

COUNCIL

Unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 14 March 2022

Present: Vice-Chancellor, Ms Wendy Becker (Teams)¹, Mr John Bowers, Professor Sir Rory Collins, Professor Patricia Daley, Sir Chris Deverell (Teams), Fra' John Eidinow, Professor Fabian Essler², Professor Cécile Fabre (via Teams), Mr Charles Harman, Professor Richard Hobbs³, Mr Nicholas Kroll (Teams), Professor Kia Nobre, Professor Diego Sánchez-Ancochea, Professor Alex Schekochihin, Professor Anne Trefethen⁴, Chair of Conference of Colleges (Baroness Jan Royall), Head of the Humanities Division (Professor Daniel Grimley), Head of the Medical Sciences Division (Professor Gavin Screaton) (Teams), Head of the Social Sciences Division (Professor Timothy Power), Senior Proctor (Ms Lucinda Rumsey), Junior Proctor (Dr David Johnson).

Student Member Representatives and representative of the Early Career Research Staff: Devika Devika (SU Graduates).

Apologies: Professor Aditi Lahiri, Head of the MPLS Division (Professor Sam Howison), Assessor (Dr Bettina Lange), Anvee Bhutani (SU President). Safa Sadozai (VP Access and Academic Affairs) and Dr Hilary Wynne (Representative of the Early Career Staff),

Officers in attendance: Registrar, Pro-Vice Chancellor (Development and Affairs), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Innovation) Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources)⁵, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), the Chief Financial Officer (Teams) , the Director of Public Affairs and Communications, the Director of Legal Services and General Counsel, Head of GLAM, the Executive Officer (Policy and Governance) in the Vice-Chancellor's Office, the Head of Governance Secretariat, the Assistant Registrar (Governance) (Teams).

In attendance:

Stephen Purbrick, Head of Financial Planning & Analysis (Item 3)

Liesl Elder, Chief Development Officer (Item 13)

Ed Bispham (Item 15)

Introductory matters: the Vice Chancellor welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked the outgoing Proctors and Assessor, for whom this was the last meeting, for their tireless work over the last year.

The main themes were: the Finance White Paper, a number of equality and pay-related items, updates on USS; the annual reports of the Chair of Education Committee, the Head of the Humanities Division and the Head of the Social Sciences Division.

Item 13 (Development Presentation) was presented before Item 12 (Annual report from Head of Social Sciences Division).

Declarations of interest: Council members were reminded to declare any interest that could give rise to a conflict in relation to any item on the agenda. These would be noted in the footnotes of the minutes.

¹ Present items 1-4 inclusive

² Absent from meeting 17:15 – 17:20

³ Declared a conflict of interest in item 4.b

⁴ Left for item 4 (c) as conflict of interest.

⁵ Declared a conflict of interest in item 4.b.

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ORDINARY BUSINESS

(A) Unreserved

CONFIDENTIAL 1. **Meeting held on 7 February 2022 (C(22)vi-xv) ***

(a) *Unreserved minutes **

An amendment was **agreed** to the second bullet-point in minute 13 (USS pensions: update) as follows:

“As a result, UUK was now consulting on a proposal to defer the application of that cap to 2025. In effect, this would allow further work on conditional indexation and the potential move to a new model to take place during the intervening three years. In effect, this agreement would therefore be in place for two years before the new valuation. If, at the end of three years, a new model was not agreed, the 2.5% cap would come back under consideration and further consultation would be undertaken.”

(b) *Matters arising from the unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 7 February 2022 not otherwise on the agenda **

- (i) Council **noted** the information in the paper (C(22)25) regarding equality targets, as requested at the 7 February 2022 Council meeting.

In discussion, it was **agreed** that the targets had been approved at the previous meeting and this paper was simply intended to provide further information on the methodology used to develop them. Council agreed that the methodology was clear and supported the targets proposed by the Staff Targets Working Group and which Council had agreed.

- (ii) Council **noted** that further discussions had taken place regarding the proposed draft legislation associated with the new degree of Master in Science in Experimental Psychology and the new degree of Master in Science in Psychology, Philosophy and Linguistics. This item would be considered at the 9 May 2022 meeting of Council. (Item 16 (a) refers 7 February 2022 Council meeting).

CONFIDENTIAL 2. **The Vice-Chancellor’s unreserved business (above the line)**

(a) The Vice-Chancellor reported on the following items of business: **

- Oral update on Covid
- The situation in Ukraine and the work that the University were doing to support all Ukrainian and Russian staff and students. In addition the work with the Council for At-Risk Academics (CARA) was on-going and the collegiate University was also seeking to intersect with government regarding support for refugees.
- In the last two months, two female members of staff had been killed whilst cycling.
- The University was taking steps to enhance safety for cyclists, including:
 - Continuing to fund cycle training, bike maintenance and bike and driver HGV awareness;
 - Working harder with our HGV contractors ensuring that all of them conform with best practice;
 - Working with college land owners and the County Council to ensure that enough infrastructure funding is made available for safe walking and cycling as part of our major housing development plans;
 - Agreeing to support Vision Zero, an international movement to end traffic-related fatalities and serious injuries. The County Council had adopted the policy and it was currently under consideration by the City Council.
- It was agreed that raising awareness of cycle safety and education would be important going forward. In addition to the recent cyclist death at the roundabout at the Plain, many students had also been involved in cycling accidents there. It was suggested that the County Council needed to be put under pressure to prioritise improving its safety.

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- Council recorded its condolences to the families and friends of the two highly respected members of staff.
- The planning application for the Schwarzman Centre had received enthusiastic and unanimous support and permission had been granted. It was hoped to break ground by October 2022.
- UCU strike ballots had been received, for a third time, on both pay and pensions.
- The University had a number of successful new Horizon awards . All of these were currently outside the BEIS/UKRI financial underwrite allowing participation while the UK remains non-associated to the Horizon programme. Work was underway to try to bring this latest tranche of awards inside the financial underwrite as it was highly unlikely that our status would be resolved by May.

(b) *Congregation Resolution: response to the war against Ukraine (C(22)43) **

The Vice-Chancellor introduced this item pointing out that the resolution was entirely consistent with what the University was already doing. It was also noted that since the papers had been circulated, more members of Congregation has signed the resolution and the full list of signatories would be published in the *Gazette*.

Council:

- (i) **deemed the resolution acceptable**, noting that the resolution would be declared carried and, subject to (iii) below, the meeting of Congregation on 26 April would be cancelled;⁶
- (ii) in so doing, the statement to be published in the Gazette of 24 March set out at (d) 5. below, with the full proposed notice provided at Annex A was **approved**;
- (iii) **noted** that if an amendment to the resolution was received by the deadline of noon on Monday 18 April, Council would need either to decide its course of action in respect of those amendments for the meeting on 26 April, or decide to adjourn proceedings until 17 May 2022 (week 4) to consider its response to the amendment⁷; and
- (iv) **agreed**, in the event of an amendment meaning that a vote was taken on the resolution, to delegate to the Vice-Chancellor the decision as to whether or not to call a postal vote, depending on the outcome of the vote in the house (unless in the meantime 50 members of Congregation called for a postal vote by the deadline).

RESTRICTED 3. **Finance White Paper (C(22)26) ***

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources) summarised progress to date noting that both the Planning and Resource Allocation (PRAC) and Finance Committees had spent three years getting agreement to move forward with first the Finance Green paper and now the Finance White Paper. Council's attention was drawn to the proposed consultation, how it would be advertised in the Gazette, including a hyperlink to more information and the use of a questionnaire. The consultation would be open for seven weeks between 24 March and 13 May 2022 and this period allowed Divisional Boards to meet and make any further comments on the proposals. The feedback gained through the consultation would go through PRAC and Finance Committee and then Council. The plan would be adoption in time for implementation from the 2023/24 financial year.

Council:

- (i) **approved** the draft Finance White Paper (included as an annex to the paper) for University-wide consultation;
- (ii) **approved** the timetable for the consultation and consideration of a final draft in TT22 via PRAC and Finance Committee; and

⁶ Under the provisions of section 7(1) of Statute IV.

⁷ Council had to decide its course of action by the morning of 19 April to enable the relevant notice to be published in the Gazette.

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- (iii) **noted** that the detailed planning necessary for a successful implementation of the Finance White Paper from 2023/24 was underway.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources) thanked Stephen Purbrick for all the work he had done so far on both the Green and White Finance papers.

4. **Report from the meeting of Finance Committee held on 23 February 2022**

RESTRICTED

- (a) *Planning & Housing Strategy – Financial Update & Budget Increase Request to July 2023* (C(22)27) **

Council **took the actions** set out in the report.

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- (b) *Court Place Gardens Legal Agreements: Oxford University Property Management Limited* (C(22)28) and (C(22)28a) **

Council **took the actions** set out in the report.

- (c) *iTransform Senior Responsible Owner* (C(22)29)

Council **approved** the appointment of Professor Anne Trefethen as SRO for iTransform.

5. **Annual Report of the Head of the Humanities Division**

The Head of the Humanities Division provided an oral report highlighting the following:

- Thanks were due to the Division's academics, professional staff, colleges and students for their work over the last two difficult years, when the Division had needed to play to its strengths;
- Education priorities for 2022 included:
 - Rebuilding resilience
 - Learning from pandemic best practice: new digital tools and hybrid delivery
 - New MSc in Digital Scholarship, AY22/3
 - Scoping new 4-year Humanities degree, which was very positive in terms of accessibility
 - Student number planning
 - Graduate access
 - Uniq+
 - OOC DTP Black and Global Majority Scholarships
 - Oxford Academic Futures
 - Staff-Student Relationship Code of Practice – this had been an important piece of work over the past few months
- A longitudinal report authored by James Robson et al (OUDE, 2020) demonstrated the value of Humanities:
 - Transformative impact of skills and subject specific learning
 - Humanities graduates enter a wide variety of professions and value flexibility
 - Strong earnings premium for Oxford Humanities graduates
 - Resilience in face of major financial challenges (e.g. 2008 crash)
 - Employers value critical thinking, ability to synthesise and present complex data, flexibility and creativity
 - High levels of job satisfaction
- On finance, the Division expected to break even this coming year; if achieved, it would be the first time since 'divisionalisation' over 20 years ago. Breaking even was a challenge due to the JRAM split and the fact that student fees were a key income driver. There was an opportunity to use the key income driver of student fees to consolidate post-pandemic finances. Coupled with this, the Finance White Paper should allow the division to move to a sustainable break-even financial position. There were further opportunities to diversify income through cultural and commercial activity in the new Schwarzman Centre for Humanities.
- On research activity, there had been a dip in 2019-20, due to the pandemic. The UK's association with Horizon Europe remained an uncertainty. The headline from the REF was

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that more than a quarter of the Division's submission came from outside Humanities, with a fifth coming from the colleges. Research priorities for 2022 were:

- DiSc (Digital Scholarship @ Oxford)
 - Maintaining momentum after REF 2021
 - Open Access
 - Impact and Innovation
- Throughout the pandemic, TORCH had run a full range of collaborative activities, including the Oxford Castle Projection and the Drummers Unite! event. The Division planned to build on this and keep new audiences engaged.
 - Planning permission had just been granted for the Schwarzman Centre. The new Concert Hall would be a spectacular venue for holding a wide range of musical events (e.g. jazz, big band, music hall) and other performance spaces would also be available. The Centre was likely to have a profound impact on the cultural life of both the University and the City. It was hoped that provisional bookings for the Concert Hall would be possible in the summer of 2025 with the Hall fully open for bookings the following year.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Head of the Humanities Division for his presentation.

CONFIDENTIAL 6. **Annual report from the Chair of the Education Committee ****

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) gave an oral report highlighting the following:

- The work of the Education Committee encompassed education policy alongside student support and the student experience. It was responsible for setting direction and worked through a number of sub-committees in order to cover research degrees, undergraduate admissions and access, taught degrees at undergraduate and postgraduate levels, quality assurance and monitoring of the PPHs.
- Progress with the strategic plan.

Priority 1: Diversifying UG admissions.

Good progress made against POLAR and ACORN (socio-economic) targets with targets exceeded two years ahead of time. 'Opportunity Oxford' had 200 students this year and 'Foundation Oxford' would be launched next term for the next admissions cycle (admission 2023).

Thanks were extended to Andrew Bell, University College's Senior Tutor, for his 'Opportunity Oxford' work.

Priority 3. Awarding gaps

Progress had been made with narrowing gaps in degree awards between black and white students.

Both gender and disability gaps had closed dramatically over the past two years and it would be interesting to see what happened at the end of this academic year.

- Developments over the past year

Our Covid-19 response was led by the Education Steering Group (ESG). ESG had developed a number of initiatives and co-ordinated a number of key projects such as on-line assessment and the Covid Hardship Fund. Thanks were extended to ESG for all its work.

Appointments: to the post of the new Student Welfare Director, Rotmi Akinsete and to the Director of Continuing Education, Professor Matthew Weait.

E-exams had used the new Inspira platform.

- Developments in train

Numerous initiatives were underway and there would be a need to evaluate these and then scale up where appropriate. These included the UNIQ+ summer internships, the Black Academic Future scholarship and mentorship programme, a fairer application processes with

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a name-blind initial assessment, standardised CVs and better guidance for assessors, and finally the Research England funded project on admission barriers facing BME students.

The Digital Education Strategy led by Sir Nigel Shadbolt was currently at the consultation stage and had strong links to the iTransform project being led by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital).

Work continued with the student experience including the joint mental health committee and on policies / processes relating to sexual harassment and violence.

- External regulatory issues

It was noted that over the past six months 1200 pages of consultation documents had been received with over 400 questions requiring a response.

The outcomes of the Augar Review, a new OFS Strategy, the appointment of a new Director of Fair Access (John Blake), the requirement to update our Access and Participation Plan this autumn and then renew it after four years rather than five were all external factors that needed to be taken into consideration.

In addition, proposals for the next Teaching Excellence Framework exercise were currently out for consultation and would be launched in September with a November submission date. Outcomes would be known in Spring 2023.

Council members discussed the presentation noting that:

- the lecture capture and digital policy were currently out for consultation. Student opinion would be taken into consideration and learning from the experience of the past two years would be invaluable in providing on-line information and support for learning;
- assessment results this year would be interesting to compare against the past two years.

CONFIDENTIAL 7. **Report from Education Committee (C(22)30) ****

(a) *The Common Award scheme at St Stephen's House – extension to entry to 2022*

Council **approved** extending the authorisation for St Stephen's House to offer the Common Award for one further year to 2022-23.

CONFIDENTIAL 8. **Council Three Year Review (C(22)31) ****

Council **took the actions** set out in the report.

CONFIDENTIAL 9. **Race Equality Taskforce Update ****

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) gave an oral update reminding Council that the Race Equality Task Force (RETF) and application for Charter Mark status had been discussed at the Council Away Day in September 2021.

The RETF met last Friday and reviewed the emergent priorities. These priorities would be taken forward and turned into an action plan in readiness for the Race Equality Charter application. The action plan points would need to be measurable.

Recruitment of the senior EDI individual had started with a job description having been agreed along with the funding; an advert would be placed shortly.

A summary of the consultation would be published and if members wanted further detail this could be provided.

10. **Report of the meeting of Personnel Committee held on 27 January 2022**

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(a) *Recommended actions to promote diversity in committee representation and inclusive governance (C(22)32) ***

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) introduced this item reminding Council that, in July 2021, it had adopted targets for the representation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) and female staff on Council and its main committees. Personnel Committee was now proposing a set of actions to achieve those targets, largely through communications, advertising, career development and succession planning.

Council **endorsed** the proposed actions for improving committee diversity and inclusive governance presented in Annexe A.

(b) *The University's Gender Pay Gap Report (C(22)33) ***

This item was taken together with item 11(a) below. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) introduced both items, highlighting the following points:

- As an employer with more than 250 employees, it was a legal requirement for the University to report to the government its gender pay gap based on the "snapshot date" of 31 March each year. The University had published a report since 2017.
- Both the median and mean gender pay gaps had reduced: the median pay gap from 13.7% in 2020 to 11.1% in 2021; the mean pay gap from 20.1% in 2020 to 18.1% in 2021. This was partly due to the introduction of the Oxford Living Wage, which was reflected in the pay of women on lower grades, but there had also been some incremental movement within grades.
- A divisional focus on the gender pay gap was required in order to aim to reduce the gap.
- The proportion of female Statutory Professors had plateaued at 19% (since 2018) – this was disappointing, however, it was hoped that work underway to accelerate progress in the representation of women in Associate Professor roles would produce a 'pipeline' of Statutory Professors.

Council **approved** the draft narrative on the University's gender pay gap report at Annexe A.

11. **Report of the meeting of the Personnel Committee held on 3 March 2022**

(a) *Annual Equality Report from 3 March meeting (C(22)34)*

This item was taken together with item 10(b) above.

Council **endorsed** the draft Equality Report for publication on the University website by the statutory deadline of 30 March 2022.

(b) *2022/23 national pay negotiations for non-clinical staff (C(22)35) ***

Council **took the actions** set out in the report.

(c) *Pay and reward ***

Council **noted** the oral update.

12. **Annual Report of the Head of the Social Science Division ****

The Head of the Social Sciences Division provided an oral report drawing attention to the following:

- the divisional turnover target
- student numbers had increased during the 2008 – 2021 period and were set to further increase into 2023. new opportunities were being considered including work in Executive Education and professional development, part time degree programmes (many with a professional focus) and distance learning which was well suited to non-matrix and part time degrees;
- the video at <https://www.socsci.ox.ac.uk/> demonstrated the work that had been done during the pandemic;

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- research had also continued during the pandemic into other areas and a number of researchers had had major research funding success including £10m for the NERC Agile Initiative;
- innovation continued with OUI launching 11 SSD spin outs to date, including four social ventures and ESRC Impact Prizes being won in 2021 in the Outstanding International impact and Panel's Choice Award categories;
- the division continued to consider equality, diversity and inclusion within the leadership team and Nandini Gooptu was now an Associate Head (EDI) adding to the already strong team;
- the challenge of space and disparate locations of a number of departments within buildings that were not always fit for purpose continued. Movement within SSD departments would not only present opportunities for divisional development but for University development too.
- slides 15 -18 mapped out the various moves that were in the pipeline between now and 2025 when the Winchester Road project was due to be completed.

CONFIDENTIAL 13. **Development Strategy Update** (paper number (C(21)67 June 21 Council meeting refers) **

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Development and External Affairs) and the Chief Development Officer gave an oral update following up on the paper presented to Council at the June 2021 meeting.

Council **noted** the presentation and congratulated the team on its achievements.

CONFIDENTIAL 14. **Report of the PRAC meeting held on 15 February 2022**

(a) *Building Capacity for Student Number Growth (C(22)36) **

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resource Allocation) informed members about the continuing work being carried out to build capacity in relation to student number growth.

Council **noted** the work of the Student Number Planning Working Group (SNPWG) to date, including the list of sites and projects under discussion to enable capacity growth for student numbers.

CONFIDENTIAL 15. **Report of the GPC meeting held on 21 February 2022 ***

(a) *Professor of Poetry Review Report (C(22)37)*

The Vice-Chancellor introduced this item, explaining that GPC had considered the report and had agreed to recommend the proposals to Council. On this basis Council **approved** the recommendations (as summarised in section (d) of the paper and available in full as a clip) without discussion.

CONFIDENTIAL 16. **USS Update ***

(a) *The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (People and Digital) provided an oral update on the current situation with UUK and USS.*

It was noted that the University had agreed to support the latest proposals, which were supported by the majority of employers. UUK had agreed and subsequently the Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) had approved the proposal (with the casting vote being used by the Chair). The USS Trustee had confirmed that there was no legal impediment to implementation. A two week consultation was currently open.

The payment schedule had changed and the recovery plan extended by one month. It was not expected that any further changes would be made and all changes would come into effect on 1 April 2022 and be in force until 31 March 2024. Another valuation of the scheme was on the way.

(b) *Discussion about the membership of the USS Review Working Group deferred from the 7 February 2022 Council meeting. (C(18)104 refers)*

This item was further deferred as only one external member was present and a decision point had yet to be reached.

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Items for approval or report without discussion ('below the line') are listed below.

17. Decision by circulation

- (a) *Approval of the draft response to the snap consultation February 2022 ((C(22)24) previously circulated)*

Without discussion Council **noted**:

The Working Group draft response was circulated on 16 February 2022 for decision by circulation. Council is asked to note that three replies approving the draft were received and there were no dissensions. The draft version was therefore considered as final and submitted to UUK by the deadline on 18 February 2022.

18. The Vice-Chancellor's unreserved business (below the line) (C(22)38)

Without discussion Council **noted**:

- (i) the appointment to a statutory post;
- (ii) the OfS publications; and
- (iii) the UUK Press Statements.

19. Proposed Revisions to Council's Standing Orders 2021/22 (C(22)39)

Without discussion Council **approved** revisions to its Standing Orders for 2021/22.

CONFIDENTIAL **20. Report of the meeting of the Personnel Committee held on 27 January 2022 and the meeting of PRAC held on 15 February 2022 (C(22)40) ***

- (a) *Recognition of Distinction: Estimated Cost 2022 & 2023 (C(22)40)*

Without discussion Council **noted** the estimated cost for the exercises with the costs being met from within departmental budgets.

21. Unreserved report of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 21 February 2022 (C(22)41)

- (a) *Changes in regulations for the Safety, Health and Environment Management Subcommittee (C(22)41)*

Without discussion Council **approved**:

- (i) the proposed amendments to Part 20 of Council Regulations 15 of 2002, as set out in Annex A; and
- (ii) the formal disbanding of the Health & Safety Review Group.

CONFIDENTIAL **22. Performance of the Oxford Endowment Fund (C(22)42) ****

Council **noted** the information.

23. Any other unreserved business

There was no other unreserved business.

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