

# Minutes Unrestricted

**Meeting title: Council**

**Date:** Wednesday 18 May 2011

**Time:** 4.00pm

**Location:** The Council room, George Thomas Building

**Present:** Dame Valerie Strachan (*Chair*), Mr M Burrow, Professor I Cameron, Professor J Falkingham, Mr B FitzJohn,\* Mr P Greenish, Mr M Killingley, Professor D Nutbeam, Mr T O'Brien, Dr M Read, Mrs H Smith, Professor P Smith, Mr M Snell and Professor A Wheeler

**In attendance:** The Chief Operating Officer, the University Secretary, Professor D Humphris, Professor P Nelson, Professor M Spearing and Dr KA Piggott

**Observers** Mr S Ling\* SUSU President–elect, and Mrs T Harrison, Registrar–designate

\* not present for restricted business

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting, particularly Mr Phillip Greenish, attending his first meeting as a class 2 member, and Professors Jane Falkingham and Peter Smith, new members appointed by Senate in Class 3. She also welcomed the SUSU President–elect, Mr Sam Ling, and the Registrar–designate, Mrs Tessa Harrison, attending as observers, and Professor Mark Spearing, new Pro Vice–Chancellor (International), in attendance.

She asked anyone aware of any conflict of interests to declare them. In respect of pensions matters, to be covered under the Vice–Chancellor’s report, Mr O’Brien declared an interest as he was in receipt of a pension from the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS). The Chief Operating Officer highlighted that all members of University staff present also had an interest in respect of USS matters.

The Chair advised members that as Professor Bashir Makhoul had not been able to attend the last three meetings of Council, in accordance with Statute 3(6) Council was required to authorise continuation of his membership.

**Resolved** That Professor Bashir Makhoul’s membership of Council be continued.

Members then received two presentations:

- Professor Nigel Shadbolt, Electronics and Computer Science on ‘OpenData’.
- Ms Helena Schulze, Student Enterprise Officer, on ‘Student Enterprise’.

## 83 **Obituary**

Dame Valerie reported with regret the death of Mr Tony Harmsworth, Director of Health and Safety, in March 2011, and invited members to stand as a mark of respect.

## 84 **Minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2011**

**Resolved** That the Minutes (unrestricted) of the above meeting be approved and signed, and that the non–confidential minutes may now be published on the SUSSED group site.

## 85 **Matters arising (not covered elsewhere on the agenda)**

### 85.1 **Future Capital Projects – Data Centre outsourcing** (minute 57)

The University Secretary confirmed that follow–up documentation had been circulated with the minutes as requested by Council. The Vice–Chair commented that he still had some queries, but would discuss these with the Chief Operating Officer outside the meeting.

### 85.2 **Vice–Chancellor’s report – International Partnerships** (minute 62)

The Vice–Chancellor reported that work was in hand to develop protocols for determining Council’s role in discussions relating to memoranda of understanding with international universities/organisations; he

would bring a paper to the next meeting.

**85.3 Report from the meeting of the Nominations Committee – Appointment of the Chancellor**  
(minute 65)

The University Secretary was pleased to confirm that Ms Helen Alexander's appointment as Chancellor had been endorsed by Senate, and then approved by the Court at its annual meeting on 4 April. She would take up the role on 1 August 2011, for a five year period in the first instance.

**86 Publication of unrestricted papers**

The Chair advised that the paper setting out revisions to the financial forecasts (agendum 10), and the section in the Vice-Chancellor's report on collaborations in Singapore (agendum 12), should be withheld as commercial in confidence although not so marked on the agenda.

**Resolved** That with the exceptions set out above the papers circulated for the meeting on 18 May should now be published on the open access SUSSED site.

**87 Update on progress with the Education Strategy** (agendum 5)

**Received** A series of three papers from Pro Vice-Chancellor Humphris, dated 6 May 2011, and headed 'Transforming our education: An update', 'Transforming our education: Institutional Review 2012/13' and 'Transforming our education: Public Information'.

Professor Humphris presented the papers, highlighting the key issues, to prompt a discussion.

(i) *Update*

The *University's access agreement* had been submitted to the Office of Fair Access for consideration on 12 April. Professor Humphris drew attention to the targets the University had set for itself in relation to the admission of students from state schools, low participation neighbourhoods, lower socio-economic groups, black and minority ethnic backgrounds and students in receipt of Disabled Students Allowance. The University's outreach activity was now being reshaped to address these targets. She emphasised that, in the changing fees environment, achieving these targets would be very challenging, particularly relation to students from lower participation neighbourhoods and lower socio economic groups, as such students might be less inclined to enter into significant debt. In response to queries about target setting, the Chief Operating Officer explained that the University reported to the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) against 19 measures of social mobility – HESA then informed the University of its Location Adjusted Benchmarks (LAB). In setting its targets the University had opted to concentrate on five of these 19 measures and targets were set in relation to the HESA nominated LAB. It was noted that the lead-in time to affect attainment of these targets was very long, and will require work with schools and students from an early age.

The University would be notified of the outcome of the submission to OFFA on 12 July 2011.

In relation to the *Curriculum Innovation Programme (CIP)* a series of new interdisciplinary module options, as listed in the circulated paper, would be piloted within a range of programmes in semester 2 2011/12; some existing modules would also be opened to students across the institution, together with provision of stage one languages. These developments would necessitate changes to the student records system, including completion of a fully on-line programme catalogue, which would give students details about the modules to enable their choices. Changes to programme regulations were also required.

There was a brief discussion about the opening up of programmes and modules, and the potential difficulties which arose in connection with professional accreditation, with specific reference to Engineering programmes. Professor Humphris pointed out that Engineering programmes faced particular issues as they were also currently restructuring to fit the University's new standard course structure and timetabling. It was suggested that it might be appropriate for Council to explore this further at the awayday. It was confirmed that it would not be compulsory for students to undertake optional 'CIP' modules, and it would remain open to students to follow a more subject-specific programme if they chose.

In response to a query about the feasibility and practicality of implementing the CIP Professor Humphris commented that, while it would be difficult, resources were available and in her view the

programme was achievable, within the proposed timescale. A crucial element in success would be appropriate academic leadership in Faculties, for example to support the opening up of modules and programmes.

An institution-wide set of *Graduate Attributes* had been developed, and work was being undertaken to clarify how these would be delivered and observable in all programmes. In connection with employability Professor Humphris reported that work was underway with Faculties and Professional Services to assess what activities were most effective in enhancing the employment prospects for graduates.

The University was also now considering actively the desirability and feasibility of enabling undergraduate students to *accelerate or decelerate their programme of study*. The possibility of taking forward flexible or blended learning was raised. Professor Humphris agreed that this was an important area for consideration, but emphasised that significant investment in resources would be required to ensure delivery of an appropriate quality.

(ii) *Institutional Review*

It was noted that the University's next Institutional Review by the Quality Assurance Agency would take place in the academic year 2012/13. This would for the first time also include an audit of publicly available information (see below).

(iii) *Public Information*

Members were advised that from August 2012 all universities would be required to publish 'Key Information Sets' at the programme level, against a standard template, to enable prospective and current students to make informed choices about programmes and modules. HEFCE had undertaken a consultation on the concept and implementation, the outcomes of which would be published in July 2011. It would then be known exactly what information would need to be provided, and this would give a year in which to prepare. Professor Humphris had established a 'task and finish' group led by the University Librarian to begin work on this. In response to a query from the Chair she indicated that it was likely that most of the information required was already available- what would be most challenging would be to collect information about assessment requirements and contact hours for every programme, and for this data to be quality assured on an annual basis.

**Resolved** To note the update, and to thank Professor Humphris for the information.

88 **Reform of the University Governance Arrangements (Proposals and timetable for reducing the size of Council)** (agendum 6)

**Received** A paper from the University Secretary headed 'Reform of the University Governance Arrangements' dated 15 April 2011.

The University Secretary reminded members that, arising from the Council Effectiveness Review, a recommendation had been approved at the January meeting (minute 28) to reduce the size of Council. The paper now circulated set out a proposal to put this into effect by reducing the lay membership (Class 2) from twelve to eight and the members appointed by Senate (Class 3) from six to three, by 2013. Taking the approach set out in the paper would still provide the opportunity to appoint new members during this time - the challenge would be to address the issues about diversity of membership previously noted by Council.

Members supported the proposal warmly, while recognising the importance of the issues relating to the diversity of membership. In response to a query as to why the proposal was regarded as of only medium impact for equality (as indicated on the cover sheet), the University Secretary explained that this was because the Nominations Committee was fully aware of the issues and was taking active steps to try to address them - mitigation of the risks was therefore in place.

The importance of providing appropriate induction and training for members was emphasised. Members were reminded that a recommendation relating to induction had been approved following the Council effectiveness review. Currently induction arrangements were made on an individual basis, taking into account the background and experience of new members; as there was now a group of relatively new members the opportunity would arise to provide some collective learning opportunities alongside this.

- Resolved** (i) That the proposed membership of Council as set out in the circulated paper be agreed, to guide Nominations Committee in future appointments.
- (ii) To note that a proposed revision to the Statute will be prepared, timed for when the reduced number of members has been achieved, which is anticipated to be in 2013.

89 **Revisions to HEFCE financial Forecasts** (agendum 10)

**Received** The Addendum to the Financial Commentary on Past Performance and Future Prospects, as submitted to HEFCE in April 2011, signed by the Vice-Chancellor and dated 4 April 2011. (The paper is commercial in confidence, restricted to Council members only).

It was noted that, exceptionally in 2011, HEFCE had permitted institutions to revise their financial forecasts in April, following the receipt of the HEFCE grant letter, and with greater knowledge of the impact of changes to tuition fees and public expenditure. The core financial assumptions contained in the revisions had been drawn to the attention of Council in discussions during previous meetings, and the significant underlying uncertainties were well known. It was noted that the University was not predicting any significant reduction in student numbers as a result of the new fees regime, but this remained a major risk, common to many, if not all, institutions.

HEFCE had not yet issued its annual assessment of institutional risk, pending analysis of these updates to the financial forecasts. The HEFCE letter would be shared with Council in due course.

It was agreed that a discussion with the Vice-Chancellor as to his views on how a more open 'market' in higher education might develop would be an interesting topic for a future awayday.

**Resolved** To receive and note the financial forecasts.

90 **Transition management Update** (agendum 11)

**Received** A report from the University Secretary, 'Transition Management update' dated 4 May 2011.

The Chair sought information about staff morale at this stage in the transitions process. It was explained that the period before Easter had been very difficult; however, for administrative staff, there was now greater certainty about roles and job security, which meant that the general view was much more positive, although staff were now experiencing the challenge of transitioning into their new roles. There were still some difficulties, and it was likely that gaps in staffing and operations would become apparent as the University transitioned fully into the new structures. Where problems were identified there was no lack of will within the Faculty teams to ensure that these were addressed. Many areas were already working well – finance processes were mentioned as an example; however it remained essential to ensure that crucial processes, such as student recruitment, were not adversely affected. As the changes took effect they may have some direct impact on academic staff. The University Secretary explained the arrangements in place for assessing and monitoring staff morale.

The Vice-Chancellor explained that, to ensure there was no impact on the crucial processes of student recruitment and enrolment, the pace of change had been slowed in respect of Student and Academic Administration (SAA), with additional time allowed for that Service to achieve its savings goals.

He paid tribute to the work of the University Secretary and his team in managing this very complex change programme to completion, to time (with the exception of SAA above) and on budget. He anticipated that, as the new structures became embedded, the need for further change would be identified, and this would be taken forward as necessary.

**Resolved** To note the report.

91 **Vice-Chancellor's report** (agendum 12)

**Received** The Vice-Chancellor's report, dated 18 May 2011.  
(The section headed 'collaboration opportunities in Singapore is commercial in confidence, although not so marked on the agenda).

The Vice-Chancellor apologised that a draft of his report, rather than the final version, had inadvertently been circulated. He presented his written report under the following headings:

- Students In Free Enterprise National Champions

- Support for Libyan Students
- OFFA Submission
- Off Quota University Places
 

The Minister for Higher Education and Science’s suggestion that universities might be permitted to charge up to full international fees to home/EU students willing to pay at that level (with no student loans), in order to increase the number of places available for such students, had been dropped very quickly. The Vice-Chancellor regretted the lack of debate on this, and had written an article for the Times Higher Education, to be published on 19 May, to seek to stimulate discussion (a copy was circulated to Council members).
- Initial Recruitment Data for 2011–12
 

The issues listed under the sub-heading ‘concerns’ were not current major issues, but rather issues to be considered in the longer term.
- Collaboration opportunities in Singapore
- Complete University Guide
 

The report ranked the University as 14th overall in the UK, the same position as in 2011. In response to a query about student satisfaction as a criterion, and the University’s performance in the National Student Survey, the Vice-Chancellor explained that although the University was performing well in the NSS, its comparators were improving their scores. In this situation Southampton needed to keep improving, as a static performance would mean we were likely to be overtaken in the rankings.

He regretted to report that the University had fallen 10 places in the rankings in the Guardian’s university guide published on 17 May. This was largely due to an apparent fall in performance in the ‘career at six months’ employability measure. It appeared that there were inaccuracies in the data submitted for this measure, and this was currently being investigated. He was however pleased to report that the University retained its number one ranking for electronic and electrical engineering and mechanical engineering, and was in the top ten for archaeology, computer science, modern languages, nursing and paramedical studies.
- Industrial Relations – UCU and pensions
 

The Joint Negotiating Committee of the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS) had met on 10 May 2011 and, on the casting vote of the independent Chair, had adopted the rule changes recommended by the USS Board in the light of the consultation process. A copy of a statement to staff from the Vice-Chancellor about the future of the Scheme, issued on 12 May, had been circulated to Council members. A more detailed pensions update would be presented to Council at the July meeting, with an opportunity for discussion.
- Development and Alumni
- New Research Awards
- Press coverage since the last meeting of Council
- UEG Decisions for Council attention

- Resolved** (i) To note the Vice-Chancellor’s report.  
 (ii) To note that a more detailed pensions update would be presented at the next meeting.

92 **Report from the President of the Students’ Union** (agendum 13)

**Received** The report from the President of the Students’ Union.

The President reported that:

- The Students’ Union Annual General Meeting took place on 17 May, at which a key issue for debate was the new policy on tuition fees. While the new policy continued to oppose the fees increase, the key focus was on ensuring that students received value for money with an excellent student experience in return for the additional financial outlay, and that the impact of the changes was minimised for future students. SUSU would continue to lobby nationally to resist further increases.
- The Students’ Union had made a successful bid to the Student Centeredness Fund to develop and re-furbish the Level 4 space in the main Students’ Union building, and the work would be completed over the summer. Thanks were due to Professor Humphris for her support.
- The annual ‘Excellence in Volunteering Awards’ had been very successful, and was streamed live on

'SUSU TV'.

- The Students' Union was in the process of registering as a charity with the Charities Commission. A very helpful meeting had been held with the Chief Operating Officer to discuss the process and implications.

**Resolved** To note the report.

93 **Financial monitoring 2010/2011: Management Accounts March 2011** (agendum 14)

**Received** The March 2011 management accounts, with a covering paper from the Chief Operating Officer, dated 19 April 2011.

The Chief Operating Officer reported that the April management accounts were now available, and showed the same underlying trends. In the March accounts the likely full accounting effect of the forthcoming acquisition of the Broadlands Archives had been included for the first time (+£5.15million). However, as it now appeared unlikely that the acquisition would be completed in this financial year, the effects had been excluded from the April projections, giving a projected surplus of £5.3million rather than the £9.8million predicted in March.

**Noted** The March 2011 management accounts and the oral update on the April 2011 accounts.

94 **Report from the meeting of the Audit Committee, 1 March 2011** (agendum 15)

**Received** The minutes from the above meeting of the Audit Committee.

The minutes were received under the following key headings:

Fraud report; Finance report; Risk Register and update on significant changes; TRAC return on University costs; Strategy for the development of the residential estate; Draft carbon management policy; Draft University tax policy and HMRC Annual Risk Assessment; Progress on responses to internal audit recommendations; Reports from internal auditors; Disaster recovery planning; External audit service (confidential minute).

Under this heading the Chief Operating Officer advised members that, following the conclusion of a tender exercise for the appointment of external auditors it was now recommended that Mazars be appointed as the University's external auditors for the 2010–11 financial statements, and that subject to continued satisfactory performance by Mazars, there would not be a further market testing exercise until the consideration of the external audit appointment for the 2013–14 financial statements (at the earliest).

- Resolved** (i) That Mazars be appointed as the University's external auditors for the 2010–11 financial statements and that subject to continued satisfactory performance, there would not be another market testing exercise until the appointment for the 2013–14 financial statements at the earliest.
- (ii) To note the minutes of the audit committee meeting on 1 March 2011.

95 **Sealing of Documents** (agendum 16)

**Received** A paper listing the documents sealed, dated 10 May 2011.

**Noted** The list of sealed documents.

96 **Valediction**

On behalf of all members the Chair thanked Mr Billy FitzJohn warmly for his very valuable contribution to the work of Council during his period of office as President of the Students' Union. He had faced a challenging year, participating in some very difficult and controversial decisions, and had done so in a very professional manner. Members wished him every success in the future.

Mr FitzJohn also thanked Council for the experience he had gained in serving as a member.