

**MINUTES OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL MEETING
HELD ON TUESDAY 23RD MARCH 2021**

(Conducted Via Teams)

Present: Canon Dr J. Turnbull (*President*), Mr F. Ball, Mrs C. Bond, Dr D. Briggs, Professor S. Broomhead, Mr M. Clinton, Sir Neil Cossons, Councillor R. Daniels, Dr M. David, Associate Professor M. Degg, Professor C. Forsdick, Mrs J. France-Hayhurst, Mr N. Jenkins, Ms E. Lewis (*CSU President*), Mr G. Reay, Professor E. Simmons (*Vice Chancellor*), The Very Revd Dr T. Stratford, The Rt Revd M. Tanner, Mrs S. Verity.

Apologies for absence were received from: Ms K. Howell and Dr A. Seeney.

In attendance: Dr H. Galbraith (*PVC Student Experience*), Mr A. Lee (*University Secretary*), Mr R. Waddington (*PVC Resources & Chief Financial Officer*), Mr A.J. Parker (*Committee Secretary*).

Ms J. Juillerat and Mr A. Shenstone (*AdvanceHE*)

Professor N. Ford (*PVC*) (*Item 9*)

Professor J. Howe (*Item 10*)

Observing: Ms F. Jones (*Corporate Communications*) and Mr J. Rankin (*CSU President Elect*).

	ACTION
<p>3325 DECLARATION OF INTEREST</p> <p>Professor Broomhead and Councillor Daniels declared interests in matters pertaining to initiatives at Warrington and planning matters being considered by Cheshire West & Chester Council respectively.</p>	
<p>3326 ATTENDANCE AND MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>(a) Dr Helen Galbraith (PVC, Student Experience) was welcomed to her first meeting.</p> <p>(b) It was noted that this would be the last meeting for Ms Eleanor Lewis (Student Union President).</p> <p>(c) Mr Jack Rankin (Student Union President Elect) was welcomed as an observer.</p>	
<p>3327 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL</p> <p>(a) The minutes of the meeting of the University Council held on Tuesday 24th November 2020 were received and approved.</p> <p>(b) The minutes of the extraordinary meetings of the University Council held on Tuesday 19th January 2021 and Tuesday 9th February 2021 were received and approved.</p>	

3328 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

3299 Vice-Chancellor's Report: it was noted that matters arising from the November 2020 meeting would be addressed in the Vice-Chancellor's Report to this meeting (*see minute 3329*).

3329 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

The Vice-Chancellor's Report was received and discussed and focussed on the key matters impacting the University.

1. Operational Matters: From 8th March the Government expanded the range of subjects permitted to return to face to face teaching with approximately 25% of students accessing some face to face sessions with more out on placements. The potential for an increased intake after Easter was increasingly unlikely. The wider Senior Leadership Team had agreed the approach to the 2021/22 academic year, planning for social distancing in the autumn term and two alternatives for the spring term, with and without social distancing. All Covid Risk Assessments were up to date and there had been positive engagement with staff unions on systems and processes.

2. UK Student Recruitment 2021/22: Applications to date were 15,004 and represented a 13.6% (+1,796) increase on the previous year. Firm replies were 2.5% up on this time last year and the University continued to benefit from interest in nursing and teaching programmes. A Level Results Day would be brought forward to 10th August 2021 with the University receiving results on 4th and 5th August 2021. Interruptions and withdrawals were at a similar level to 2019/20.

3. International Student Recruitment: The International Centre continued to service several intakes simultaneously, all of which were at different stages and all indicating positive numbers. International student recruitment had also been bolstered by the Home Office announcement that the new Graduate route would open to international students on 1st July 2021. The new visa would provide overseas students who study in the UK the opportunity to stay in the UK for up to two years (three years for Doctoral students) to work or look for work.

4. Financial update: The Annual Financial Return was submitted to the OfS at the end of February and indicated a deficit of £8.8M, subject to several key risks. Assumptions in the forecast included no accommodation income before the Easter break, but accommodation income after Easter was also uncertain, as well as other commercial income streams such as summer conferencing income. Upside factors included the budget for international student income may be achieved and could be exceeded if the May 2021 intake materialised. There had also been a slowdown in non-pay spend which would partly offset lost income.

The business planning/budget setting process 2021-22 had concluded. The key challenge remained the provision of resource in areas that had recruited well whilst ensuring overall downward pressure on staff costs.

The nascent 'Citizen Student' strategy continued to develop and a set of KPIs would be developed during the summer term and submitted to the July University Council meeting.

A draft of the Annual Review 2019/20 was shared.

5. Staffing Matters: The Strategic Executive Team had been strengthened by the arrival of PVC Student Experience, Dr Helen Galbraith and interim Strategic Estates Director, Mr Jerry Headley. In April Professor Helen O'Sullivan would take up post as Provost and Rashmi Patel would join in May as interim HR consultant.

Collective consultation continued with UCU and Unison, the recognised trade unions, relating to proposed redundancies as a result of the Warrington project and the business planning process which, combined with the voluntary severance scheme, denotes a total of 156 at risk posts.

6. Strategic Projects: *see minute 3332.*

7. Community Engagement: A multi-channel communication campaign had commenced, aiming to emphasise the positive impact of the University and its students and staff. A key element would be a monthly newsletter which would be distributed widely within the local communities. The PVC Student Experience would also lead on community liaison meetings to create a clear and robust community engagement plan. Meetings would also be held with local Councillors to identify areas of concern and to prioritise how the University can engage and address them. It was noted that such discussion would not be possible during the period preceding the forthcoming local elections.

8. Compliance with OfS regulatory requirements: Condition C1 (consumer law):

Dr Galbraith spoke on the University's review of its ongoing compliance with consumer law and, in particular, its communications with students regarding how teaching and assessment would be delivered in 2020-21 and the circumstances in which changes might be required. It was highlighted that the University had developed a central Teams site in which to archive all communications sent to applicants and students. The University also continued to review Government guidance and refine plans for the return of further in-person teaching over the remainder of the academic year. A further round of student surveys would also be undertaken and action plans developed to address key themes and areas of concern raised.

The University Council welcomed the detailed report and actions undertaken to date to ensure continued compliance with this condition of registration.

Mr Nick Jenkins left the meeting at this point.

3330 STUDENT UNION PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Ms Lewis spoke to the CSU President's report. Of particular note was the CSU's collaboration with the University in the creation of a 'safety-net' policy, which aimed to prevent the pandemic inhibiting students' academic progression. The CSU continued to support the University with the allocation of and publicity for the hardship fund to support students experiencing financial hardship as a result of the pandemic. Work was also being undertaken to support students, particularly international students, with academic integrity and to help PG students improve their representation at a postgraduate symposium planned for April 2021.

The results of the CSU elections were announced on 5th March 2021, with the sabbatical team for 2021/22 as follows:

President: Jack Rankin

Vice-President (Education): Lauren Friel

Vice-President (Activities): Jordanne Farley-Moss

Vice-President (Shrewsbury): Gabby Abbas

Vice-President (Warrington): Sam Derbyshire

It was noted that this would be the final full University Council meeting for Ms Lewis whose term of office as CSU President would expire on 30th June 2021. The President expressed the Council's gratitude for the work of Ms Lewis, particularly during the pandemic, in supporting the University and its students. The University Council wished her well for the future.

3331 REF2021

Professor Neville Ford (PVC, Research and Knowledge Transfer) spoke to a report on the Research Excellence Framework 2021 and the new Research and Knowledge Exchange Strategy. He reported that the University would submit 270 members of academic staff to 19 Units of Assessment, which represented a growth in volume of around 75% on the previous submission. Final review work was currently being undertaken and submission would be made ahead of the 31st March deadline. Results were expected by April 2022 and would inform Government support for research and metrics for various league tables.

Professor Ford also reported that the Research & Knowledge Exchange (RKE) Strategy had been developed to support delivery of the Citizen Student Strategy. The RKE Strategy focussed on four multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary core themes (Health and Wellbeing; Culture and Society; Sustainability and Environment; and Regional Economy) that built upon existing strengths and reflected institutional values. Three research institutes and a knowledge exchange institute would be created, with impact at the centre of future research plans.

The University Council thanked those colleagues from across the institution that had been involved in the creation of the REF submission and the RKE Strategy.

Embargoed results of the pilot Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) were expected shortly.

(a) Thornton

Professor Joe Howe (Executive Director of the University's Energy Research Institute) reported on the University's engagement with the industrial decarbonisation agenda and, in particular, with the HyNet North West project, based on the production of hydrogen from natural gas. The project included the development of a new hydrogen pipeline and the creation of the UK's first carbon capture and storage (CCS) infrastructure, a vital technology in achieving the widespread emissions savings needed to meet the 2050 carbon reduction targets. The University was one of several supporting organisations and sought to ensure Thornton was integral to the project. A business plan was being prepared to support a feasibility study.

The University Council welcomed the update and acknowledged the potential benefits of supporting work in this area.

Teaching had ceased at Thornton, save for two 3-week periods which would end in May and which had been approved by CWaC and the HSE. Following the refusal of planning permission for two engineering buildings on Exton Park in February, a revised application for the design workshop only would be submitted by May 2021.

Progress continued with the implementation of a process for the selection of a development partner at Thornton.

(b) Warrington

i) Mersey Bank House (to be known as Sarah Parker Remond House): acquisition had been completed on 24th February 2021 and an application for planning consent to change the use of the premises would be submitted shortly.

ii) Time Square: lease conveyancing was proceeding with a view to completion by May 2021. Initial designs for fit out were in the process of being produced.

iii) Padgate: a pre-application planning process had begun with the local planning authority and an initial meeting had taken place with Sport England regarding the required provision of replacement open space and sports facilities.

(c) Shrewsbury

Monthly meetings had been held between the University and Shropshire Council and a new working relationship established. The Council had agreed to seek the consent of the Secretary of State to enter into a new lease of Guildhall as the current lease expires in June 2022. Work progressed to finalise the Partnership Agreement. The Flaxmill remained attractive although there was no additional funding for relocation at this stage.

3332 MAJOR INITIATIVES (CONTINUED)**(d) Medicine Initiative**

The GMC had confirmed that the University had been successful with its stage 3 submission and could now move to stage 4. A key issue would involve assurance of clinical placement capacity with partners. Feedback would be given to the GMC in May 2021, with further response from the GMC expected by July, maintaining progress needed for a September 2022 start.

3333 REPORTS OF COMMITTEES

Reports from the Chairs of committees were received and considered on the following meetings of the committees by reference to matters listed in a written summary, with the resolutions or other action shown. The draft minutes of the meetings were included amongst the papers for the meeting of the University Council.

(a) Planning & Resources Committee (Tuesday 19th January and Tuesday 2nd March 2021

IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the updates to the CSU Memorandum and Articles of Association.

(b) Audit & Risk Management Committee (9th February 2021)

IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the Risk Register.

(c) Nominations & Governance Review Committee (10th December 2020)

IT WAS RESOLVED as follows:

- (1) Liability in respect of executive search recruitment of new members should not be incurred until the Nominations and Governance Review Committee had given the matter further consideration following Advance HE's final recommendations becoming available.
- (2) The decision as to retaining an executive search recruitment firm for this purpose was delegated to the Nominations and Governance Review Committee and would be reported to the next meeting of University Council.

(d) Human Resources Committee (2nd February 2021)

IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the University Policy for Health & Safety at Work.

(e) University Mission Committee (24th February 2021

IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the Fairtrade Statement of Commitment.

The Secretary would review matters in relation to modern slavery and human rights.

3334 MINUTES OF MEETINGS

The Minutes of the following meetings were received:

- (a) Planning & Resources Committee held on Tuesday 19th January 2021 and Tuesday 2nd March 2021
- (b) Audit & Risk Management Committee held on Tuesday 9th February 2021
- (c) Nominations & Governance Review Committee held on Thursday 10th December 2020
- (d) Human Resources Committee held on Tuesday 2nd February 2021
- (e) University Mission Committee held on Wednesday 24th February 2021
- (f) Senate held on Wednesday 9th December 2020 and Wednesday 10th March 2021

3335 OFFICE FOR STUDENTS (OfS)

An up-dated list of OfS publications was received and noted.

3336 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

It was agreed that there was merit in developing a policy for the naming of buildings in order to formalise approval processes. The policy would reference situations where sponsorship would be advantageous. The Secretary would draft a policy for consideration by the Planning and Resources Committee.

3337 DATES OF OTHER UNIVERSITY EVENTS

The dates of Graduation Ceremonies, Open Days, Open Evenings and University Council meetings were noted.

3338 DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Next meeting: Tuesday 6th July 2021, 9.30 am

Future meetings – all 9.30 am:

2021-22:

Tuesday 23rd November 2021

Tuesday 29th March 2022

Tuesday 5th July 2022