

Academic and Governance Services

Council

21/26 A meeting of the Council was held online on Monday 5 July (People and Talent) (for M
Staff Engagement Manager (for Minute 21/32 onl

Apologies were received from Mr T. Beardmore-Gray.

The President welcomed Mr Knowles, RUSU President, and Miss Loweth, RUSU Welfare Officer, to their first meeting of the Council.

21/27 The President informed the Council that Mathilda Hodgkins-Byrne, a graduate of the University, had been selected for the British rowing squad at the Tokyo Olympics.

21/28 The minutes (21/12–21/25) of the meeting held on 15 March 2021 were confirmed and signed.

Items for note

21/29 Membership of the Council

Class 7

It was reported that, consequent upon the Students' Union elections, the following would be members of the Council in the Session 2021-22:

Member02

indicated that the experience of exclusion contributed to the awarding gap at the University between White students and BAME students, and most especially Black students, with 8.4% fewer BAME students achieving 'good degrees' than White students, and 16.2% fewer Black students achieving 'good degrees' than White students. It was notable that, according to a recent study by the Institute of Fiscal Studies, BAME students on average achieved better A level results than White students; universities should recognise that the awarding gap occurred in higher educationher_33Td ()Tjj -0.0 0.75 424Td ()Tj -0.EMC /P DC -5 0 98.217 Td (gn.- b)11.1

Mrs Owen and Mrs Gordon, who had jointly chaired the Group, reminded Council of the Group's remit, membership and the process it had followed. The Group's recommendations identified a range of actions to improve the effectiveness of Council in relation to transparency and engagement, governance, and its procedures and operation, which would further strengthen the University's compliance with the CUC Code.

The Council approved the Group's recommendations. It particularly welcomed the proposals to enhance the visibility of Council and to focus more clearly on those issues where the Council could add value rather than duplicating work already satisfactorily completed in committees. In relation to the recommendation that Council members be paired with Heads of School/Function, the Council was mindful that closer engagement with operational matters risked compromising the Council's governance function, and agreed that implementation of the recommendation should take account of this concern. In relation to the recommendation that oversight of the University's business adopt a risk perspective, the Council recognised that the Risk Register and the Audit

Mrs Owen, as Chair of the Committee, paid tribute to the achievements of the previous RUSU sabbatical team and to the energy, enthusiasm and ambition of the new team. She drew the Council's attention to the wide-ranging work, led by the Pro-Vice-Chancellors (Education and Student Experience), to ensure and enhance the quality of the student learning experience in the coming year and in the longer term. On behalf of the Committee, she commended RUSU's financial statements, which indicated significant reserves and effective financial management. The Council supported the proposed changes to the content and format of the Annual Learning and Teaching Report to Council (ALTR), and welcomed the suggestion that the forthcoming review of the working of Senate might consider whether some joint Council-Senate discussion of the ALTR would promote better mutual understanding between the two bodies and lead to more productive consideration of the ALTR.

In response to questions, Mrs Owen explained that the Committee had noted that RUSU's reserves amounted to some £2m, which was four times the target identified in the reserves policy. RUSU was considering how some of the reserves might be spent to the best effect for the benefit of students, and whether there would be merit in including a University nominee on the Trustee Board as an observer.

Resolved:

"That:

1. the draft amendments to RUSU's Memorandum and Articles of Association, now submitted, be approved;
2. the Report of the meeting of the Student Experience Committee held on 22 June 2021, now submitted, be approved."

Matters for report

21/36 Report of the Vice-Chancellor (Item 8)

The Council received the Report of the Vice-Chancellor.

The Vice Chancellor reported that he was pursuing the proposal on the more flexible use of apprenticeship levy funds, which he had set out in a joint letter to the Government on behalf of universities, students' unions and businesses. Under the proposal, universities and businesses would be able, for a limited

The Vice-Chancellor reported that the University Community Fund, recently established to support colleagues working on projects which benefited the local community, had attracted many strong applications. The success of the Fund would be reviewed after two years of operation.

Resolved:

“That the Report of the Vice-Chancellor, now submitted, be approved.”

21/37 Report of the Senate (Item 9)

The Council received the Report of the meeting of the Senate held on 24 June 2021.

The Vice-Chancellor reported that the Senate had discussed at length a proposal to change the structure of the academic year to a semester model

The Vice-Chancellor reported that the University had made its submission for the Research Excellence Framework (REF) 2021. The REF exercise would determine the University's QR funding and influence its league table rankings for the next seven years. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) (Professor Zaum) paid tribute to the 200 colleagues across Schools and Functions who had supported the submission process. He reported that the University had submitted 700.25 FTE in 2021 compared with 590.4 FTE in 2014; the increase was driven by changes in the REF rules which required all eligible staff to be submitted.

Professor Zaum believed that the University's submission had been of higher quality than in 2014, but, due to the rule changes, it was smaller in size, relative to the sector; this would depress the income derived from the REF, but would not affect its consequences for the University's reputation and league tables. The University had submitted the same number of units of assessment as in 2014, but the larger units now represented a greater proportion of the submission: whereas the five largest units of assessment contributed 40% of the University's submission in 2014, they now contributed 50% of the submission.

Professor Zaum explained that the impact statement had grown in importance. It was a powerful tool to demonstrate the social contribution of research, but was vulnerable to changing circumstance and factors outwith the University's control. Fluctuations in the commitment of external research partners, or their disappearance, represented a major risk, especially for smaller units of assessment.

In relation to the Annual Statement of compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity 2020-21, Professor Zaum noted that the most significant change since the previous year was a strengthening of research integrity training.

Resolved:

"That:

1. the University commit to adopt a semester system from the beginning of the academic year 2023/24;
2. the Annual Statement of compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity 2020-21, now submitted, be approved;
3. the Report of the meeting of the Senate held on 24 June 2021, now submitted, be approved."

21/38 Report of the Strategy and Finance Committee (Item 10)

The Council received a Report of the meeting of the Strategy and Finance Committee held on 7 June 2021.

The President reported that the University had, as anticipated, insufficient funds to repay its £50m revolving credit facility (RCF) with HSBC, which was due to expire in April 2022, and had run a competitive process for its renewal. The Committee had approved the appointment of Santander to provide a £50m RCF, and the legal and financial arrangements were now almost complete. The Council was satisfied with this outcome, and noted that the President and the Chief Financial Officer would act on behalf of the University in approving and signing any documentation arising from the RCF application.

The Council noted the progress of the Strategic Foundation Programme and was pleased to learn that some financial benefits were already being realised. The Programme would allow the University to generate its targeted surplus by 2024/25; in the event that only half of the financial benefits were realised, only a return to a break-even position would be achieved, leaving very limited capacity for investment.

The Chief Financial Officer presented the draft Budget 2021/22. She explained that, due to the pandemic, the University needed to set a deficit budget, with a deficit of £7m for the Academic Group and a deficit of £24.7m for the University Group. Cashflow was sufficient to support the budget, provided student recruitment w

emerging major themes of future research and ensure that the University remained at the leading edge of research in this field. The purchase of a new farm and the building of new facilities provided the NIRD Trust and the University with an opportunity to invest in new research areas addressing future priorities.

2. Kate Owen be reappointed to the Strategy and Finance Committee, Student Experience Committee, Appointments and Governance Committee, and Remuneration Committee to 31 July 2024;
3. Penny Egan be reappointed to the Strategy and Finance Committee and the Student Experience Committee to 31 December 2024;
4. a group be established, with a membership as specified in the Report, to run the process of appointment of a new Chancellor;
5. the Report of the meeting of the Appointments and Governance Committee held on 8 June 2021, now submitted, be approved.”

21/41 Report of the Remuneration Committee (Item 13)

The Council received the Report of the meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on 8 June 2021.

The Council noted that the University had formally endorsed the UUK’s proposals for the reform of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), which offered a more realistic alternative to those proposed by the USS Trustees.

Resolved:

“That:

1. the draft revised Grievance Procedure, now submitted, be approved;”
2. the Report of the meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on 8 June 2021, now subm

Monday 14 March 2022 at 2.15 pm
Monday 4 July 2022 at 2.15 pm.