

**UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD
COUNCIL
MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON
1 OCTOBER 2009**

Present: Dr A Mawson (Chair)
Mr C Wells (Deputy Chair)
Mr I Austin
Mr T Britten
Prof M Bull
Dr M Burrows
Mr R Chotai
Mr N Collins
Mr P Crompton
Ms L Doyle
Ms F Goodey
Mr J Greenough
Prof M Hall
Cllr B Pennington
Ms C Shaw
Mr M Webber
Mr J Willis

Apologies: Mr J Corner
Mr N Renfrew

In attendance: Dr A A Graves (Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Registrar and Secretary)
Prof G Aouad (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation)
Mr S Attwell (Director of Finance)
Mr K Barnes (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Strategic Partnerships and Development)
Mr F Benton (Executive Director, Estates and Property Services)
Prof S Donnelly (Executive Dean, Faculty of Science, Engineering and Environment)
Mr D Drury (Interim Executive Director, Information and Learning Services)
Prof K Kobbacy (Executive Dean, Faculty of Business, Law and the Built Environment)
Prof G Nicholls (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Academic)
Prof C Pine (Executive Dean, Faculty of Health and Social Care)
Mr M Rollinson (Head of Governance Services and Deputy Secretary)
Mr P Hopwood (Director of Planning and Performance) items COU.09.63 – 65
Mr S Mulholland (Director of Student Information) for item COU.09.61

COU.09.59 MEMBERSHIP (COU/09/44)

Council received the membership list for 2009-10, noting that, following the retirement of Prof R Howard, the election process for an academic member of staff would commence shortly.

COU.09.60 MINUTES (COU/09/45)

The minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2009 were confirmed as a correct record.

COU.09.61 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Council received the report from the Vice-Chancellor. Council noted that:

- i) recruitment panels for the posts set out in the advert appended to the Vice-Chancellor's report had now been established and the selection progress was now progressing;
- ii) the acquisition of the Harold Riley photographic archive was of great value to the University. It was intended that the collection would be digitised; images would be made available to the public at no more than the cost of reproduction;

- iii) the issue of student contact hours had received media attention nationally and regionally in recent months. The matter was under active consideration at the University (for example, the Vice-Chancellor had suggested to Deans that the prospectus could contain minimum contact hours for each programme) and further developments at national, sector wide level were possible;
- iv) improving retention and completion rates continued to receive urgent attention; the Vice-Chancellor advised that the University would build on the work of the current Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic), for example by reforming University academic regulations to make sure that they encouraged good academic behaviour and habits(eg encouraging students not to defer assessment for tactical or trivial reasons);
- v) measures to ensure effective space utilisation continued under the direction of the Executive Director of Estates and Property Services and were integral to the implementation of the University Master Plan(these measures included the potential for co-operation with, and synergy between, local public sector partners in relation to the efficient use of space);

The Vice-Chancellor thanked Mr P Crompton for his hospitality during recent visits to Salford City College campuses – close liaison with colleagues at Salford City College and other FE partners was essential in order to ensure that there was effective integration and continuity of experience for students transferring from colleges to the University.

Council also noted the tabled interim report of the Director of Student Information, which provided an overview of the conversion process (i.e. enquiries, applications and registrations).

COU.09.62 FINANCE REPORT (COU/09/47)

Council considered the report for the Director of Finance noting in particular:

- the underlying surplus of £1.8 million was disappointing and was advised that measures were in hand to improve the situation for future years (e.g. the saving of £7.1m in recurrent staff costs through Project Headroom Phase 1 and the projected Project Headroom Phase 2 non-pay savings). The most recent plan and budget had taken into account potential funding cuts in the order of 9% and the achievement of at least 3% operating surplus (2011-12 represented a potential “pinch year” in the budget as reported to the previous Council meeting).
- although provision had been made for non-completion, the extent of the problem was greater than originally envisaged and that the University was particularly vulnerable to the financial impact of this because of its position at the edge of the HEFCE contract range. Measures to reform Academic Regulations to encourage sound academic behaviour (e.g. reducing number of assessment attempts permitted and discouraging a tactical approach to completion of assessments) had been mentioned in COU.09.61 iv) above and it was anticipated that these would improve the level of completion.
- Council would receive the Financial Statements for 2008/9 which would include the provision deemed necessary to reflect the actual clawback position. The finance report for November will set out the full impact of clawback on the 2008-09 accounts and on the 2009-10 budget (a non-completion rate of 11.1% had been assumed in the budget and the actual non-completion rate could be as high as 20% based on the HEFCE definition). In the meantime, all expenditure against agreed budget would be kept under close scrutiny to ensure a prudent approach was adopted.

Responding to questions, the Director of Finance advised that there were effective central controls over external bids for funding; all bids had to be approved by the Director and progress of submitted and approved bids was monitored closely to ensure costs were allowable and the expected returns delivered. Bids which required funding in excess of

agreed budget would be identified during the approval process. Council noted that the performance objectives for Deans of Faculty and Professors would include a requirement to bid successfully and profitably for external funds.

The Director of Finance reported that the Department for Communities and Local Government had recently issued new guidelines in relation to overhead recovery which potentially put in jeopardy all current European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) projects; the North West Development Agency (NWDA) had frozen all ERDF contracts until the position was clarified (the matter had been raised with HEFCE).

Council noted that the University had reached agreement on detailed sale and purchase and other supporting agreements for the disposal of Crescent Purchasing which was expected to be effective from 1 November 2009; this was in accordance with the Heads of Terms agreement approved by Council on 12 February 2009 and attached to the report.

Council **resolved** to approve the agreements presented for approval and which were available for scrutiny by members at the meeting (the Director of Finance was given authority to agree any final amendments necessary to ensure completion and any required further changes to the disclosure letter and the authority to sign the various agreements on behalf of Council).

COU.09.63 POLICY FOR RISK AND RISK MANAGEMENT (COU/09/48)

Council **resolved** to approve the new Policy for Risk and Risk Management as seen and endorsed by Audit Committee and the University's internal auditors, KPMG.

COU.09.64 RISK REGISTER (COU/09/49)

Council received a report setting out the current top six risks on the corporate Risk Register, noting that the item "University dependence on HEFCE grants" had been moved up the Risk Register because of the increased exposure to HEFCE grant clawback referred to in COU.09.62 above.

Council was advised that the risk of failure of the University's network and ICT services was being addressed in three phases; the initial phase, to stabilise the current infrastructure and remove immediate danger of failure, should be completed by early in the New Year. The remaining two phases would allow for revamping of the infrastructure to ensure that it was fully fit for purpose (this would improve efficiency and reduce maintenance costs) and a strategic analysis to ensure that the University's IT infrastructure and support was fully integrated with mission and strategy. The remaining phases would be completed within 12-18 months. Council agreed that ensuring robust strategic leadership, direction and governance of IT was essential to ensure that the problems that had recently emerged were not repeated. Council was advised that appropriate plans were in place to deal with critical incidents should they develop.

Council was reminded that both the Strategic Leadership Team and Audit Committee received the full Risk Register and that both these bodies monitored the changing status of risks on the Register; local risk registers (e.g. at Faculty and School level) were now being developed and these were helping to underpin the developing understanding of risk across the institution. It was noted that the development of the local risk registers should help to ensure that emerging risks were identified at an early stage. Council received copies of the full Risk Register annually and would continue to ask officers to report on the status of the top six risks at each meeting.

The Vice-Chancellor reported that it was clear from recent discussions with HEFCE at the most senior level that the sector faced an extremely volatile future and that this was likely to impact upon the institutional Risk Register over the next few years.

COU.09.65 OPERATING PERFORMANCE INDICATORS (COU/09/50)

Council received the latest iteration of the Operating Performance Indicators, noting that this would be the last time that it saw the report in its current format; revised Key Performance Indicators linked to the University's developing strategic plan (see COU.09.66 below) would be presented to the next meeting.

Council noted that the missing data in Section 2 (non-continuation rates) should read:

2.1	Full-time First Degree Year 1	16.1%
2.2	Full-time Other Undergraduate Year 1	20.7%

Council noted the much improved performance in relation to the number and value of research grants and contracts secured and congratulated Prof G Aouad (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Research and Innovation) for his achievement in this area. Data relating to UPBEAT and Continuing Professional Development had been removed because of concerns about the quality of data.

Council noted that the TRIBAL benchmarking of activities in different areas of the University was about to recommence and this would allow benchmarking of University staffing levels and resources provided.

The decline in part-time undergraduate numbers was noted; the Vice-Chancellor reported that the recent SLT/Heads of School residential retreat to consider the academic plan had identified the development of part-time provision in key, niche areas as a priority (it was noted that the current national funding regime was not supportive of part-time students).

COU.09.66 VISION, MISSION AND VALUES 2009-10 TO 2017-18

Council noted that the Vision, Mission and Values document was now developing into a full Strategic Plan. The latest iteration incorporated objectives of each Faculty and would be considered at a special meeting of Senate on 7 October; the document would then be presented to Council during the November retreat for scrutiny and approval. Council **resolved** that consideration of the Strategic Plan should be a key element of the agenda for the November retreat.

COU.09.67 COUNCIL ADVISORY GROUP (COU/09/51)

Council received the report of the Council Advisory Group meetings held on 7 August and 16 September 2009 including the reports of Lead Member meetings appended to the report. Council noted the realignment of management functions referred to in the 7 August 2009 report, noting further the revised management structure diagram tabled at the meeting.

Council noted the reference to reducing carbon emissions in the 29 June 2009 Estates Lead Member meeting notes and was advised that Mr K Barnes (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Strategic Partnerships and Development) would be developing a University Sustainability Plan.

COU.09.68 AUDIT COMMITTEE (COU/09/52)

Council received the report from the Audit Committee meeting held on 16 September 2009. Council noted the reference to the Data Quality report which had resulted in a "weak" opinion, primarily as a result of the University's historic failure to comply with HEFCE definitions, specifically in relation to completion and non-completion (see item COU.09.62 above). Council noted the substantial steps taken by the University, in close collaboration with HEFCE officers, to improve processes and procedures in the management of data quality in the University, that the recommendations of the report for further improvement were largely implemented or about to be and that both the internal and external auditors had expressed satisfaction with the University's action and consequent mitigation of risk. Council noted that the internal and external auditors would be consulted on an appropriate form of words to be

used for the opinion on data quality which would need to be included in the Audit Committee Annual Report (to be submitted to the October meeting of the Committee).

Council noted that the Policy for Risk and Risk Management had been approved under item COU.09.63 above and **resolved** that the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2008-09 also be approved.

Council noted further the Internal Audit Strategy and Action Plan as approved by the Committee noting comments that the plan beyond 2009-10 should include provision for review of student accommodation, student support services and overseas student recruitment. SLT had already advised that it wanted to assist the Committee by commenting further on prioritisation and it was agreed that the above comments were helpful, as they would assist the University in assessing the impact of recent changes to accommodation and student services on the overall student experience.

COU.09.69 NOMINATIONS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE (COU/09/53)

Council received the report of the Nomination and Governance Committee meeting held on 16 September 2009. Council **resolved** that the Ordinances which had been approved by the Committee and Strategic Leadership Team be adopted.

Council noted that arrangements for the HEFCE Assurance Review (which would take place on 18 November 2009) were in hand.

COU.09.70 SENATE (COU/09/54)

Council received the report of the special Senate meeting held on 14 September 2009.

COU.09.71 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

1. University House

Council noted that the new Student Life Centre at University House was now open and had been very well received by students; congratulations were offered to all those involved in the development and implementation of the project.

2. Vice-Chancellor's Residence

Council noted that necessary work to the Vice-Chancellor's residence had now been completed and that he was now resident in Salford. The Vice-Chancellor's former residence in Bowdon remained on the market.

COU.09.72 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

27 November 2009 as part of the residential retreat at Hoole Hall, Chester on 26 and 27 November; Council noted that Ms A Johns, Head of Leadership, Governance and Management at HEFCE would be in attendance for part of the retreat.