

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 13 DECEMBER 2024

- Present:** Lord Keith Bradley (Chair), Professor Nic Beech, Phillip Bishop, Dr Tony Coombs, Stephen Gleave, Merlyn Lowther, Professor Peter McDermott, Cllr Theresa Pepper, Adnan Sabir, Nigel Wilcock, and Professor Katherine Yates.
- Via Microsoft Office Teams: Angela Adimora, Professor Dame Susan Bailey, John Bland, Helen Brown, Sara Das, Philip Green, Alan Roff, and Dr Elsa Zekeng [until COU.24.116].
- Apologies:** Alvina Imran, Micheal Omoniyi, Suzanne Robinson, Claire Sproston, and Helen Taylor.
- In attendance:** Professor Simone Buitenijk (Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost via Microsoft – via Microsoft Office Teams), Julie Charge (Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer), Emma French (Chief Academic Services Officer & University Secretary), Jackie Njoroge (Chief Strategy and Data Officer), and Elaine Pateman Salt (committee secretary).
- By invitation:** Huda Agham (student), Sima Almahrous (student), Ebba Brooks (Peer Assisted Learning Manager), Mollie Foster (Head of Advice and Wellbeing, SSU), and Professor Claire Hamshire (Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Experience), [COU.24.104], and Ed Moloney (Chief Executive Officer, Salford Students' Union- via Microsoft Office Teams) [COU.24.105].

COU.24.99 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Noted: that there were no known or newly made declarations of interest pertaining to the agenda.

COU.24.100 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Confirmed: the minutes of the previous meeting held on 18 October 2024 (COU/24/85).

COU.24.101 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Considered: matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

Reported:

- i) that the Director of Legal Services had left the University, and that the undernoted interim University appointments had been made:
 - Head of Campus and Student Life to the Prevent Duty Lead;
 - University Secretary to the Data Protection Officer (DPO) and as company secretary to the subsidiary companies.
- ii) that regarding the Prevent Duty Lead, this had been a reportable event – administrative - to the Office for Students (OfS);
- iii) that an interim appointment to the Director of Legal Services had also been made.

COU.24.102 CONFIRMATION OF STARRED ITEMS

Confirmed:

- i) that Item 23 (Gift Acceptance and Ethical Fundraising Policy; COU/24/106) was approved without discussion; and
- ii) that Item 24 (Use of University Seal; COU/24/107) was noted without discussion.

COU.24.103 CHAIR'S ACTION

Received: a report of Chair's Action taken since the previous meeting regarding approval and submission of the University's annual Prevent Data Return and Accountability Statement to the OfS (COU/24/86).

COU.24.104 STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Received: a presentation on the peer assisted learning pilot (COU/24/87), including a discussion with students of their individual experiences at the University.

Noted:

- i) the collective view that the pilot was a superb initiative;
- ii) that the peer assisted learning (PAL) leaders were provided with extensive training to undertake their roles, including managing personal boundaries and signposting to student support services;
- iii) that the programme was established in the sector and included structured debriefing opportunities;
- iv) that a pilot evaluation report would be compiled, incorporating cost benefit analysis to extend the scheme;
- v) that it had been demonstrated through the programme at other institutions that PAL leaders were attractive to employers;
- vi) that the scheme was accredited, and leaders were able to reference this;
- vii) that there was demonstrable success data available from similar sized institutions who had established the programme;
- viii) that the pilot had been intentionally limited to accurately test the programme at the University, and particularly to ensure that timetabled events could be accommodated;
- ix) the view that there were significant opportunities offered by the programme for all levels of student study and research;
- x) that the PAL leaders were able to network with their counterparts in other institutions, and potentially it was hoped with international institutions;
- xi) that the offer was not compulsory for students, but that by timetabling events it became less desirable for students to 'opt out';
- xii) that also, ambassadors of the programme promoted it during Welcome Week;
- xiii) that 30% was seen as a satisfactory level of participation in the programme, and that following an initial drop in participants there had been an increasing back to around that level;
- xiv) that the renewal in participation coincided with assessment deadlines which demonstrated the impact potential of the programme;
- xv) that the gender representation of PAL leaders was broadly balanced between males and females;

- xvi) that there had intentionally been targeted diverse recruitment to the PAL roles to facilitate diverse leadership;
- xvii) that the NHS also used the acronym 'PALS' for their patient advice and liaison services;
- xviii) that the University was aware of this and had carefully adjusted the pilot branding;
- xix) that the Chair thanked the guest attendees for their engaging presentation, and the students for sharing their experiences of being PAL leaders.

COU.24.105 UNIVERSITY OF SALFORD STUDENTS' UNION CONSTITUTION

Considered: on the recommendation of University Leadership Team, the Memorandum and Articles of Association for Salford Students' Union (COU/24/88).

Reported:

- i) that Salford Students' Union (SSU) Board of Trustees had approved the refreshed Articles at its meeting in September 2024;
- ii) that Student Union members had also had the opportunity to meet, and had approved the revisions;
- iii) that the substantive proposed change was removal of the student council as a formal construct, with a focus instead on greater and wider access for all members;
- iv) that this proposal had been a key outcome of SSU's democracy review;
- v) that the experience of, and since, the Covid-19 pandemic on student engagement with their Union had demonstrated need for change in democratic process.

Noted:

- i) that the introduction of the Policy Book was in its infancy but was hoped to become an agent for change;
- ii) that the SSU remained focused engaging with its members, including for example, exploring use of artificial intelligence (AI) features to facilitate student representation, identify trends or gaps in student experience, and to develop policy;
- iii) that the Chair recognised the significant work undertaken to reach the proposal and thanked all those involved in the SSU's democracy review and refresh of the governing instruments.

RESOLVED: that the Articles of Association for the University of Salford Students' Union (t/a Salford Students' Union) be approved and adopted with immediate effect.

COU.24.106 ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY RETURN REQUIREMENTS OVERVIEW

Received: an overview of the University's annual accountability return requirements under the terms and conditions of funding for higher education institutions, to the Office for Students for the financial year-ending 31 July 2024 (COU/24/89).

COU.24.107 ANNUAL INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT CLOSED MINUTE

Received: on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, the annual Internal Audit Report for 2023/24, produced by PwC (COU/24/90).

Reported:

- i) that PwC's risk opinion – - redacted - was unchanged from the previous annual report;
- ii) that ten internal audits had been undertaken during 2023/24, with two resulting in a 'high risk' outcome – redacted - ;
- iii) that a follow-up audit had been conducted on the management actions taken following the – redacted - internal audit and had demonstrated considerable progress;
- iv) that Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) had requested a thematic analysis in the Report, and PwC had noted two key themes- redacted - ;
- v) that where applicable, the use of student focus groups had been established as part of internal audit process which had been welcomed by ARC;
- vi) that also an effective management action tracking tool had been implemented.

Noted: that ARC were assured PwC remained sufficiently independent to the University and were able to provide robust challenge.

COU.24.108 ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE REPORT CLOSED MINUTE

Considered: on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, the annual Health and Safety Committee Report for 2023/24 (COU/24/91).

Reported:

- i) that – redacted - ;
- ii) that – redacted -.

Noted:

- i) that data insight had shown age, and the role performed impacted on physical sickness, but that mental health impacts could be seen across all demographics;
- ii) that the Health and Safety Committee reviewed extensive data to establish statistical relevance;
- iii) the view that the absence interventions provided by the University were predominantly reactive, and that the University might seek proactive prevention to illness particularly taking learning from the post-Covid culture;
- iv) that the Health and Safety Committee was seeking to extend its terms to include wellbeing and to refresh its approach as described;
- v) that the Report indicated significant health and safety risks were under control, - redacted -;
- vi) that a refresh of the University's framework of leave policies had been undertaken during the year, to provide and ensure consistency and flexibility in the approach to absence;
- vii) that also the University had provided support activities under its policy on the menopause.

RESOLVED: that the Health and Safety Committee Report for 2023/24 be approved.

COU.24.109 ANNUAL AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE REPORT CLOSED MINUTE

Considered: on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, its annual report to Council for 2023/24 (COU/24/92).

Reported:

- i) that – redacted - ;
- ii) that ARC had undertaken two extensive ‘deep dives’ into culture risk, and AI risks in the sector;
- iii) that tender processes for internal and external audit services had been successfully undertaken during 2023/24, - redacted -
- iv) that value for money had been reflected upon in the section on efficiency and effectiveness, and had been thematic in several of the internal audits undertaken;
- v) that ARC had been assured by the University’s use of data analytics to support production of its end-of-year reports;
- vi) that the Chair of ARC thanked committee members and University officers for their attendance and contribution to committee meetings.

RESOLVED: that the Audit and Risk Committee Report for 2023/24 be approved, and the opinion of the Committee accepted.

COU.24.110 ANNUAL REMUNERATION REPORT

Received: on the recommendation of Remuneration Committee, the annual Remuneration Report for 2023/24 (COU/24/93).

COU.24.111 OFFICE FOR STUDENTS ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY RETURNS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION CLOSED MINUTE

Considered: on the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee, the evidence for the University’s financial statements to be considered on a ‘going concern’ basis (COU/24/94).

Reported:

- i) that evidence was provided to confirm the University was able to trade for the next 12 months from today (the date of approval of the financial statements);
- ii) that included in the Report were a range of financial scenarios demonstrating how the University might mitigate against, or be impacted by, financial adversity;
- iii) that – redacted - .

Noted:

- i) that the OfS had published a report of financial sustainability in the sector, and that the University’s position was commended, recognising those involved in driving and achieving successful financial outcomes;
- ii) that however, the Finance and Resources Committee (FRC) was not complacent in the matter of sustainability and was undertaking checks on forecast assumptions;
- iii) that the University was not immune to the more extreme financial scenarios put forward by the OfS, and the view that FRC was right to monitor analysis of sensitivities;
- iv) that pay as percentage of income had – redacted -
- v) that the – redacted -
- vi) that the cost impact of space utilisation was being considered, for example in the co-location of staff and decant planning for buildings reaching their ‘end of-life’;
- vii) that also a new timetabling system was anticipated to bring benefit to effective space utilisation;

- viii) that no formal correlation had been established between staff health data and space utilisation at this time;
- ix) that the University well understood its position on low space utilisation but expected the effects of the Campus Connectivity Plan to take place over several years alongside 'quick fixes' that could be achieved more easily.

RESOLVED: that the financial statements for the financial year ending 31 July 2024 be approved on a 'going concern' basis.

COU.24.112 OFFICE FOR STUDENTS ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY RETURNS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Considered: on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, the Integrated Report; Financial Statements for the financial year ending 31 July 2024 (COU/24/95).

Reported:

- i) that the Integrated Report had been prepared under a single narrative thread: 'collaborative advantage';
- ii) that there was insignificant difference between the audited financial statements and the quarter four position reported to Council in October 2024;
- iii) that however, movements were required to be detailed and addressed and were appended.

Noted:

- i) that the measurement for valuing innovation did not match between the sections on strategy and performance.
- ii) that the Chair thanked members of FRC and ARC for their detailed scrutiny and challenge of the components of the annual accountability returns;
- iii) that the Report continued to be developed year-on-year and the view that it had further improved in each iteration.

RESOLVED:

- i) that the Integrated Report; Financial Statements for the financial year ending 31 July 2024 be approved, subject to amendment of the measurement for valuing innovation;
 - ii) that the Chair of Council, Vice-Chancellor, and Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer sign the Financial Statements on behalf of the Council;
 - iii) that a note of thanks be issued to those involved in production of the Report.
- ACTION i): DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE AND CHIEF FINANCE OFFICER**
ACTION iii): CHIEF ACADEMIC SERVICES OFFICER & UNIVERSITY SECRETARY

COU.24.113 OFFICE FOR STUDENTS ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY RETURNS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Considered: on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, the external auditor's draft Audit Highlights Memorandum and Management Letter (COU/24/96).

Reported:

- i) that no issues had been raised by KPMG in the control of significant risks to the University;

- ii) that however, members were reminded of their duties in providing signed and dated declarations of interests in order that the management recommendation be implemented fully next year;
- iii) that – redacted - ;
- iv) that since the Report had been published, KPMG had confirmed the Memorandum was the final – not draft – version.

Noted: that KPMG were thanked for addressing issues of accessibility in this year's Memorandum, notably in the use of coloured backgrounds and text colour.

RESOLVED: that the Audit Highlights Memorandum and Management Letter be noted, and authority given to submit the final version to the Office for Students as part of the annual accountability returns by the due date.

COU.24.114 OFFICE FOR STUDENTS ANNUAL ACCOUNTABILITY RETURNS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Considered: on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, the University Management Representation Letter (COU/24/97).

Noted: the view of the Chair that the Letter represented and recognised the high quality and strength of the University's financial team.

RESOLVED:

- i) that the University Management Representation Letter be approved;
- ii) that the Letter be signed by the Chair of Council on behalf of the Council.

COU.24.115 SUBSIDIARY COMPANIES

Considered: on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee, University of Salford Enterprises (USE) Ltd audit exemption under Section 479A of the Companies Act (COU/24/98).

RESOLVED:

- i) that the guarantee of liabilities of USE at 31 July 2024 be confirmed;
- ii) that the University Secretary be authorised to confirm this guarantee on behalf of the Council and University.

COU.24.116 UNIVERSITY STRATEGY

Considered: on the recommendation of the University Leadership Team, the University Strategy 2025 – 2030 (COU/24/99).

(Secretary's note: the top-level equality impact assessment (EIA) to inform the detailed EIAs for underlying delivery plans of the University Strategy was approved ahead of the considerations: EIA2024-55).

Reported:

- i) that the proposal represented consultation with approximately two thousand stakeholders, and built on the key focuses of the University;

- ii) that the proposal was purposefully short with high-level key performance indicators (KPIs), and that this would enable detailed delivery plans and metrics to underpin the strategic ambitions;
- iii) that work was underway to move towards strategic delivery, including through cultural change;
- iv) that the University's purpose was stated as '*innovating to enrich lives*';
- v) that there would be a single resource for hosting of the strategic delivery plans, alongside a single basket of KPIs and output measures.

Noted:

- i) that in the case of the goal for social mobility, the University had already achieved its desired outcome but would need to retain a high-ranking position;
- ii) that the Colleague Engagement Survey had provided data to measure the University's cultural change against, and that a 'pulse survey' was scheduled for January 2025;
- iii) the view that the document was inspiring, clear, and concise, and that the language used should be evident in the content of all future reports and proposals;
- iv) the view that where applicable the external version of the document be flexible in its language to link to Government policy, including contribution to economic growth;
- v) that it was intended to publish a 'one-page' public version of the Strategy;
- vi) the view that the proposed Strategy demonstrated the University's ambition and confidence, and provided enough detail to distil accountability across the institution;
- vii) the view that this iteration recognisably linked to the historic values of the University;
- viii) that the term 'social justice' had been used to broadly describe improving student outcomes in the context of the University;
- ix) that the University was seeking to be deliberately inclusive and to construct a systemic approach to equity;
- x) that this approach mirrored social justice themes of local communities, donors, and research funding;
- xi) that incentivisation towards improving behaviour and culture might include such processes as, for example, academic promotion;
- xii) that colleagues and students would be able to 'click through' component parts of the Strategy using the internal website to further understand meaning and attendant delivery plans.

RESOLVED:

- i) that the University Strategy 2025-2030 be approved, subject to development of the language and delivery plans as described;
- ii) that the report on the University's interpretation and delivery of 'social justice' being prepared for the Senate be also shared with Council.

ACTION ii): DEPUTY VICE-CHANCELLOR & PROVOST

COU.24.117 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Received: a report from the Vice-Chancellor on key strategic activities of the University (COU/24/100).

Reported:

- i) that since the Report had been published, the University had been confirmed as securing fifth place in the Higher Education Policy Institute (HEPI) Social Mobility Index 2024;
- ii) that work had been undertaken on the collaborative relationship between the University and local Further Education (FE) colleges, including careers and employment events, and in the case of Salford City College, providing temporary classroom space.

Noted:

- i) that the Chair noted the significant external engagement and influence of the Vice-Chancellor which allowed him to put forward the view of the University externally;
- ii) the view that the University's social responsibility mission and values appeared to be aligning with emerging Government policy.

(Secretary's note: a copy of the refreshed structure chart for the University Leadership Team was circulated following the meeting).

COU.24.118 SENATE REPORT

Received: a report of the meeting of Senate held on 26 November 2024 (COU/24/101).

Reported: that a new academic calendar for 2025-26 had been approved and that the consultation on this and the mitigation on impacts of the calendar were well received by Senate.

COU.24.119 GOVERNANCE, NOMINATIONS AND ETHICS COMMITTEE REPORT

Received: a report regarding the Committee meeting held on 28 November from the Chair of Governance, Nominations and Ethics Committee (COU/24/102).

COU.24.120 STANDING COMMITTEES OF COUNCIL

Considered: on the recommendation of the Governance, Nominations and Ethics Committee (COU/24/103):

- amendments to the terms of reference for Audit and Risk Committee and Governance, Nominations and Ethics Committee (GNEC), and Finance and Resources Committee;
- amendments to the footnotes on the relationships between the standing committees; and
- increases in the constitution for Audit and Risk Committee and Finance and Resources Committee.

Reported: that the adjustments to the terms for ARC and GNEC related to a mapping against the Committee of University Chairs (CUC) Code for Audit Committees regarding safeguarding and Prevent Duty, whistleblowing, and the University's statement on modern slavery.

Noted: that the Chair thanked the governance team for the work to ensure governance matters were coherent across the terms of reference for standing committees of Council.

RESOLVED:

- i) that adjustments to the Audit and Risk Committee and Governance, Nominations and Ethics Committee regarding ethical compliance and oversight be approved;
- ii) that clarification to Term 4 of the Finance and Resources Committee regarding recommendation of capital plans to Council be approved;
- iii) that amendments to the footnotes used in the terms of reference for Audit and Risk Committee, Finance and Resources Committee, and Governance, Nominations and Ethics Committee be approved;
- iv) that increases in the appointed independent members in the constitution of Audit and Risk Committee and the constitution of Finance and Resources Committee be approved.

COU.24.121 REMUNERATION COMMITTEE REPORT

Received: a report regarding the Committee meeting held on 28 November 2024 from the acting Chair of Remuneration Committee (COU/24/104).

COU.24.122 AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE REPORT

Received: a report regarding the Committee meeting held on 15 November from the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee (COU/24/105).

Reported:

- i) that the Chair of ARC thanked FRC members for their counsel and contributions to the first part of the ARC meeting on 15 November 2024;
- ii) that the internal audit follow up on Health and Safety had resulted in fewer recommendations being identified, showing the University's progress in this area;
- iii) that University staff cyber training rates had been reported at 98.5% compliance.

COU.24.123 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Reported: that no other items of business had been notified to the Chair.

COU.24.124 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

Noted: that the next meeting was scheduled for Friday 17 January 2025.