term 'climate emergency' had been used by the media and subsequently by those promoting it within the University, but the comment was acknowledged as important for future discussions;
- iii) that the University had signed the Civic University Agreement jointly with the Greater Manchester Universities, and was now commencing negotiations on the detail of the enhanced partnership;
- iv) that the Chair, Lord Bradley, intended to reference the Agreement when the Skills and Post-16 Education Bill returned to Parliament in the Autumn.

COU.21.78 **CONFIRMATION OF STARRED ITEMS**

Confirmed:

- i) that Item 20 (Register of Interests, Gifts and Hospitality Policy; COU/21/73) was approved without discussion;
- ii) that Item 21 (Use of University Seal; COU/21/74R) was noted without discussion.

COU.21.79 **MEMBERSHIP**

Considered: on the recommendation of the Governance, Nominations and Ethics Committee, the proposed membership diversity targets (COU/21/60).

Reported:

- i) that the Governance, Nominations and Ethics Committee (GNEC) had extensively considered how to embed the Council's commitment to diversity in its membership;
- ii) that the conclusion had been to reflect a more balanced representation of the student population as the primary reference point;
- iii) that GNEC recognised the setting of targets was not an 'end point' or went far enough to evidence commitment, and that it was also important to improve the extent to which the Council members engaged with stakeholder and minority groups;
- iv) that to enable a current assessment of membership diversity to be made, the recommendation included a request to gather data (in confidence and for that purpose).

Noted:

- i) the view of the Chair that the development to the membership was a continuous effort and that impact regarding increased diversity would start to be evidenced over the coming months and years;
- ii) that GNEC expected to review the current membership data at its next meeting, and to maintain continuous and regular oversight as part of its terms;
- iii) that GNEC would report back to Council at the January 2022 meeting before considering when it would be relevant to make a regular report;
- iv) the view that it would be beneficial to take the opportunity to capture wider diverse experiences and background during this exercise, for example educational background and demographic data.

RESOLVED:

- i) that an appropriate balance in the membership be further defined as 'delivery of a balanced membership which broadly reflected the diversity of the student body';
- ii) that the definition be adopted as a target operating model for member diversity;
- iii) that a data collection exercise be conducted with the current Council membership, including seeking consent to hold and process the required characteristics data.

ACTION iii) INTERIM UNIVERSITY SECRETARY

STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Received: [in advance] a video presentation from students arriving or returning to campus at the start of the 2021/22 academic year.

Reported:

- i) the personal experiences of international students Ibifuro Douglas, Abdul Mohammed and Kabir Olayiwola;
- ii) that - redacted - had moved to Salford from India with his wife and three young children, and that he had struggled to network during the restrictions arising from the pandemic but had been able to meet other international students during the online business challenge event in Salford Business School;
- iii) that - redacted - highlighted the difficulties and challenges faced when moving to a new country, including difficulties integrating as a mature student and cultural adaptations;
- iv) that - redacted - had arrived from the Pacific region and had arrived expecting to be able to find and secure accommodation relatively easily, but was now living 18 miles from the University and could not always travel to campus easily or in a timely fashion;
- v) that - redacted - had looked forward to the opportunity to travel from Nigeria and study for a masters degree but had been forced to be separated from her children for five months whilst she secured accommodation;
- vi) that - redacted - current accommodation was up to an hour and a half travel from campus and that this impacted on her attendance;
- vii) that all three had found the search and securing of accommodation particularly difficult and had referenced practices of increased pricing, increased deposits and security guarantees required of international students from private landlords;
- viii) that - redacted - commended the Salford Business School for support in integrating international students into the University and Salford/the United Kingdom, and had received personal tutoring support and additional sessions;
- ix) that international students spent a significant amount of money to study abroad, often several thousand pounds before even arriving in the UK and then contributed to the local economy during their studies;
- x) that concerns were raised by the students for others in their cohorts without similar support networks or additional funds that could be raised, and the stress potentially caused when finding accommodation at the same time as settling into a new country and starting studies;
- xi) that - redacted - also referenced the risk to lone females arriving in the UK;
- xii) the view that international students be provided with wider and more practical support in securing accommodation;
- xiii) the view that accommodation would continue to be a significant factor in the student's experience and time in the UK.

Noted:

- i) that the personal stories were very impactful, and members thanked the guests for their honesty;
- ii) that the University could not control the private landlord market but continued to seek greater engagement with landlords;
- iii) the view that there was an additional amount of stress for international students arriving without accommodation being secured in advance;
- iv) the view that an online or hybrid model of delivery seemed to alleviate the travel challenges but would introduce other complexities when looking to integrate into the community and student body;
- v) that there was also the challenge of ensuring robust internet connection and access to technology;
- vi) the view that the University should be mindful of these experiences for the arrival of the next cohorts of international students;
- vii) that the Salford Technology Fund was to be run again this year and that it was available to home and international students, but that it was imperative that international students had clear signposting to all the support available to them;
- viii) the view that if the University sought to continue to grow its international student recruitment the experiences relayed by the students must be addressed.

COU.21.81

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Received: a report from the Vice-Chancellor on key issues affecting the University (COU/21/61).

Reported:

- i) that there had been significant grade inflation reported for A-level results;
- ii) that there had been the highest number of applicants in a decade choosing to defer entry rather than enter clearing (which they were eligible for), which the University had interpreted as largely due to the opportunities provided by achievement of better outcomes;
- iii) that the University was significantly over target for its international postgraduate student recruitment, but below target slightly for its domestic undergraduate student recruitment;
- iv) that the new Secretary of State for Education, Nadhim Zahawi, had slowed some of the sector policy considerations since taking up the position, but that the University continued to await detail with interest and was planning for a number of scenarios;
- v) that students had started to return to campus in greater numbers, but the University continued to be cautious in its approach and was experiencing low rates of reported Covid-19 infections;
- vi) that 78% of teaching was planned as 'face-to-face' and 22% for online delivery during the first semester;
- vii) that the School of Science, Engineering and Environment (SSEE) build was progressing well, the Energy House 2 build was nearing completion, and that the robotics building foundations had been dug;
- viii) that the University had been shortlisted in four categories of this year's Times Higher Education (THE) Awards;
- ix) that the International Opportunities Team had successfully secured an award to support its work this academic year;
- x) that the interim arrangements put in place after the retirement of the University Registrar and Secretary had been operating satisfactorily;
- xi) that John McCarthy had been permanently appointed for those responsibilities related to student administration and experience;
- xii) that a new combined role of University Secretary and Director of Academic Quality had been created and that a search agency had been appointed to support external recruitment;
- xiii) that Alison Jones continued in the role of Interim University Secretary until an appointment was made, which was anticipated before the end of the calendar year;
- xiv) that Chair, Chairs of Committees and GNEC would be kept apprised of progress.

Noted:

- i) that student progression data was expected to be confirmed on or around 18 October 2021, and from that point the University could make further analysis of success or interventions required;
- ii) that there was a positive progression picture emerging, linked to the work undertaken to enable student success;
- iii) that after a competitive procurement exercise, the successful search agency for the University Secretary and Director of Academic Quality role had been Anderson Quigley;
- iv) that the role had been ring-fenced for an internal candidate who ultimately chose not to apply, but that the external advert did not preclude applications made from internal colleagues.

COU.21.82

CAMPUS OPERATIONS (COVID-19)

Received: an update on the University's management and operation of the campuses during the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic (COU/21/62).

Reported:

- i) that the reported data on the number of students isolating included those international students in quarantine;
- ii) that as of Wednesday 6 October 2021, 3 students were reported to be isolating and 18 international students were in quarantine;
- iii) that the University continued to receive low levels of reported infections and instances

- of isolation, but expected an increase in the next six-to-eight-week period as the semester progressed;
- iv) that the mechanisms remained in place to manage localised issues;
 - v) that a professional services daily 'stand up' meeting had been established as more administrative colleagues returned to work on campus;
 - vi) that the meetings continued to identify and resolve single points of failure in the management of the campus and student experience;
 - vii) that the University had surveyed students about vaccinations, and had received nearly 2,000 responses;
 - viii) that 81% of respondees had received two vaccinations, and of those who had received one vaccination 86% intended to get a second vaccination;
 - ix) that longitudinal data on employee absence since 2020 had been reported to the Health and Safety Committee, and that there was evidence that working from home gave a level of protection from infection;
 - x) that qualitative data on employee experiences during the period of the pandemic was to be sourced in the coming weeks through focus groups.

Noted:

- i) that the University was to promote flu vaccinations and was planning to run its annual flu vaccine programme on campus during November;
- ii) that there had been reports of dramatic rises in Covid infection levels in high schools since the start of the academic year;
- iii) that the University continued to promote the use of face coverings (or mandate use where it was allowed), and continued to hand out face masks at peak student traffic times;
- iv) that the University had changed its messaging regarding face coverings to promote 'taking personal responsibility' and communal benefits to on-campus delivery;
- v) that Covid vaccinations were being made available to arriving international students;
- vi) the view that this was an opportunity for the University to create an ongoing public health hygiene campaign, particularly as flu viruses and paediatric respiratory issues were at high levels;
- vii) that a key part of maintaining good mental health was also maintaining physical health;
- viii) that the University had a good infrastructure and contingency processes in place to operate under any future restrictions, developed from the learned experience of the previous eighteen months;
- ix) that the virtual learning environment (VLE) platform had been upgraded which put the University in a good position if it needed to 'flip' delivery online, either locally or more widely;
- x) that it was anticipated student expectations would be different this academic year, both for new and returning students;
- xi) that Cllr Merry reported low vaccination take-up in Salford in comparison to data on national take-up levels, and that the City Council was promoting community social responsibility in its future communications;
- xii) the view that the pandemic would eventually be reclassified as endemic;
- xiii) the view that key influencers should be utilised to cascade and promote communications;
- xiv) the view that single use masks also raised the issue of waste and impact on the carbon footprint;
- xv) the view that the University be mindful in its communications of the fears regarding vaccination expressed by the non-white community in Salford, and to take a collaborative approach;
- xvi) that there had been vaccination clinics held on campus and the comments made had been useful for future planning and messaging;
- xvii) that members continued to thank the senior team and all those involved for their due diligence towards the health and safety of students and staff.

COU.21.83

Health and Safety Annual Report 2020/21 CLOSED

Considered: on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, the Health and Safety Annual Report 2020/21 (COU/21/63).

Reported:

- i) - redacted -

RESOLVED: that the Health and Safety Annual Report 2020/21 be approved.

COU.21.84

Universities UK / Universities Superannuation Scheme CLOSED

Received: an update on the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) consultation (COU/21/64).

Reported:

- i) that since the update had been issued further activities had commenced and information been received;
- ii) - redacted -

Noted:

- i) - redacted -

COU.21.85 **University of Salford Tax Strategy**

Considered: on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, the University of Salford Tax Strategy (COU/21/65).

Reported:

- i) that it was considered good practice to develop a transparent tax strategy;
- ii) that the University had applied sector and charity governance in its approach to taxation, but this represented written confirmation of its activities;
- iii) that the proposed Strategy was risk-averse in terms of the University's approach.

Noted: the view that the Strategy also demonstrated the University's commitment to appropriate taxation, which could be shared publicly and with partners and suppliers.

RESOLVED: that the University of Salford Tax Strategy be approved with immediate effect.

COU.21.86 **Ownership of Salford Professional Services Ltd and Salford University Purchasing Services Ltd**

Considered: on the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee, the transfer of ownership of Salford Professional Services Ltd and Salford University Purchasing Services Ltd to report directly to the University of Salford (COU/21/66).

(Secretary's note: Finance and Resources Committee approved the change of name from Salford University Purchasing Services Ltd to Salford University Services Ltd at its meeting in March 2021 [minute reference COFRC.21.13] however the amendment is still undergoing due process at Companies House).

Reported:

- i) that the proposed move of ownership for Salford Professional Services (SPD) Ltd and Salford University Services (SUS) Ltd was to enable the University to directly influence opportunities arising from its activities such as the development of an Institution of Technology (IoT) and provide greater flexibility in the way services were delivered;
- ii) that the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Team (VCET) had been directly overseeing SPD for an extended period;
- iii) that the move would also allow the current owner (University of Salford Enterprises (USE) Ltd) to focus solely on the identification and commercialisation of the University's intellectual property (IP);
- iv) that the full strategic review of USE was to be presented to the December meeting of Finance and Resources Committee (FRC), but that the Board of USE had proposed that there was no need to delay transfer of ownership as part of the 'direction of travel' toward its re-focused strategy;

- v) that Huw Williams and Professor Karl Dayson were members of the Board of USE, and that Garry Dowdle attended in an advisory capacity;
- vi) that the USE Board had discussed the need for the company to realise the University's innovation aims.

Noted:

- i) that the terms and conditions for employees of SPD were comparable to the University's except for those working in the sales team, and that the transfer would be managed by Human Resources;
- ii) that it was the intention to reference the transfer of ownership in the annual Integrated Report (financial year-end accounts and respective subsidiary year-end accounts);
- iii) that the external auditors (KPMG) had been made aware of the proposal and had made no comment on the transfer;
- iv) that Mr Dowdle appraised members of the rigorous process of self-assessment currently being undertaken by the Board of USE and his view that the proposal aligned to the strategic intentions of the company.

RESOLVED: that the transfer of ownership of Salford Professional Services Ltd and Salford University Purchasing Services Ltd (soon to be Salford University Services Ltd) to the University of Salford be approved.

COU.21.87 **2020-21 Annual Policy Review**

Received: a report on the key policy developments across the Office for Students, Department for Education and Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy over the 2020-21 financial year (COU/21/67).

Reported: that the Report was a summary of the various policy updates given across the previous year and continued to evidence the emerging Government policy.

Noted: that individual equality impact assessments (EIA) were completed against each policy and that links to these would be included in future policy reports for greater transparency.

COU.21.88 **ENABLING STUDENT SUCCESS**

Received: a presentation on the University's strategic plan for enabling student success, in the context of value for money (COU/21/68).

Reported:

- i) that members were reminded the plan had been implemented as a programme of work rather than a formal project;
- ii) that it was the objective of the plan to change the frontline student experience and consequently improve the University's metrics for student progression and graduate employability;
- iii) that it was anticipated those metrics would be fundamental to the Government's proposed Proceed measurement;
- iv) that the programme had commenced immediately prior to the start of the pandemic and had been a shared institutional priority for VCET;
- v) that the original nine actions had been reduced to eight actions;
- vi) that work continued on decolonising the curricula, improving and developing industry placements, improving the in-year customer journey and responding to the live student voice, developing better structures for programme leadership and responding to the regulatory environment;
- vii) that there was evidence of success, for example in 2020 the previous poor progression performance had been reversed and with emerging evidence of another good result in 2021;
- viii) that two schools had improved student attrition rates, one school was holding position and one school had made changes which were beginning to impact positively in-year;
- ix) that infrastructure had been amended to respond better to need, for example in the committees of Senate, the establishment of the Learning and Teaching (L&T) Network, appointment of an Academic Lead for the Network (due to commence in November 2021), and revised operational committees;

- x) that this was a programme of cultural change as well as structural change;
- xi) that organisation and management continued to be a challenge and there was renewed focus on the 'join up' between academic and professional services;
- xii) that structural adjustments were complex but being worked through, for example staff student ratios and programme leadership;
- xiii) that the Pro Vice Chancellor for Student Experience was providing assurances 'from the ground' and conducting 'mystery shopping';
- xiv) that evidence of outputs was being triangulated with the USSU and through the revised student representative system;
- xv) that the University was committed to systemic and sustained progress toward a successful student experience

Noted:

- i) the view that the interventions were starting to work, and that good evidence was emerging of successful outcomes;
- ii) that the University had been working on improvement of student experience and outcomes for a number of years;
- iii) that the external policy and regulatory environment gave a deadline of between 12 to 18 months for sector improvement, but that whilst the University was mindful of this it was developing longer-term cultural change and continuous improvement practices;
- iv) that it was anticipated the L&T Network and development of a community of practice would provide resource to the programme;
- v) that academic colleagues would be further supported towards attaining the Postgraduate Certificate in Academic Practice and Higher Education Academy (HEA) Fellowship status;
- vi) that it was the intention to actively develop pedagogical practice;
- vii) the view that the University appeared confident it could meet the required progression and employability standards set by the Government;
- viii) that there had originally been 65 programmes identified as below thresholds, but that this figure was now in the low 40s, and on that basis, there was some degree of confidence that more programmes could be positively impacted in the timescale;
- ix) that however, there was potential for intervention from the Office for Students (OfS) for programmes which were not able to make the required level of improvement against the metrics;
- x) that it was still unknown what format the intervention might take, or on what data decisions might be taken to intervene;
- xi) that the University was prepared to take internal remedial action if required;
- xii) the view that embedding continuous improvement had to have connectivity with continuous professional development (CPD) and true meaning to those involved;
- xiii) the view that consideration should be given to measurement of continuous improvement;
- xiv) that view that the temporary changes to the personal mitigating circumstances (PMC) procedure during the pandemic had positively influenced the data presented;
- xv) that the PMC procedure had now reverted back to its normal requirements, and that the University was mindful of the potential impact of the exceptional year;
- xvi) that the external policy and regulatory environment would provide measurements for success, but that the University was also developing internal key performance indicators such as the aspiration to be a 'top 50' University;
- xvii) the view that the University should not wait for Government measurements, but should develop its purpose and measure against the collective learning experience;
- xviii) that the work to refresh the Corporate Strategy would also support the framing of success.

RESOLVED: that the next report include a proposal on ways to measure the short, medium and longer-term success of the plan.

ACTION: PRO VICE-CHANCELLOR, STUDENT EXPERIENCE

COU.21.89

Quarterly Performance and Risk Report CLOSED

Received: on the endorsement of the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Team, a detailed report on the National Student Survey (NSS) results 2021 and Graduate Outcomes (2018/19 leavers). Also included was the University's performance against lead indicators during Quarter 4 2020/21, and the Top 10 Risk Profile was appended on the recommendation of

the Audit and Risk Committee (COU/21/69).

Reported:

i) - redacted -

Noted:

i) - redacted -

COU.21.90 **University of Salford Students' Union**

Received: on the endorsement of the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Team, an update on the operations of the University of Salford Students' Union (USSU) (COU/21/70).

Reported:

- i) the thanks from the Board of Trustees to the University for its support financial and otherwise, toward a better Union and positive impact on the student experience;
- ii) that USSU had published its first Impact Report;
- iii) that the focus on the return to working on campus and the start of the academic year was to 'bounce back better';
- iv) that as part of the work of the Rafiki peer-led wellbeing service, each first year undergraduate and postgraduate taught student was to receive a wellbeing phone call;
- v) that this represented approximately 6,000 outbound calls;
- vi) that it was known that students might have their first thoughts about dropping out immediately prior to the first assessment submission;
- vii) that over 1,000 students had been contacted during the national lockdown to hold wellbeing support conversations.

Noted:

- i) the thanks from members for the large and positive impact USSU was having in supporting students during this time;
- ii) that reports of USSU's initiatives and the collaborative relationship with the University were welcomed.

COU.21.91 **QUARTERLY FINANCE REPORT CLOSED**

Received: on the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee, the Quarter 4 2020/21 finance report (COU/21/71).

Reported:

i) - redacted -

COU.21.92 **COMMITTEE CHAIRS' REPORTS**

Received: the Committee Chairs' Reports (COU/21/72).

Reported:

- i) that the substantive business of the Finance and Resources Committee (FRC) had been recommended onward to Council;
- ii) that FRC intended to review the student recruitment recovery plan at its next meeting to address some of the concerns from the undergraduate recruitment for 2021/22;
- iii) that Remuneration Committee (RemCo) had been apprised of UCU's rejection of the annual pay settlement and that it was balloting members on strike action (and also on the USS situation);
- iv) that RemCo had approved the Annual Remuneration Report subject to some final inclusions;
- v) that executive performance review dates were being re-aligned to data availability, and future RemCo meeting dates would also reflect this;
- vi) that Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) was particularly keeping close oversight of information security even as there was a move toward less remote working;
- vii) that ARC was in the process of writing its annual report to Council.

COU.21.93 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

Noted: that following the earlier update on the role of University Secretary, members thanked Janet Lloyd for her support and exemplary work in the interim position and wished her the best of luck for the future.

COU.21.94 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Reported:

- i) that the next meeting would be held on Friday 26 November 2021;
- ii) that a meeting following this had been scheduled for Friday 10 December 2021 in case this was needed to consider statutory returns business, but that as soon as was practicable the invitation would be confirmed or released in diaries;
- iii) that members were encouraged to attend the opportunities to visit campus (if comfortable and able);
- iv) that the Chair had attended a tour of campus and was impressed to see the developments underway and to see students back on campus;
- v) that campus tour dates included 15 October, 8 November and 9 November 2021.