

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 17 JANUARY 2025

- Present:** Lord Keith Bradley (Chair), Angela Adimora, Professor Dame Susan Bailey [via Microsoft Office Teams], Professor Nic Beech, Phillip Bishop, John Bland, Dr Tony Coombs, Sara Das, Stephen Gleave, Philip Green, Alvina Imran, Merlyn Lowther, Professor Peter McDermott, Councillor Theresa Pepper, Alan Roff, Adnan Sabir, Claire Sproston, Helen Taylor, Nigel Wilcock, Professor Katherine Yates, and Dr Elsa Zekeng.
- Apologies:** Helen Brown, Suzanne Robinson, and Micheal Ominiya.
- In attendance:** Professor Simone Buitenkamp (Deputy Vice-Chancellor & Provost), Julie Charge (Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer), Jackie Njoroge (Chief Strategy and Data Officer), and Elaine Pateman Salt (committee secretary). M. Green (observing).
- By invitation:** Philip Beswick (student), Racheal Davies (Support Progression Advisor), Erin Dixon (student), Gemma Lace (Associate Dean, Academic Student Experience (SEE)), and Will Steele (Student Voice Coordinator, Salford Student Union) [COU.25.04], Professor Vish Maheshwari (interim Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Experience) [COU.25.09], and Dr Pradeep Passi (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Social Justice and Equity) and Cath Prescott (Head of EDI Culture Change) [COU.25.10; COU.25.11].

COU.25.01 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Noted: that there were no new declarations of interest pertaining to the agenda.

COU.25.02 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Confirmed: the minutes of the previous meeting held on 13 December 2024 (COU/25/01).

COU.25.03 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

Noted:

- i) that there were no matters arising from the minutes not covered elsewhere on the agenda;
- ii) that regarding the proceedings, Item 6: Student Experience would be taken first to accommodate guest attendance.

COU.25.04 STUDENT EXPERIENCE

Received: a video presentation (in advance) on the University's student course representatives followed by discussion with course representatives on their experiences of academic governance.

Noted:

- i) that volunteering to be a representative was time consuming but that those involved accepted the additional time required in view of their commitment to caring for their fellow students;
- ii) that wherever possible, the School of Science, Engineering and Environment (SSEE) tried to identify and follow up with students not participating in social or extra-curricular activities;
- iii) that SSEE had been triangulating success in student support with qualitative data from the National Student Survey (NSS) and attrition data;
- iv) that one attrition example had been drop-out from the white, male demographic citing University as not suitable for them, and in response SSEE had introduced social events to appeal to future cohorts;
- v) that a particularly successful and well-attended event was the 'culture shock' event aimed primarily at international students who had moved country;
- vi) that the student representatives collaborated on event and data analysis to find new ways to reach less engaged and potentially vulnerable students;
- vii) the view that the input of the representatives and analysis of the events provided were both invaluable in shaping a focus on future students and to better understand the needs of those incoming to the University;
- viii) that the Chair highlighted the contribution of all student representatives who voluntarily gave their time and thanked the guest attendees for their presentation.

COU.25.05 CONFIRMATION OF STARRED ITEMS

Confirmed:

- i) that Item 18 (Treasury Management Policy; COU/25/11) was approved without discussion; and
- ii) that Item 19 (Use of University Seal; COU/25/12) was noted without discussion.

(Secretary's note: the items had been incorrectly numbered on the published agenda but corrected here).

COU.25.06 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Received: an oral report from the Vice-Chancellor on key strategic activities of the University.

Reported:

- i) that the University has successfully increased its position from 15th to 8th in the People and Planet's University League;
- ii) that the University was pleased to now be in the top ten institutions taking part as sustainability was a key theme in the University Strategy, but would seek to ensure that a 'real difference' in this area was delivered;
- iii) that the current financial status of the sector was becoming clear as financial reports were submitted to the Office for Students (OfS) and made public, including that approximately 70% of institutions were reporting being in deficit in terms of operating days by cash reserves;
- iv) that the University was not in a deficit position, but had to be prudent and give regard to its financial sustainability due to increasing costs and competitive revenues;

- v) that staff costs had – redacted - and that this had been part of the deliberative social justice campaign;
- vi) that University Leadership Team (ULT) had undertaken their first visit to the University's further education (FE) 'feeder' colleges – Hopwood College – and was to work towards a mutual partnership in the mission to create collaborative advantage and remove perception of 'hierarchical' relationships between FE and higher education (HE);
- vii) that the visit had included meeting the senior team and college students, and that ULT had particularly noted learning to be taken from the College's expertise in special education needs and disabilities (SEND) provision, including preparing students for transition from FE to HE providers;
- viii) that future relationship activities would include career outreach, via higher education pathways but also other routes;
- ix) that placemaking activities since the previous report had included the planning application for an acoustics building – which had received good publicity – and the progressing construction phases for the Health and Society clinic and Greater Manchester Institute of Technology (GMIoT);
- x) that there had been very productive engagement between the University and Salford Students' Union in the writing of the Union's policy book, which was also expected to be important to the strategic delivery plan for education;
- xi) that student voice had been incorporated in the Winter graduation ceremonies through alumni speeches, and that this had been well received and would continue in future planning;
- xii) that members of ULT had undertaken the University's new allyship training including the majority attending the drama-based session which had been a powerful experience;
- xiii) that in the previous few days, the Government had announced unpausing implementation of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act subject to pursuing minor revisions that were not substantive to the University's current policy and procedures;
- xiv) that the OfS had announced approval to the undernoted changes in University title
 - a) University of Bolton to the University of Greater Manchester;
 - b) University of Central Lancashire - or UCLan - to the University of Lancashire.

Noted:

- i) that a number of voluntary employment severance schemes at institutions were public knowledge as the sector sought to develop sustainability;
- ii) that there was no indication at this time that staff or students were being incentivised away from the University;
- iii) that, rather, the highly competitive environment in Clearing was a greater risk to student recruitment;
- iv) that there was public discussion of the potential scenarios for merger or acquisition in the sector;
- v) that the University's focus remained on delivery of its mission and its established network of partners.

Received: on the recommendation of the University Leadership Team, a detailed report on educational sustainability (student recruitment, progression, and continuation). Also included was the University's performance against lead indicators during Quarter 1 2024/25 (COU/25/02).

Reported:

- i) that an example of a contributing factor to financial stability in the sector could be seen in Table 1: Change in UK UCAS acceptance data [pg. 02/6];
- ii) that regarding student enrolment, the University was not growing significantly but was matching previous cohort intake levels and that this was not true across the sector;
- iii) that there had been a small – redacted –;
- iv) that the University was – redacted – ;
- v) that following initial recruitment it was important to ensure students were retained, and that the Report demonstrated improvements in progression between Level 4 (undergraduate first year) and Level 5 (undergraduate second year);
- vi) that risk factors to successful progression included intake via Clearing, and recruitment via vocational routes.

Noted:

- i) that the University was pursuing options to diversify, such as degree apprenticeship provision, online delivery provision, and international undergraduate programmes;
- ii) that the financial impact of not retaining students for three-year programmes could quickly escalate to a risk;
- iii) that a range of financial scenarios had been – and would continue to be – ‘stress-tested’ at Finance and Resources Committee (FRC);
- iv) that the University's performance was resilient compared to the sector;
- v) that undergraduate recruitment remained the University's largest market;
- vi) that the University was seeking to understand its success in international recruitment, which might include location (Manchester being an attractive destination), and the University's supportive international payment terms;
- vii) that the University and College Admission Service (UCAS) application deadline was imminent, and was earlier this year than normal;
- viii) that student number planning for the 2026 intake was underway;
- ix) that the key performance indicators and future performance reports would be re-aligned to the refreshed University Strategy;
- x) the view that it would be reassuring for Council to receive data and early analysis on recruitment performance at the point of UCAS deadline;
- xi) that in particular, contextual information for members for example on demographic and disciplinary trends would be welcome;
- xii) that higher rates of absenteeism were being experienced across education leading to different education experiences and outcomes, and that a vibrant job market, and development of degree apprenticeship programmes were all factors impacting on recruitment to full-time graduate study from the increased 18-year-old demographic;
- xiii) that information on the detail and ‘push’ of the Government's lifelong learning entitlement had still not come forward, but that the University was developing micro credentials in anticipation of future opportunity;
- xiv) that the postgraduate taught (PGT) programme portfolio was to be redefined through the new education plan;
- xv) that also, distance and part-time learning was being developed;

- xvi) that course withdrawal was governed by the Competitions and Markets Authority (CMA) and that the University had noticeably clear procedures to ensure it was compliant with contractual obligations, including not advertising a course as available to future applicants;
- xvii) that however, closing a programme whereby a teaching unit might also be closed was a rigorous process that required consultation and significant consideration through academic and corporate governance structures;
- xviii) that an instance of a recent course withdrawal had been processed late with a very small number of applicants being affected (provided with an alternative offer), and that the University had taken a number of actions from a 'lessons learnt' review;
- xix) that the cost impact to the University of a percentage increase or decrease in student recruitment was fiscally significant;
- xx) the view that a breakthrough in the relationship between the University and its provider institutions was welcomed;
- xxi) the view that the University should be assured it had demonstrated experience in apprenticeship provision through receipt of the Good rated Ofsted report, and could now push forward in development of the programmes;
- xii) that the University offered a loyalty discount scheme for its students to undertake postgraduate study but that review of the scheme was due;
- cxiii) that 15 scholarships were available annually for doctoral research, and that thanks to a legacy gift the Summer Research School cohort was to be increased which opened research opportunities for students.

COU.25.08 SENATE REPORT

Received: an oral report of the special meeting of Senate held on 08 January 2025.

Reported:

- i) that a single item meeting had been convened to consider the delivery plan for the education strategy, and that Senate had conducted a robust debate of the plan detail;
- ii) that collaboration with academic colleague in the development of the delivery project plan had been particularly commended by the members;
- iii) that also, there had been a general view that greater financial investment in existing implementation of interactive learning techniques would be welcomed;
- iv) that the delivery plan had received a high-level of support and was well received by members, noting the focus on student engagement and support.

COU.25.09 UNIVERSITY STRATEGY: EDUCATION

Received: on the recommendation of the Senate, the strategic delivery plan for education (COU/25/03).

Noted:

- i) the view that the delivery plan demonstrated a clear ethos for students from diverse backgrounds and experiences to flourish;
- ii) the view that, regarding support for academic staff who might struggle to transition to a refreshed culture and approach, that a greater coaching infrastructure might be made available to support the major change project;

- iii) the view also, that consideration might be given to supporting incoming students to transition across multiple cultural differences, but particularly the change from transactional academic experience to an interactive learning environment; or understanding on what the institution was attempting to deliver as an educational experience;
- iv) that the University had taken learning from the coaching system put in place to support students on apprenticeship programmes, and the effect this had on student engagement;
- v) that the University was committed to co-creation and co-championing of the delivery plan implementation project, and that this would be demonstrated through iterative updates to Council;
- vi) that it was expected cultural change would take time to effect;
- vii) that the Learning, Teaching and Enhancement Centre (LTEC) was expected to play a significant role in supporting academic colleagues through the implementation;
- viii) the view that delivery would require re-assessment of the forecast investment for delivery of a traditional curriculum;
- ix) the view that the plan was inspiring, and that consideration should be given to quick implementation despite the challenges this brought, and that the University had an opportunity to be a transformative leader in the Sector;
- x) the view that there was complexity in delivering the plan and particularly implementation at a time where complexity already existed, and that a 'starting point' might be established;
- xi) that the wholehearted thanks and ongoing support from the Members were given to Senate in strategic delivery of the education plan.

COU.25.10 EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSIVITY ANNUAL REPORT

Considered: on the recommendation of the University Leadership Team, the annual report of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity at the University - 'Delivering Change at Salford' (COU/25/04).

Noted: the view that references to the University Strategy should be central to the narrative.

RESOLVED: that the Equality Report 2024 be approved subject to the undernoted:

- a) inclusion of a joint introductory statement of the Chair of Council, Vice-Chancellor, and President of Salford Students' Union; and
- b) final approval of the design-version for publication be delegated to the Chair of Council.

ACTION a): PRO VICE-CHANCELLOR, SOCIAL JUSTICE AND EQUITY
ACTION b): CHAIR

COU.25.11 EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSIVITY

Received: on the recommendation of the University Leadership Team, a report on the University's progress in its Equity, Diversity, and Inclusivity Statement of Ambition (COU/25/05).

Noted:

- i) that the report included the first complete year of data, and that the team were now able to prioritise interventions;
- ii) that the student metrics for equitable outcomes were not on track towards the goals set;
- iii) that intersectionality with entry routes could potentially be impacting on course progression, and that also socioeconomic status was being investigated;
- iv) that it was anticipated the strategic delivery plan for education would help address some of the challenges being faced by students under the Statement of Ambition;
- v) that a 'co-review' would take place across interventions made in each area;
- vi) the view that postgraduate research (PGR) students should be included as a cohort under consideration of cultural change.

COU.25.12 **FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE REPORT**

Received: a report regarding the recent Committee meeting from the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee (COU/25/06).

COU.25.13 **QUARTERLY FINANCE REPORT CLOSED MINUTE**

Received: on the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee, the Quarter 1 2024/25 Quarterly Finance Report (COU/25/07).

Reported:

- i) that the – redacted -
- ii) that several announcements from Government had affected the University's financial position, including increases to employer national insurance contributions and increase in tuition fees for undergraduate programmes;
- iii) that however, - redacted - ;
- iv) that – redacted - ;
- v) that the University had explored listing options for Centenary House with English Heritage, but that a listed status had not been justified following a detailed review;
- vi) that there was potential for further negative press coverage on the decision to demolish Centenary House;
- vii) that both buildings posed additional security risks and that being structurally unsound also created significant risk to public safety, with Old Adelphi building requiring external scaffolding as risk mitigation;
- viii) that Higher Education institutions (HEIs), including the University, had published fiscal reports for 2024 and that a detailed sector analysis was being prepared.

Noted:

- i) that research grant bidding was conducted by a small cohort at the University, and that previous successful grant terms were being fulfilled by that cohort leading to a decline in new research income grants for a second successive year;
- ii) that the new appointment to the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Enterprise role had taken up position in late December and was taking up development of the strategic delivery plan for research;
- iii) that research grant income was only one indicator of success in this area;
- iv) that preparations were underway towards the Research Excellence Framework (REF) exercises due in 2029 and 2036;

- v) that education was research-led and the University's research capacity and output needed to develop alongside the education delivery plan.

COU.25.14 ANNUAL FINANCIAL RETURN WORKBOOK AND COMMENTARY

Considered: on the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee, the annual Financial Return Workbook and Financial Commentary submitted to the Office for Students (COU/25/08).

Reported: that the data in the submission was an amalgamation of previous reports that had been received and approved by Council, alongside commentary to explain any variances.

RESOLVED: that the Annual Financial Return Workbook and Commentary submitted to the Office for Students be ratified.

COU.25.15 ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY ANNUAL REPORT

Received, on the recommendation of the Finance and Resources Committee, the University's annual report of its environmental sustainability (COU/25/09).

COU.25.16 GRANT FUNDING CLOSED MINUTE

Received: an oral update on the University's compliance processes to meet conditions of grant funding.

Reported:

- i) that the – redacted - grant funding was an example of the capital funding sought by the University to assist with its ambitions under the Campus Connectivity Plan and The Crescent development under the private sector partnership between English Cities Fund and Salford City Council;
- ii) that funding opportunities had been provided by the Conservative Government as part of its devolved Levelling Up fund programme, prior to it being voted out of power;
- iii) that another example of capital grant funding pursued by the University had been through the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to – redacted -
- iv) that capital grants included conditions relating to expenditure deadlines, build deadlines, and clauses relating to financial 'clawback' to the public purse;
- v) that inevitably, a level of risk was involved to comply with conditions put in place, but that the University had taken learning from each major grant and had demonstrated its abilities to meet the criteria.

Noted:

- i) the view that the implementation of grant agreements centred on the strength of the partnership between the parties involved;
- ii) that the Finance and Resources Committee received assurances on the delivery of capital projects through detailed monitoring reports to each meeting, including monitoring compliance with specific conditions and the project expenditure profile;
- iii) the view that capital projects were by their nature complex;

- iv) that in the case of 'fast moving' contract negotiations requiring Council approval, the Chair of Council worked closely with the Executive and Chairs of Finance and Resources Committee and Audit and Risk Committee to take the appropriate action or to seek appropriate delegation from members to act;
- v) the collective view that proper powers and pragmatic processes were in place to conclude negotiations for grant terms.

COU.25.17 **CAPITAL GRANT FUNDING AGREEMENT CLOSED MINUTE**

Considered: the Capital Grant Agreement with – redacted - toward the building of the – redacted - facility (COU/25/10).

- Sections 1 to 4 wholly redacted -

5 Resolved

5.1 After due and careful consideration and taking into account their duties and obligations as charity trustees and the Charter, Statutes and Ordinances of the University, and considering the best interests of the University, it was duly resolved by the Council that:

5.1.1 the terms and conditions of, and the transactions contemplated by, the Documents, be and are hereby approved;

5.1.2 all powers, authorities and discretions of the Council be delegated to the Authorised Individuals, being Emma French, Chief Academic Services Officer and University Secretary and Julie Charge, Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer, as may be necessary for the authorisation of all acts, matters or documents in connection with the entry into the Grant Agreement including, but not limited to:

- (i) authority to negotiate and finalise the Grant Agreement and any other ancillary documents required to give effect to the Grant Agreement;
- (ii) authority to sign and deliver on behalf of the University the Documents with such amendments thereto as they may, in their absolute discretion, think fit and where any such Documents are to be executed as a deed that such document be executed as a deed by the University by the affixing of the seal by the Chief Academic Services Officer and University Secretary and the Deputy Chief Executive and Chief Finance Officer;
- (iii) authority for any one of the Authorised Individuals to:

(A) do all such things including the execution of documents, certificates and notices in such form and including such amendments as they (acting jointly and severally), in their absolute discretion, see fit and to provide further confirmation to any party involved with the Grant Agreement as is necessary or desirable to give effect to the Grant Agreement;

(B) to issue a certificate setting out the name and signature of each of the persons authorised to execute the Documents and all such undertakings, statements, certificates, notices, acknowledgements and other documents as may be required to be

done, signed and executed by or on behalf of the University in connection with the Documents pursuant to the foregoing resolutions; and

(C) to certify as true a copy of any other document a true copy of which is to be delivered by the University pursuant to or in connection with the Documents, each such certificate to be in such form as such person may in their absolute discretion think fit.

COU.25.18 **ANY OTHER BUSINESS**

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

COU.25.19 **DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

Noted: that the next meeting was scheduled on Friday 11 April 2025.