

UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2020 at 10.15 am via Microsoft Teams.

Membership:

Ms Ingrid Barker (until C.20.36.2)	✓
Mr Peter Bungard	A
Ms Phoebe Crook	✓
Mr Paul Davies	✓
Ms Nicola de longh (Chair, from C.20.28.1)	✓
Mr Chris Fung	✓
Mr Dai Jones	✓
Mr Martin Jones	✓
Mr Stephen Marston	✓
Mr Allen Mawby	✓
Mr Steve Mawson (from C.20.34.2)	✓
Mr Stephen Maycock	✓
Dr Andrew Misiura	A
Ms Imaani Mitchell	✓
Mrs Karen Morgan (until C.20.39.2)	✓
Ms Mehjabeen Patrick (until C.20.43)	✓
Mr Daniel Ramsay	A
Mrs Pam Sissons	✓
The Rt Revd Robert Springett	✓
Dr Peter Warry	✓

Board Apprentice:

Ms Sophie Perret	✓
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In attendance:

Ms Andrea Chalk (for C.20.37)	Academic Registrar
Mr Stewart Dove (for C.20.40)	Student Registrar
Mrs Anna Hay (for C.20.40)	Head (Student Wellbeing)
Professor David James	Dean (Academic Development)
Dr Richard O'Doherty	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Mrs Camille Stallard	Chief Financial Officer
Dr Matthew Andrews (Officer)	University Secretary and Registrar
Mrs Penny Gravestock (Minutes)	Assistant Secretary to Council

C.20.25 Etiquette of Virtual Meetings

Received: recommendations from the University Secretary and Registrar on how the meeting should be run via videoconference, noting in particular how to raise comments or questions through the 'chat' function, and the importance of muting microphones when not talking.

C.20.26 Prayer

The Rt Revd Robert Springett opened the meeting with a prayer.

C.20.27 Welcome and Apologies

C.20.27.1 Received and noted: apologies for absence from Mr Pete Bungard, Dr Andrew Misiura and Mr Daniel Ramsay, and for late arrival from Mr Steve Mawson. It was noted that Ms Nicola de Longh was having a technical problem and would join the meeting as soon as possible. Until that point, Mrs Karen Morgan would chair the meeting.

C.20.27.2 Noted: that it was the first meeting for three new External Members of Council: Ms Ingrid Barker, Mr Steve Mawson, and Dr Peter Warry. During the course of the meeting, each new Member introduced themselves.

C.20.28 Coronavirus COVID-19 Update

C.20.28.1 Received: a verbal update on the University's approach to the Coronavirus situation. The Vice-Chancellor highlighted:

- a. that Government advice was being followed to keep people safe and to apply social distancing recommendations. Staff were working at home where possible, subject to those required to keep services going, particularly for students. It was reported that approximately 20% of students were still on campus;
- b. the aim to deliver all teaching, support for learning, and assessments online. The Vice-Chancellor thanked the staff involved in this activity, noting that all had worked willingly and flexibly to make the changes;
- c. that an announcement to students regarding the revised arrangements for assessment was being finalised for circulation shortly which would outline a 'no detriment policy' where further assessments would be set but could only improve a student's overall mark;
- d. that debate about the best way to support student learning was continuing across the sector, but that the University had decided that it should continue to teach and to assess to allow students to get their award;
- e. in parallel to this work, it was important that other areas of the University should be sustained to allow it to be in the best shape possible for when the situation changed. Whilst some students had called for fees to be reduced for the end of the year, it did not appear as if there would be a move in the sector to offer waivers where teaching was being maintained;
- f. the University was in discussions with its partners regarding accommodation to decide the approach regarding rental where students had gone home for the final term;
- g. recruitment for 2020/21 start had been going well with applications and acceptances up on the previous year. It was reported the campus visits and open days had been cancelled and student recruitment activity moved online where possible;
- h. that how the situation would develop by September 2020 was totally unknown, and that the Academic Leadership Group had discussed and were planning for a number of different scenarios which would be reported back to Council.

C.20.28.2 Considered: Council congratulated the Executive team on their handling of the situation, and discussed:

- a. the University's 'no detriment' policy with regard to assessment. It was reported that no Government advice had been received with regard to this, but there was a need to maintain academic standards. It was noted that Exeter University had been the first institution to publically declare such an approach, and that a number of other institutions had adopted similar policies;
- b. whether students were asking for refunds for tuition and accommodation fees already paid. It was reported that, in the main, they had been looking for waivers for future payments, rather than a refund of what had already been paid;
- c. the experience that could be learnt regarding online assessment from the University of Hong Kong;

- d. the issue of refunding accommodation fees where services were not being provided, and balancing the contractual and moral stances. It was noted that costs to the University would not reduce even if the income was lost, and that management was monitoring the situation as it changed across the sector. There was a concern raised regarding students in private accommodation who could expect to receive similar support if University rents were refunded. There was a fear that some institutions could become insolvent as income dropped. Council discussed the relationship between the University and its students, and how members of that community supported each other;
- e. recent media speculation that student number caps could be introduced for the 2020/21 academic year to mitigate against some institutions taking greater numbers of home students following the potential drop in the international market. There was also a concern that some institutions were moving offers from conditional to unconditional to attract students more quickly. Whilst it was noted that had not been any change of policy to date, the situation would need to be managed in order to maintain institutional sustainability.

C.20.29 Business of the Agenda

Noted: that there had been a request to unstar the Council Schedule of Business (paper C/29/20) so that item would be discussed.

C.20.30 Declarations of Interest

Received: declarations of interest from:

- a. Ms Nicola de longh for the Wellbeing Strategy Update (agenda item C.20.40) due to her role as a trustee on the board of the Gloucestershire Counselling Service;
- b. Mr Martin Jones for items related to University partnerships (C.20.36 and C.20.37) due to his role as Vice-Chair at South Gloucestershire and Stroud College;
- c. Mr Chris Fung for his involvement with Lunch.Co, which was a peer-to-peer cooking provider that would be identifying opportunities in homes and student accommodation.

C.20.31 Minutes of the meeting held on 4 February 2020

Resolved: the minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting held on 4 February 2020.

C.20.32 CONFIDENTIAL: Matters Arising (C/15/20)

C.20.32.1 [C.20.17.3] *Council Membership: approval of new External members*

Received and noted: a verbal update from the University Secretary and Registrar. It was noted that the second round of interviews had been scheduled for 15 April 2020 but that, under the current situation, it would be decided whether these would be undertaken virtually or be postponed.

ACTION: Chair / University Secretary and Registrar

C.20.32.2 [C.20.08.3] *CONFIDENTIAL: Matters Arising: Project Review*

This item was considered under Confidential Business.

C.20.33 Chair's Business (C/16/20)

C.20.33.1 Received and noted: the Chair's report, outlining key meetings and focus areas since February 2020. Council discussed:

- a. the opportunity raised by the Vice-Chair to propose to the Lord Lieutenant that the University could be a location for a visit by the Earl and Countess of Wessex;
- b. possible arrangements to replace Council's away day which had been cancelled due to the Coronavirus situation. It was reported that the Chair and the University Secretary and Registrar were considering alternative ways to allow Council to consider its vision for the University, including using videoconferencing, webinars, and phone calls.

C.20.33.2 Noted: that since the last meeting on 4 February 2020, there had been three decisions made by circulation, and one use of the Company Seal (details below). There had been no exercise of delegation.

- a. Decisions made by circulation:
 - on 6 February 2020:
This item was discussed under Reserved Business;
 - on 10 March 2020:
This item was discussed under Confidential Business;
 - on 20 March 2020: an email was circulated outlining a number of proposals for Council positions and membership of Council's committees. A quorate response was received approving all recommendations.
- b. Use of Company Seal: on 11 February 2020, for a deed with Cityheart Gloucester Ltd and Cityheart Ltd relating to land at Barbican Road and Ladybellegate Street, Gloucester.

C.20.34 CONFIDENTIAL: Vice-Chancellor's Report (C/17/20)

- C.20.34.1 Received and noted: a paper updating Council on major developments affecting the University since the meeting held on 4 February 2020. The following were highlighted:
- a. the recent Budget on 11 March 2020, noting that there had been very little reference to universities and that it was expected that the Comprehensive Spending Review would include decisions following recommendations from the Augar report regarding funding. It was noted, however, that the Review may get pushed back to the autumn of 2020 in light of the Coronavirus situation;
 - b. the University's position in recently released employments and earnings data, including the analysis from the Longitudinal Education Outcomes (LEO) survey, and noting the continued debate around universities and value for money linked to these results;
 - c. the launch of the latest recruitment campaign on the theme of 'Who Cares? We do.';
 - d. an update on senior appointments, noting in particular that the new Director of Human Resources, Julie-Ann Brooks, would be joining the University on 4 May 2020. It was reported that initial interviews for the Head of the Business School had been held via videoconferencing on 27 March 2020, and that three had been invited back for a final stage (although the arrangements for these in light of the current circumstances were being discussed);
 - e. the candidates for honorary awards as approved by Academic Board on 25 March 2020, noting that it was hoped that all awards would be conferred at the Graduation Ceremonies as normal in November 2020;
 - f. an update on industrial relations across the sector.

- C.20.34.2 Noted:
- a. that the plan for the Vice-Chancellor and Chair to meet with their counterparts at the Royal Agricultural University had been postponed due to recent circumstances;
 - b. the Vice-Chancellor's attendance at the recent UniversitiesUK Innovation and Growth Project Board event, and it was confirmed that EmERGE Education (investors in education technology developments) had been represented.

C.20.35 Students' Union Update (C/18/20)

- C.20.35.1 Received and noted: the Students' Union update. The following were highlighted:
- a. the response by the Students' Union to the COVID-19 situation, addressing student needs, ensuring they received the necessary communications, and providing engagement activities through social media platforms;
 - b. the outcomes of the Full Time Officer elections, with the successful candidates starting in July 2020:

- Luc Brown as President;
 - Imaani Mitchell as Education Officer;
 - George Berry as Sports Officer;
 - Asha Sutton as Welfare Officer;
- c. the latest situation regarding staffing, noting that there was just one remaining vacancy for a Commercial Coordinator, to which an appointment would only be made if it was decided that the role would bring in sufficient income to fund it;
- d. that a fuller update of the Operating Plan would be presented to the next meeting.

C.20.35.2 Considered: the opportunity to reflect on the range of activities covered in the Operating Plan and to focus on those that were essential priorities. It was noted that, as a new team of Officers started work, they would bring in their own priorities but the steer to focus on core activity could be passed on.

C.20.36 CONFIDENTIAL: Annual Review of Partnerships (C/19/20)

This item was discussed under Confidential Business.

C.20.37 CONFIDENTIAL: Report on Annual Business Review of Academic Partnerships (C/20/20)

This item was discussed under Confidential Business.

C.20.38 CONFIDENTIAL: Update on the INTO/UoG JV Closure (C/21/20)

This item was discussed under Confidential Business.

C.20.39 STEM Strategy (C/22/20)

C.20.39.1 Received: the University's STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) Strategy for 2020-23, developed in the context of three core drivers:

- a. the Industrial Strategy;
 - b. the Gloucestershire Local Industry Strategy;
 - c. the outcome of the 2019 Augar review and potential funding changes.
- The Deputy Vice-Chancellor reported the need for the Strategy to be flexible to respond to the outcomes of specific funding initiatives and to continuously evaluate the University's academic portfolio.

C.20.39.2 Considered:

- a. the University's position relative to others in the sector;
- b. that it was not planned at the current time to set targets for increasing the number of students as a success factor;
- c. the work underway to assess the University's Engineering provision;
- d. opportunities being assessed with regard to potential programmes in Radiography to sit alongside the existing Allied Health and Nursing provision;
- e. the range of courses offered by the University, and whether it should be mapped against competing institutions with a view to prioritising areas of provision. It was reported that different subject areas varied in success compared with other providers and that the University only introduced a new course if it believed there was a viable market and employability for graduates. It was confirmed that Finance and General Purposes Committee had particularly considered the comparative market when discussing resource requirements for potential new programmes at its recent meetings.

C.20.39.3 Resolved: Council reviewed and approved the STEM strategic aims for 2020-23.

C.20.40 Wellbeing Strategy Update 2018-23: Progress Report (C/23/20)

C.20.40.1 Received and noted: a report updating Council of the progress made to date in implementing developments linked with the University's Student Wellbeing Strategy. The Student Registrar outlined the contents of the report, highlighting:

- a. the achievements to date, reflecting the nine themes of wellbeing, and noting the wide scope of activity;
- b. specific activity related to mental health, which was a pressing issue for the sector and the wider community;
- c. assurance given regarding the oversight of the work within the University structure.

C.20.40.2 Considered:

- a. the success of the online Big White Wall as a service to support students in their mental wellbeing. Data had shown that the University's students used it for longer and more interactively than those at other institutions, which it was felt was due to the University's active approach to referral. It was reported that, following the excellent take up of this online provision, other services were also being investigated;
- b. training for mental health first aid being offered to staff;
- c. the support available for students following the lockdown in response to the Coronavirus situation, noting the work to provide counselling via telephone or videoconferencing. It was reported that virtual sessions had continued for those that had already been receiving support before the lockdown, and that anybody on the waiting list had been assured that they had not been forgotten. Work had also been undertaken to

put protocols in place to ensure that online processes were managed appropriately;

- d. the University's position in the sector for the proportion of students declaring mental health concerns.

C.20.41 Student Retention (C/24/20)

This item will now be considered at the meeting to be held in May 2020.

C.20.42 CONFIDENTIAL: Financial and Operating Performance Report (C/25/20)

This item was considered under Confidential Business.

C.20.43 Operating Plan and Institutional KPIs 2019/20 (C/26/20)

C.20.43.1 Received: the update from the February 2020 review of the 2019/20 Operation Plan and institutional key performance indicators (KPIs). It was reported that work on the 2020/21 Plan had begun, but that the current situation may require the University to reconsider its core priorities for that year.

C.20.43.2 Noted: the 2019/20 performance to date.

C.20.44 Risk Management Report (C/27/20)

C.20.44.1 Received: the updated Risk Register and Action Plan for 2019/20, noting that it had previously been considered by Audit Committee. The University Secretary and Registrar reported that a new risk was being considered by University Executive Committee related to the Coronavirus situation and the University's strategy to return to normal business.

C.20.44.2 Resolved: Council received and approved the Risk Management Report, including the updated Risk Register and Action Plan for 2019/20.

C.20.45 Access Agreement 2018/19* (C/28/20)

Received and noted: the monitoring return submitted to the Office for Students concerning access activity in 2018/19.

C.20.46 Council Schedule of Business* (C/29/20)

Resolved: Council considered the Schedule of Business and agreed that the Annual Chaplaincy Report should be considered under standard business (not starred) at the meeting to be held on 12 May 2020.

C.20.47 Minutes from Council Committees*

Noted: that the minutes from the following meetings would be available from <https://connectglosac.sharepoint.com/sites/UniversityCommittees>:

- a. Remuneration and Human Resources Committee, 12 February 2020;
- b. Audit Committee, 6 March 2020;
- c. Finance and General Purposes Committee, 10 March 2020.

C.20.48 Any Other Business

No other business was raised.

C.20.49 Date of Next Meeting

Tuesday 12 May 2020, at 9.15 am (likely to be held via Microsoft Teams)

UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

Action list for the meeting held 31 March 2020

Minute number	Action	Responsibility
C.20.32	<i>CONFIDENTIAL: Matters Arising</i>	
C.20.32.1	<i>[C.20.17.3] Council Membership: approval of new External members</i>	Chair / University Secretary and Registrar

	<p><u>Received and noted:</u> a verbal update from the University Secretary and Registrar. It was noted that the second round of interviews had been scheduled for 15 April 2020 but that, under the current situation, it would be decided whether these would be undertaken virtually or be postponed.</p>	
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