

COUNCIL
**Loughborough
University**

Minutes of the meeting of 27 June 2024

COUN24-M2

Attendance

Christine Hodgson

Kerri Akiwowo
Penny Briscoe
Graham Corfield
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 (ab)
Mark Thurston
Mike Wedderburn
Georgia Whelan
Sheryl Williams

In attendance: James Henry (item 24/32 only); Jo Maher; Veronica Moore (item 24/36 only);
Jennifer Nutkins; Alex Owen (item 24/32 only); Dan Parsons; Richard Taylor;
Rachel Thomson; Luke Vulpiani

Apologies received from: Paul Taylor

24/29 Declaration of Interests

John Sinnott declared an interest in items relating to the Local Government Pension Scheme, for which Leicestershire County Council is the administering authority; LUSEP in which the Council has invested; and East Midlands Freeport for which the Council is the accountable body.

24/30 Minutes & Matters Arising

30.1 Minutes

COUN24-M2

Council **CONFIRMED** the minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2024.

30.2 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

24/31 Chair's Report

The Chair has received two pieces of correspondence in relation to item 24/37 on the agenda, International Opportunities for Sport Education in Saudi Arabia.

A letter from some of the University's staff networks had been made available to Council Members on Board Intelligence. The Chair had also received direct correspondence from a former employee of Loughborough University. The Chair reported the nature of its content but the letter was not shared with members as it is not routine to circulate pieces of correspondence in this way.

SECTION A – Items for Discussion

24/32 University Finances

32.1 2023/24 Quarter 4 Forecast Update

COUN24-P35

Council **CONSIDERED** and **APPROVED** the 2023/24 Quarter 4 forecast update.

The forecast had been reviewed by Finance Committee and Strategic Portfolio and Resources Committee. The main movement in the forecast was owing to changes to USS pension and this does not improve the cash position. Council noted it is important to communicate clearly the reasons for any move in the forecast.

32.2 Budget for 2024/25 and 5-year forecast

COUN24-P36

Council **APPROVED** the budget for 2024/25 and the 5-year forecast.

The 2024/25 budget and 5-year forecast had been considered in detail by Finance Committee and Strategic Portfolio and Resources Committee. Once Council approves the budget, it will not be brought back unless there are material changes.

Council particularly asked about assumptions in the budget on international student numbers, research funding and future changes to USS and LGPS pensions

Forecasts for commercial income are relatively prudent and there are opportunities for growth, however, unlocking commercial income requires investment, so there may be costs before returns are realised.

24/33 Higher Education External Environment

COUN24-P37

Council **CONSIDERED** an update on the external environment in which the University operates and particularly noted the points below.

A recent report on Higher Education finances by the Office for Students indicated a deteriorating financial position for the sector. Over 60 University currently have some form of severance scheme and others, including Loughborough, are expected to enact severance schemes in the coming months. Savings are required to ensure financial sustainability.

There is a need for universities to work together to ensure influence for the sector; the recent sector collaboration on the Migration Advisory Committee's report on the Graduate route, was a model for how the sector can work collectively to influence government policy.

The University has a key commitment to Sustainability and Net Zero and there are successes in this areas research into green hydrogen.

Loughborough University has agreed a prestigious partnership with the Massachusetts Institute of Technology focused on research and working with industry. The partnership also has exclusive master's degree programme for hundreds of students each year, with time divided between Loughborough and the USA.

Regional considerations are important and there are opportunities for the University to work with local partners to make a contribution to the broader East Midlands region.

24/34 Strategy Update – Implementation and Resourcing

COUN24-P38

Council **CONSIDERED** the resourcing of the Strategy and **ENDORSED** the approach and timelines for reviewing the Strategy in light of the financial position of the sector.

Financial sustainability considerations were at the forefront and maintaining the current levels of reserves was important to ensure a strong base for any future investment.

The decision has been made to pause two large capital projects for new builds for Design and Creative Arts and the School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences. These projects have been paused not stopped, and there are different drivers in both cases.

24/35 Sporting Excellence and Opportunity Core Plan

COUN24-P39

Council **APPROVED** the Sporting Excellence and Opportunity Core Plan.

The focus of the Core Plan is on leveraging Loughborough's excellence in sport to benefit the whole organisation. Sport, Health, Wellbeing is a separate strategic theme, however, there will be crossover with the Sporting Excellence and Opportunity Core Plan. The Core Plan board will own the KPIs, which will be reported to the Strategic Portfolio and Resources Committee and then to Council.

The Core Plan is themed around five strategic priorities: ecosystem, environmental sustainability, women's sport, para sport and disability sport, and the power of AI and digital. The five strategic priorities each have a corresponding vision and key performance indicator, which provides a focus for the key actions that the University will undertake and its measures of success.

The Core Plan's focus on Para and Disability Sport could be used as a driver to help make campus more disability-accessible. Work is currently being undertaken to ensure student accommodation has fully-accessible disability rooms and there are opportunities to take a fabric-first approach to new builds for disabled access.

The Core Plan seeks to leverage support to increase commercial income and provide a driver to deliver world leading research. There are significant opportunities in women's sport and women's health, which are currently underrepresented in global sport education and research. There are also opportunities in public health and working with the NHS, as well as making women's sport more inclusive by involving different communities.

24/36 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Core Plan

COUN24-P40

Council **APPROVED** the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Core Plan.

The Core Plan mandates clear EDI governance, sets institutional priorities and engages organisational resource to facilitate meaningful change. The KPIs in the Core Plan are focussed on things that can be measured to ensure clear and deliverable targets. The pace of change is manageable and reasonable, with clear expectations for senior leadership, including accountability.

Data is one of the four objectives in the Core Plan and it is recognised data in some areas needs improving. Student data is currently more comprehensive than staff data owing to external reporting requirements on students. Enhanced data is an essential enabler for the

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other objectives in the Core Plan and as data collection and analysis is improved targets and KPIs will be revised in a phased way. Council asked about social mobility and socio-economic diversity, which is not a current area of focus. The Core Plan aligns with the University's Access and Participation Plan for students which sets out how the University will improve opportunity for underrepresented groups to access, succeed and progress from Higher Education.

Council asked for assurance that there is appropriate resourcing of the EDI Core Plan. The executive is confident that there are appropriate resources, including human resource, to deliver the Plan. It was noted that Staff Networks have played an important role in supporting EDI to date and that these roles are voluntary and require support to be sustainable. The Plan creates formal EDI leadership roles for each Academic School and Professional Service with agreed selection processes, role titles, roles descriptors and (where appropriate) workload allocation.

Council thanked all those who had worked on the revised Core Plan, particularly Veronica Moore and Surinder Sharma.

24/37 International Opportunities for Sport Education in Saudi Arabia

COUN24-P41

Council **CONSIDERED** and **COMMENTED** on the progress to date and **ENDORSED** the development of a full business case for consideration in the autumn.

Council's consideration of the matter noted the following:

An extraordinary meeting of General Assembly called by the Vice-Chancellor to discuss potential opportunities in KSA was held on 6 June 2024. As part of this meeting, a UCU resolution not supportive of an in-country presence in KSA had been voted on, supported, and was submitted to Council under General Assembly's powers in Statute XV.5.

Senate had considered the item on 12 June and after discussion and a vote (Yes: 29, No: 6, Did Not Vote: 6) had endorsed the development of a full business case for further consideration.

As noted in the Chair's verbal report, a letter from some Staff Networks raising concerns about a potential partnership in Saudi Arabia had been circulated to Council members. It was noted that some people with some protected characteristics had particularly expressed reservations about a potential partnership.

There are different operational models under consideration and a concrete proposal was still to be developed. Loughborough is not intending to make any significant capital investment and will retain control over academic quality and standards.

Academic Freedom is a key principle of UK Higher Education and is enshrined and protected in Loughborough's governance under Statute XXI. Work will be undertaken to protect academic freedom as far as is possible while mindful of the norms, sensitivities and legal operating context of KSA. Such issues are common in most trans-national education ventures undertaken by UK Higher Education institutions and are not unique to this initiative but will require careful consideration. Any partnership in KSA will operate lawfully and in a way that is consistent with the Charter and Statutes.

Council requested an enhanced business case be received for any proposal, to include comprehensive Equalities Impact Assessment, reputational analysis, legal framework, information about the protection of academic freedom, the repatriation of surplus and potential exit strategy.

24/38 Audit and Risk Committee

38.1 Audit and Risk Committee Update

COUN24-P42

Council **RECEIVED** a report from the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 10 June 2024. ARC had received an Internal Audit report from PwC on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion which had been rated as high risk. The findings in the report should now be largely mitigated by the revised EDI Core Plan which Council had approved at this meeting.

ARC had also received an Internal Audit report on Risk Management and members were pleased to note a highly positive report, highlighting both well-defined processes and practices across the University, together with a number of areas of good practice. One area noted to improve things even further would be to introduce a process to actively monitor and incorporate new and emerging risks into the risk management processes.

38.2 Office for Students Regulatory Compliance

COUN24-P43

Council **RECEIVED** assurance on the University's compliance with its Office for Students regulatory duties. All areas were rated green and the risk of breaching any Condition of Registration was believed to be low.

24/39 Governance and Nominations Committee

39.1 Council Effectiveness Review

COUN24-P44

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

The Review was building on the in-depth 2021 Review and emerging themes were contained in the paper. The consideration of a Senior Independent Governor was highlighted as one of the emerging themes that may add value to Council's effectiveness. Capturing sustainability considerations on the coversheet had been discussed and would be further considered by the Working Group. It was important that the coversheet remained concise and informative.

The final report will be drafted over the summer and submitted to Council in October. It is expected a draft of the final report will be circulated to Council members in advance of the October meeting for comment.

Independent external quality assurance oversight for the Review is being undertaken by Will Spinks from Halpin Partnerships; Will has endorsed the process to date and will provide a statement of quality assurance for the final report should he remain satisfied with the process.

24/40 Infrastructure Committee

Council **RECEIVED** a verbal update from the Chair of Infrastructure Committee on infrastructure.

24/41 Health, Safety and Environment Report

Council **RECEIVED** a verbal report from the meeting of the Health, Safety and Environment Committee held on 14 May 2024. The formal KPI rating remained green and no major updates needed to be reported to Council.

24/42 University Honorary Degrees and Medals

COUN24-P45

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.

24/43 Matters for Report by the Vice-Chancellor

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

Following the appointment of Professor Rachel Thomson as Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, recruitment is currently in-process for the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience role Rachel formerly undertook.

There have been a number of ministerial visits from different parties, discussing various issues including sport, research in the region and University funding.

SECTION B – Starred Items for Approval

24/44 *Loughborough Students' Union

44.1 *Annual Report

COUN24-P46

Council **RECEIVED** the Students' Union Annual Report.

44.2 *Constitution Review

COUN24-P47

Council **APPROVED** an immediate update to the Loughborough Students' Union Constitution and to **APPROVED** proposed Composition and Membership and Terms of Reference for an LSU Constitution Working Group to be established to undertake a more thorough review during 2024-25.

44.3 *Executive Officer Elections

COUN24-P48

To **RECEIVED** assurance that the elections for Students' Union Executive Officers in 2024 (offices to be held in 2024/25) were free and fair.

24/45 *Freedom of Expression

COUN24-P49

Council:

- a) **APPROVED** Amendments to Ordinances, policies and Codes of Practice except where these relate to HR matters.
- b) **NOTED** the proposed amendments to Ordinances, policies and Codes of Practice relating to HR matters are subject to consultation and negotiation with the campus trades unions and **APPROVED** in principle, subject to these discussions. Should any substantive changes be made, the relevant details will be brought back to Council.
- c) **APPROVED** a new Ordinance XLVI on Freedom of Expression. First Hearing.

24/46 *Joint Committee for Appointment of Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience**COUN24-P50**

Council **APPROVED** a Joint Committee for the appointment of Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience.

24/47 *Access and Participation Plan**COUN24-P51**

Council **APPROVED** the Access and Participation Plan.

24/48 *Student Complaints Annual Report**COUN24-P52**

Council **APPROVED** the Student Complaints Annual Report 2022/23.

24/49 *Sport Committee Composition and Terms of Reference**COUN24-P53**

Council **APPROVED** Sport Committee becoming a joint Council-Senate Committee and **APPROVED** revised Composition and Terms of Reference.

24/50 *Strategic Projects and Resourcing Committee Composition and Terms of Reference**COUN24-P54**

Council **APPROVED** the Terms of Reference and Composition of the Strategic Portfolio and Resources Committee (to replace Operations Committee).

24/51 *Ordinance VIII – The Council**COUN24-P55**

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

24/52 *Ordinance XVII – Conduct and Discipline of Students**COUN24-P56**

Council **APPROVED** amendments to Ordinance XVII – Conduct and Discipline of Students. First Hearing.

24/53 *Ordinance XXV – Honorary Titles**COUN24-P57**

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

24/54 *Ordinance XLIII – Policy and Procedure on the Use of Fixed Term Contracts**COUN24-P58**

Council **APPROVED** amendments to Ordinance XLIII – Policy and Procedure on the Use of Fixed Term Contracts. First Hearing.

24/55 *Conditions of Service**COUN24-P59**

Council **APPROVED** amendments to the conditions of service for staff so that Research Associates and Senior Research Associates receive the same notice entitlement as other staff on grade 6+.

SECTION C – Starred Items for Information**24/56 *Matters for Report**

Council **RECEIVED** the following reports:

56.1 *Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) COUN24-P60

56.2 *Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) COUN24-P61

56.3 *Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Sport) COUN24-P62

24/57 *Appointment of Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor**COUN24-P63**

Council **NOTED** the appointment of Professor Rachel Thomson as Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor for a term of 5 years from 1 August 2024.

24/58 *Senior Appointments

Council **NOTED** the following Senior appointments:

The Privy Council have approved Paul Michell as the University Visitor for a 5-year term from 01 August 2024.

Professor Rebecca Cain as Acting Dean of the School of Design and Creative Arts from 1 August 2024, until a full, external selection process is completed during the 2024-25 academic year.

Professor Lauren Sherar as Acting Dean of the School of Sport, Exercise and Health Sciences from 1 August 2024, until a full, external selection process is completed during the 2024-25 academic year.

24/59 *Office for Students

59.1 Prevent Duty

COUN24-P64

Council **NOTED** that the Office for Students has concluded the 2022/23 process for monitoring the University's compliance with its Prevent duties.

59.2 Reportable Events

COUN24-P65

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.

24/60 *Annual Report on Philanthropy

COUN24-P66

Council **RECEIVED** the annual report on Philanthropy.

24/61 *Capital Framework Progress Report

COUN24-P67

Council **RECEIVED** a progress report.

24/62 *Common Seal

COUN24-P68

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

24/63 *Reports from Committees

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

COUN24-P69	Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Committee – 23 May 2024
COUN24-P70	Finance Committee – 15 March 2024
COUN24-P71	Governance and Nominations Committee – 21 March 2024 and 23 May 2024
COUN24-P72	Health, Safety and Environment Committee – 15 May 2024
COUN24-P73	Human Resources Committee – 22 May 2024

COUN24-P74	Infrastructure Committee – 17 April 2024
COUN24-P75	Strategic Portfolio and Resources Committee (Operations Committee) – 11 March 2024, 09 April 2024 and 29 April 2024
COUN24-P76	Remuneration Committee – 21 March 2024
COUN24-P77	Research and Innovation Committee – 23 April and 03 June 2024
COUN24-P78	Senate – 13 March 2024

24/64 Any Other Business

The Chair thanked John Sinnott, Chris Linton, Molly Page and Georgia Whelan whose terms of office as Council members were finishing.

24/65 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 17 October 2024, all-day, Away Day, Loughborough University London

Future Meetings

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

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

Thursday 03 July 2025, 14:00-17:00, Loughborough Campus