

COUNCIL



Loughborough
University

Minutes of the meeting of 21 March 2024

COUN24-M1

Attendance

Christine Hodgson

Kerri Akiwowo
Penny Briscoe
Graham Corfield (ab)
Andrea Davis
Tarek Hassan
Naomi Hudson
Matthew Inglis

Nick Jennings
Chris Linton
Jennifer Maxwell-Harris
Nicky Morgan
Emma Nadin
Molly Page
David Price
Surinder Sharma

John Sinnott
Luke Stott
Paul Taylor
Mark Thurston
Mike Wedderburn
Georgia Whelan
Sheryl Williams

In attendance: Jo Maher; Alex Owen; Dan Parsons; Richard Taylor; Rachel Thomson;
Luke Vulpiani

Apologies received from: Graham Corfield

24/1 Declaration of Interests

Nicky Morgan declared that her position as a director of the East Midlands Institute of Technology had finished and that she is a non-executive director at Santander who the University has an account with.

24/2 Minutes & Matters Arising

2.1 Minutes

COUN24-M1

Council **CONFIRMED** the minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2023.

2.2 Matters Arising

The Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Core Plan that was expected to come to Council in March is now expected in June.

Council members have been sent an online questionnaire for the Effectiveness Review which they are asked to complete as their input to the review is essential.

24/3 Chair's Report

Item 20 on the agenda, Ordinance XXXV – Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure, had been unstarred following a request from a member of Council.

SECTION A – Items for Discussion

24/4 University Finances

COUN24-P1

4.1 Financial Update

COUN24-P1

Council **CONSIDERED** the current financial position for the 2023/24 financial year and **APPROVED** the Q3 forecast based on the recommendation of Finance Committee.

Council noted that not having more than two years of consecutive deficits was a Council KPI but also central to the institution's financial sustainability and the fulfilment of Council's fiduciary duties.

Council considered current student recruitment, marketing activities and resource allocation. Home recruitment remains strong, with falls in international students across the Higher Education sector, although this is nuanced by country and there are some signs of recovery in Chinese market. The first year of the Private Pathway Provider at Loughborough has provided more than 200 international students on campus and it is expected 90% will become undergraduate students.

A new marketing campaign will be launched at the end of March 2024 focussed on raising the University's global profile through advertising, digital content and media coverage. The campaign will target a range of audiences, including academics, employers, policymakers and prospective postgraduate students, to encourage them to study, partner or work with Loughborough.

Council asked the University to report to Council on the University's Marketing Strategy and how this translates into student numbers.

4.1 Financial Sustainability Update

COUN24-P1a

Council **CONSIDERED** matters arising from financial sustainability considerations in the context of a decline in international students across the Higher Education Sector, alongside flat tuition fees for home undergraduates and a rising cost base.

Investment in the Strategy's Core Plans were due in-part to be funded by an increase in international students. Loughborough has significant cash reserves, which creates a stable basis for planning future sustainability. Cash reserve holding levels are considered by Finance Committee in order to ensure appropriate levels are maintained. There may be opportunities as well as risks in the current situation and it is important to be positioned to benefit from any opportunities that may arise.

The importance of commercial strategy has grown, including the use of land and intellectual property. A balance needs to be struck between utilising current assets and estates and investing for the future.

Council asked to receive scenario planning that would enable consideration of what measures should be implemented and when certain levers should be pulled.

24/5 Gender Pay Gap

COUN24-P2

Council **CONSIDERED** the 2024 report on the Gender Pay Gap.

It is mandatory for the University to report its gender pay gap on an annual basis in March.

The gender pay gap is the percentage difference in pay between all men and women in the organisation. It is a different to equal pay, which is about paying men and women the same for work of equal value. The University does not have a structural equal pay issue but it does have a gender pay gap.

- The mean average pay gap for women on 31st March 2023 was 17.4% which is 5 percentage points smaller than in 2022.
- The median pay gap for women on 31st March 2023 was 16.6% which means the gap is 9 percentage points smaller than in 2022.

Progress in reducing the gender pay gap was positive and shows a downward trend over the last seven years. The reduction in the gender pay gap is real and not due to statistical or methodological fluctuation; the number of women at higher grades has increased and there is a greater gender balance in grades 1-5. A comprehensive action plan has been developed to

support progress towards the ultimate elimination of the gender pay gap, though putting a timescale on this is difficult. It is important that the improvements in the gender pay gap are communicated to staff.

The University has also undertaken analysis of its race pay gap, although it is not a statutory requirement to report this. The Race Pay Gap is lower than the Gender Pay Gap, but it is recognised work is required to reduce and eliminate the gap. Actions to support the reduction of the Race Pay Gap are contained within the University's Race Equality Charter Action Plan.

24/6 Staff Experience Survey

COUN24-P3

Council **CONSIDERED** a report from Human Resources Committee on the results of the staff experience survey.

The report is run annually so there has been limited time for actions taken since the last survey to have impacted the current results. The response rate had declined slightly from 66% last year to 62%; although it remained above the sector average. A higher response rate was desirable.

There were no significant differences based on protected characteristics, however, there were differences for the non-disclosed characteristics category, and work is being undertaken to understand this.

Scores for all themes were positive and higher than last year (the values theme was not part of the survey last year). Six of the themes scored higher than the sector benchmark with the remaining three scored below the sector benchmark: values (one percentage point lower), reward and recognition (one percentage point lower), and wellbeing (two percentage points lower).

Work has begun in the last year on articulating the institution's values and how these are enacted through the Strategy and the University's activities. There is ongoing work around staff wellbeing and pay and recognition.

Future targets could be set at one standard deviation above the mean of the benchmark for comparator institutions, or in the upper quartile of comparator institutions. Human Resources Committee will be asked to consider the appropriate metric at its next meeting on 22 May.

Outcomes and actions taken from the staff survey are being communicated at both an institutional and service level, including the Vice-Chancellor communicating this to staff at General Assembly.

24/7 Sporting Excellence and Opportunity Core Plan

COUN24-P4

Council **RECEIVED** an update on the progress made in developing the Sporting Excellence and Opportunity Core Plan from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Sport.

Comprehensive consultation with internal and external stakeholders has been undertaken to develop the Core Plan, including an external consultancy company who were engaged to consult with more than 30 external companies. The Core Plan is now being socialised to shape the key performance indicators prior to a final draft by early May and for final approval by Council in June.

Sport is a key driver in attracting students to the University, for the University's reputation and generating income. There are opportunities for the University to attract more commercial and philanthropic partners and sponsors through its sporting activities.

The Sporting Excellence and Opportunity Core Plan seeks to maximise strengths across the institution to be a global influencer and leverage brand awareness and reputation. The Core Plan will include community sport and sustainability as key elements.

Para sport will be a key element in the Sport Core Plan and the British Paralympic Association are a key partner. A separate consultation on para sport is currently being undertaken and will be incorporated in the final Core Plan. It was noted that whenever there is a reference to Olympic Sport there should be a reference to Para Sport.

24/8 International Opportunities

COUN24-P5

Council **NOTED** an update on opportunities for Sport Education in Saudi Arabia.

It was hoped to have a draft proposal for Council's consideration but the plan was now to bring a proposal to Council in June with a final decision on whether to proceed or not in November.

Consultation about a potential partnership in Saudi Arabia continues to be undertaken with stakeholders, including staff, students and the alumni advisory board.

24/9 Strategy – Update on Enabling Projects

COUN24-P6

Council **CONSIDERED** an update on the University Strategy Enabling Projects Programme, which consists of six key projects: Project Enable; Project Expectations; Project Compliance;

Project Workplace; Project Digital; and Project Reputation. An additional enabling activity is themed on 'Reimagining the Research and Innovation Office'.

To date the Enabling Programme and related projects have been overseen by the Change Portfolio Board which has now been decommissioned. The Programmes will now report to the new Strategic Portfolio & Resources Committee (SPaRC), which will replace Operations Committee and have oversight of the Strategy Core Plans to ensure that all strategic change activity is considered together.

24/10 Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor Recruitment

COUN24-P7

Council **RECEIVED** a verbal update on the recruitment of the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor. A head-hunter had been used for the recruitment search producing a long-list of eight strong candidates, which would be reduced to a shortlist with final interviews in April.

24/11 Audit and Risk Committee

COUN24-P7

Council **RECEIVED** a report from the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 07 February 2024.

ARC had received an Insights session from PwC on managing risk and fraud prevention in partnerships, which highlighted a significant increase in the amount of partnership fraud currently being investigated in the Higher Education sector. One area specifically highlighted was compliance with proper due diligence processes, particularly with overseas partnerships.

PwC also provided ARC with a summary of the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act: Failure to Prevent Fraud. As the University is currently building out its strategy for scaling strategic partnerships, ARC have requested a detailed update at its June meeting to cover both assurance on the University's approach to fraud prevention and strategic partnerships.

ARC received an overview on the challenges with international student recruitment and changes to the revised budget for 2023/24. ARC welcomed the update and the subsequent planning being undertaken to provide assurance on the financial sustainability of the University. ARC noted that Operations Committee had increased the risk score on the International Student Dependency strategic risk, and positively noted the increased monitoring and reporting on this. ARC noted that consideration should be given to when, if the shortfall continues for a sustained period, the University will have to amend the international growth principles set in the University strategy and the impact that will have.

24/12 Governance and Nominations Committee

12.1 Council Effectiveness Review

COUN24-P8

Council **CONSIDERED** an update on the 2024 Effectiveness Review of Council.

The Effectiveness Review of Council Working Group met for the first time on 07 March to agree its terms of reference, the methodology for the review and timeline. The Working Group will also review actions taken since the 2021 Effectiveness Review to ensure that they have been implemented and sustained.

External input to the review, required by the Chair of University Committees Code of Practice, would be provided by Halpin Partnership, a prominent HE consultancy.

Council members had received notice of the questionnaire for the review and invites for structured interviews would be circulated shortly.

It is expected that the Group will report its findings to the October meeting of Council.

12.2 Amendment to Ordinance VIII – First Hearing

COUN24-P9

Council **APPROVED** an amendment to Ordinance VIII, increasing the maximum lay composition of Council from nine to ten.

12.3 Appointment of new Lay Member

COUN24-P10

Council **APPROVED** the appointment of Jon Woods as a Lay Member of Council for a 3-year term commencing from 01 August 2024.

24/13 Health, Safety and Environment Report

13.1 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report

COUN24-P11

Council was **ASSURED** that the University is fulfilling its obligations with regard to Health, Safety and Environment and **ENDORSED** the annual report.

The report outlines that the University operates a health and safety system that identifies and manages risk effectively. A range of processes identify risks locally, at school and professional services level, and across the University and compliance with legal requirements is monitored by the Health, Safety and Environment Committee through a series of key performance indicators. Data and commentary are presented to each meeting of the Committee which also the management of one risk topic in depth at each meeting.

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13.2 Health, Safety and Environment Update

Council **RECEIVED** a verbal report from the meeting of the Health, Safety and Environment Committee held on 06 February 2024.

The formal KPI rating remained green with no major updates needing to be reported to Council. The Water Management and Fire Safety Management risk are being actively managed and closely monitored.

24/14 University Honorary Degrees and Medals

COUN24-P12

Council **APPROVED**, on the recommendation of Senate and the advice of the University Honours Committee, the award of Honorary Degrees and University Medals to the individuals named in the paper.

24/15 Matters for Report by the Vice-Chancellor

Council **RECEIVED** a verbal report from the Vice-Chancellor who reported the following items:

- There had been a number of high-profile visits to the University including:
 - The Governor of the Bank of England Andrew Bailey who gave a lecture as part of Loughborough Business School's Distinguished Speaker series.
 - Professor Lucy Chappell, Chief Scientific Adviser for the UK Department of Health and Social Care.
 - Andrew Griffiths MP, Minister of State for Science, Research and Innovation and Stephanie Peacock, Shadow Minister for Sport, Gambling and Media.
 - His Excellency Ambassador Manoah Esipisu, the High Commissioner of Kenya visited the University to discuss research linked to the region, as well as future opportunities.
 - The University has been successful in bidding for five new centres for doctoral training, which will fund over 100 PhD students. The centres include EnerHy, the Centre for Doctoral Training in Engineering Hydrogen Net Zero.
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SECTION B – Starred Items for Approval

24/16 *Joint Committee for Appointment of Deans

COUN24-P13

Council **APPROVED** a Joint Committee for the appointment of Deans for the School of Aeronautical, Automotive, Chemical and Materials Engineering, Loughborough University London and School of Social Sciences and Humanities and **DELEGATED** authority to Chair of Council to make the Dean appointments on behalf of Council, on the recommendation of the Joint Committee.

24/17 *Committee Terms of Reference and Composition

COUN24-P14

Council **APPROVED** amendments to Committee Terms of Reference and Composition.

24/18 *Degree Outcomes Statement

COUN24-P15

Council **APPROVED** the 2022/23 Degree Outcomes Statement.

24/19 *Ordinance XXV- Honorary Titles First hearing.

COUN24-P16

Council **APPROVED** amendments to Ordinance XXV – Honorary Titles.

24/20 Ordinance XXXV – Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure. First Hearing.

COUN24-P17

The item was unstarred at the request of a member of Council.

The paper referred to consultation with the Joint Negotiation and Consultative Committee and the Academic and Related Staff Negotiating Sub-Committee, but under the terms of the Partnership Agreement this should be negotiation.

Noting the above, Council **APPROVED** amendments to Ordinance XXXV – Staff Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.

SECTION C – Starred Items for Information

24/21 *Pro-Vice-Chancellor Reports

Council **RECEIVED** the following reports:

21.1 *Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) COUN24-P18

21.2 *Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) COUN24-P20

21.3 *Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Sport) COUN24-P21

24/22 *Annual Report on Academic Partnerships

COUN24-P22

Council **NOTED** the Annual Report on Academic Partnerships.

24/23 *Annual Report from the Radiation Protection Officer

COUN24-P23

Council **NOTED** the Annual Report from the Radiation Protection Officer.

24/24 *Office for Students Reportable Incidents

COUN24-P24

Council **NOTED** that there have been no reportable incidents since the last meeting of Council and no events which needed to be considered if it qualified as a reportable event.

24/25 *Capital Framework Progress Report

COUN24-P25

Council **RECEIVED** a progress report.

24/26 *Common Seal

COUN24-P26

Council **RECEIVED** a list of documents to which the University Seal has been attached.

24/27 *Reports from Committees

Council **RECEIVED** reports from the following Committees:

COUN24-P27 **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee – 28 February 2024**

COUN24-P28	Finance Committee – 01 November 2023 and 12 January 2024
COUN24-P29	Governance and Nominations Committee – 22 November 2023
COUN24-P30	Health, Safety and Environment Committee – 06 February 2024
COUN24-P31	Human Resources Committee – 31 January 2024
COUN24-P32	Infrastructure Committee – 21 February 2024
COUN24-P33	Operations Committee – 06 November 2023, 04 December 2023, 15 January 2024 and 12 February 2024
COUN24-P34	Research and Innovation Committee – 21 November 2023 and 13 February 2024

24/28 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 27 June 2024, 14:00-17:00, Loughborough Campus

Future Meetings

Thursday 17 October 2024, 15:00-16:00, Away Day, Loughborough Campus

Thursday 21 November 2024, 9:00-12:00, Online

Thursday 27 March 2025, 9:00-12:00, Loughborough University London

Author – Luke Vulpiani

Date – April 2024