

## COUNCIL



Loughborough  
University

## Minutes of the meeting of 21 November 2024

### COUN24-M4

#### Attendance

Christine Hodgson

Rachael Alvey	Matthew Inglis	Luke Stott
Kerri Akiwowo	Nick Jennings	Paul Taylor (ab)
Penny Briscoe	Jennifer Maxwell-Harris	Rachel Thomson
Graham Corfield	Nicky Morgan	Mark Thurston
Andrea Davis	Emma Nadin	Mike Wedderburn
Natalie Gasson-McKinley	James Peat	Sheryl Williams
Tarek Hassan	David Price	Jon Woods
Naomi Hudson	Surinder Sharma	

In attendance: Sam Grogan; Jo Maher; Alex Owen; Dan Parsons; Richard Taylor; Luke Vulpiani

Apologies received from: Paul Taylor

#### 24/91 Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest.

#### 24/92 Minutes & Matters Arising

##### 92.1 Minutes

##### COUN24-M3

Council **APPROVED** the minutes of the meeting held on 17 October 2024.

##### 92.2 Matters Arising

The Secretary welcomed Natalie Gasson-McKinley, new lay-member of Council, and Professor Sam Grogan, Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience, who was attending Council for the first time.

## SECTION A – Items for Discussion

### 24/93 Strategy Update and Key Performance Indicators

#### 93.1 Council Away Day Report

##### COUN24-P103

Council **CONSIDERED** action points and outcomes following the Council Away Day.

The away day discussions had endorsed a strategic pivot focussed on growing UK undergraduate student numbers. This would enable investment in academic staff ahead of the next Research Excellence Framework in 2029 and mitigate reliance on an unstable international market. The pivot did not signal a departure from the Strategy or the University's international aspirations but recognised that there may need to be a different trajectory or pace of achievement.

International and domestic rankings are continuing to be prioritised to secure the student recruitment position. The National Student Survey (NSS) remains an area of focus as it is important in determining the University's UK league table position and contributes metrics for the Teaching Excellence Framework. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience is leading an NSS working group and each School has an action plan, particularly focussed on assessment and feedback. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor will report progress on the NSS action plan to March Council.

Capital investment principles and priorities have moved from large projects to a series of smaller capital projects which will protect and enhance the student and staff experience.

#### 93.2 Key Performance Indicators

##### COUN24-P104

Council **CONSIDERED** an update and review of the University KPIs.

The Core Plan Boards oversee the delivery of the core plans, including regular monitoring of the University KPIs approved by Council. The Core Plan Boards reviewed data against targets, considered the actions in place to address any gaps or progress the trajectory of KPIs and then proposed a RrAgG rating.

The KPIs flagged to Council as areas of focus, were international students, the QS World Ranking, growing the University's global reputation in research and innovation and sustainability.

The QS rankings and global reputation are linked; in order to achieve the KPI of a top 200 QS ranking, work is being undertaken to grow our global academic and employer reputation through research and innovation led engagements.

An internal audit report on International Student Recruitment submitted to Audit and Risk Committee was noted at this point.

The Sustainability KPI is currently below target but a number of implementation projects are currently taking place, including decarbonisation of the swimming pool.

## 24/94 University Finances

### 94.1 University Financial Statements

#### COUN24-P105

Council **APPROVED** the adoption of the accounts and the submission to the Office for Students for the year ended 31 July 2024.

There are significant financial challenges in the Higher Education sector but Loughborough is positioned better than many comparator institutions.

The year end showed a £3.6 million operating surplus and a total surplus of £109 million owing to a non-cash accounting adjustment from USS pension changes. It was important to explain that this was a paper surplus when communicating the accounts and the CFO will consider the best way to ensure this is clear.

The Honorary Treasurer provided assurance to Council about the scrutiny process for the annual accounts. The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee reported that ARC had reviewed the University's draft financial statements for the year ended 2023/24 and recommended the adoption by Council of the University's financial statements subject to the completion of the outstanding audit work and the confirmation of an unmodified audit report from the auditors.

Risk and compliance culture was a risk Council could be confident of assurance overall, although there remain some areas where enhancements remain on-going.

### 94.2 Confirmation of Financial Forecast 2024-29

#### COUN24-P106

Council **APPROVED** the content of the OfS financial annual returns, and the process for submission.

Council **APPROVED** the data in the financial and student number tables relating to actual financial data for 2022/23 and 2023/24 for submission to OfS.

Council **APPROVED** on the recommendation of Finance Committee, the financial forecasts for the period ending 31 July 2029, as presented in the financial and student number tables, for submission to OfS.

Council **APPROVED** the associated commentary for submission to OfS.

Council **AUTHORISED** the Vice-Chancellor to approve changes to the tables resulting from OfS queries during the data verification period.

While the expected surplus had been achieved, the budget figures had changed in-year and so were being brought to Council.

The government recently approved a one-year inflationary increase of 3.1% for Home Undergraduate fees for 2025/26. The University was still deciding how it would apply to all students. Projected additional revenue from the fee increase was offset by the increase to employer National Insurance contributions which had a cost of approximately £3.5 million.

A long-term funding plan for Higher Education is required and the sector is seeking to work with government to ensure this happens.

### 94.3 Revolving Credit Facility

#### COUN24-P107

Council **APPROVED** the procurement of a Revolving Credit Facility.

## 24/95 Annual Report on Senior Staff Remuneration

#### COUN24-P108

Council **APPROVED** the annual report on Senior Staff Remuneration on the recommendation of Remuneration Committee.

The Vice-Chancellor recused himself for this item.

The report provided assurance that remuneration for staff on all grades was consistent, fair and transparent. All staff receive a pay increase which is negotiated nationally and equality impact assessment of the rewards programmes provides assurance about its equity.

## 24/96 International Opportunities

#### COUN24-P109

Council **CONSIDERED** an update on international opportunities for Sport Education in Saudi Arabia and **APPROVED** the recommendations.

Based on a market assessment, Loughborough is no longer pursuing an in-country campus presence in Saudi.

The approved recommendations were that the focus should remain on advancing existing partnerships and through offering Loughborough based provision such as short courses (which do not result in Loughborough University credit towards a degree) or training camps as appropriate. It was also recommended that a watching brief is kept on educational partnerships delivering accredited provision, but not to progress collaborative degrees at this time.

## 24/97 Office for Students Regulatory Compliance

### COUN24-P110

Council **CONSIDERED** an update on regulatory compliance for the Office for Students (OfS) and was assured that there is minimal risk of the University breaching any of its conditions of registration.

The Access and Participation Plan and Financial Sustainability conditions are rated amber; this is unchanged from previous reports and does not show a heightened risk, rather it reflects the challenges faced by many in the sector around widening access to Higher Education and financial sustainability.

Following a recent review the OfS will have a renewed focus on quality and standards. This does not present a heightened risk to Loughborough as our B3 conditions are above threshold and Teaching Excellence Framework outcomes are currently rated excellent. Academic assurance will be covered in detail in an item at March Council.

Council received an update in October that the implementation of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill has been paused and it is unclear whether there will be a future condition of registration linked to this. There will be a new condition of registration related to harassment and sexual misconduct with effect from 1 September 2025. The COO is overseeing a working group to assess and prepare for compliance.

## 24/98 Audit and Risk Committee

### 98.1 Report of meetings

#### COUN24-P111

Council **RECEIVED** a report from the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 05 November 2024.

The external auditors had presented their Audit Findings Report to ARC and all the key audit areas were discussed and reviewed. The audit is substantially complete and there have been no issues or concerns which require highlighting to Council.

ARC viewed international students as an area of concern of risk and as noted under item 24/93 postgraduate application turnaround times had been flagged in the internal audit report.

## 98.2 Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report

### COUN24-P112

Council **APPROVED** the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2023-24, **NOTED** the Audit Committee's findings, and **RECEIVED** the Internal Audit Annual Report 2023-24.

The ARC Annual Report endorsed the adequacy and effectiveness of the institution's arrangements for governance, risk management and control, and sustainability, economy, efficiency, and effectiveness (value for money) and the quality of data submitted to regulatory bodies.

The internal audit tender process was now complete. Council **DELEGATED** authority to ARC to sign-off the new internal auditor contract subject to final discussions.

### 24/99 Infrastructure Report

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

### 24/100 Delegation of Authority for Granting a Long Lease for Project Texas on Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park

### COUN24-P113

Council **APPROVED** the proposed process for the delegation of authority for granting a long lease in relation to Project Texas, to be used only if ultimate approval is required outside of normal Council meetings.

The precise direct cash benefit of the project is not yet known, but there are other benefits in terms of developing LUSEP and facilitating research.

### 24/101 University Honorary Degrees and Medals

### COUN24-P114

Council **APPROVED** the award of Honorary Degrees and University Medals to the individuals named in the paper.

## 24/102 Matters for Report by the Vice-Chancellor

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

- UK Research and Innovation is setting-up links with Mayoral Combined Authorities (MCA). This is challenging for Loughborough as currently the East Midlands MCA doesn't include Leicestershire. The University is working with the East Midlands mayor to engage on regional issues and build partnerships where possible.
- Winter graduation will take place at the Loughborough campus on Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> and Friday 13<sup>th</sup> December and all Council members were invited to attend.

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## SECTION B – Starred Items for Approval

### 24/103 \*Prevent Duty

#### COUN24-P115

Council **APPROVED** the Prevent Annual Monitoring Report for submission to the Office for Students.

### 24/104 \*Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

#### COUN24-P116

Council **APPROVED** the statement on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.

### 24/105 \*Committee Terms of Reference Amendments

#### COUN24-P117

Council **APPROVED** minor amendments to the Terms of Reference for Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Governance Committee and Infrastructure Committee.

### 24/106 \*Amendment to Ordinance V The Chancellor – Appointment of a New Chancellor. First Hearing

#### COUN24-P118

To **APPROVED** an amendment to Ordinance V The Chancellor. First Hearing.

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## SECTION C – Starred Items for Information

### 24/107 \*Pro-Vice-Chancellor Reports

Council **NOTED** the following reports:

**107.1 \*Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience)**

COUN24-P119

**107.2 \*COO acting in lieu of Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Equity, Diversity and Inclusion)**

COUN24-P120

**107.3 \*Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation)**

COUN24-P121

**107.4 \*Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Sport)**

COUN24-P122

**107.5 \*Provost**

COUN24-P123

**24/108 \*Office for Students Reportable Events**

COUN24-P124

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

**24/109 \*Capital Framework Progress Report**

COUN24-P125

Council **RECEIVED** a progress report.

**24/110 \*Common Seal**

COUN24-P126

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

**24/111 \*Reports from Committees**

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

COUN24-P127	<b>Governance and Nominations Committee – 16 October 2024</b>
COUN24-P128	<b>Health, Safety and Environment Committee – 02 October 2024</b>
COUN24-P129	<b>Infrastructure Committee – 24 September 2024</b>
COUN24-P130	<b>Sport Committee – 24 October 2024</b>
COUN24-P131	<b>Strategic Portfolio and Resources Committee (Part B) – 07 October 2024</b>

**24/112 Any Other Business**

Following the 2024 Council Effectiveness Review, Council had agreed to the appointment of a Senior Independent Governor to ensure compliance with the Committee of University Chairs



Code of Governance. Governance and Nominations committed is overseeing the implementation of the Review's recommendations and has proposed Nicky Morgan for the role. Council **APPROVED** the appointment of Nicky Morgan as the Senior Independent Governor.

### **24/113 Date of Next Meeting**

Thursday 27 March 2025, 9:00-12:00, TBC

### **Future Meetings**

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

Thursday 16 October 2025, all-day, Away Day, Loughborough Campus

Thursday 27 November 2025, 9:00-12:00, online

Author – Luke Vulpiani

Date – November 2024