

# Minutes Unrestricted

**Meeting title:** Council

**Date:** Wednesday 25 January 2012

**Time:** 4.00pm

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

**Present:** Dame Valerie Strachan (*Chair*), Mr J Boyer, Professor I Cameron, Professor J Falkingham\*\*, Professor R Holdaway, Mr S Ling\*, Professor D Nutbeam, Dr M Read, Ms R Rivaz, Mrs H Smith, Dr G Spittle, Mr J Trewby and Professor A Wheeler

**In attendance:** The Registrar, the Chief Operating Officer, the Director of Communications and Marketing, the Director of Finance, the Pro Vice-Chancellor Education, the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Mrs J Williams.

\* not present for restricted business.

\*\* not present for Agenda Item 25.

The Chair welcomed Jo Williams, the new Head of Governance Services, attending her first full meeting of Council.

**Declarations of Interest:** All University staff present declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item 8 as members of the Universities' Superannuation Scheme (USS).

Mr Boyer declared an interest in respect of Agenda Item 17 as a member of the Council of the EPSRC.

## 50 **Presentation from Professor Ajit Sheno, Director of the Southampton Marine and Maritime Institute**

The Council received a presentation regarding the work of the Institute, detailing the stimuli for its creation, the scope of what it was covering, its vision and mission, its current position and the links made both externally and internally and the challenges it faced. Members noted and applauded the Institute's ambitions to be the best at what it did and highlighted the need to develop measures of its success. The Chair thanked Professor Sheno for his presentation and congratulated him on the impressive work carried out by the Institute so far.

The Vice-Chancellor highlighted that the Institute model was an important vehicle for innovation in education and for attracting talent and working with partners. He reminded members of Council that it was a part of the University strategy to create a small number of similar inter-disciplinary institutes across the University.

## 51 **Obituary**

The Chair reported with regret the death of Raymond Start an MPhil/PhD student in Education, in November 2011, and invited Members to stand as a mark of respect.

## 52 **Minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 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.

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

### 53.1 **Vice-Chancellor's Report** (Minute 32)

The Chair highlighted that the report on research income requested at the last Council was included on this Agenda at Item 17 – Financial Comparisons with other Russell Group Universities.

## 54 **Publication of unrestricted papers**

The Chair advised that the papers for agenda items 6, 7 and 10 were circulated as confidential to Council and should not be published on the open access site.

**Resolved** That with the exceptions set out above the papers circulated for the meeting on 25 January 2012 should now be published on the open access SUSSED site.

55 **Progress against actions agreed the Council Awayday, September 2011 (Agenda Item 5)**

**Received** A paper from the Vice-Chancellor advising of progress against actions agreed at the Council Awayday in September 2011.

The following key areas were highlighted:

- **Student Support:** Proposals for the Student Support and Access Agreement 2013/14 were detailed in a full report at Agenda Item 6. The Vice-Chancellor had been lobbying Government and Opposition parties in relation to Government policy on postgraduate students as this remained unclear.
- **Student assessment and feedback:** Work was being undertaken to more fully understand students' expectations in relation to assessment and feedback and to take action where required.
- **Student Evaluation & NSS:** Work was continuing to enhance the student experience and to improve response rates to the NSS.
- **Student Profile and Portfolio Review:** There was much volatility in the undergraduate market. Changes to the programme portfolio were being actively considered by the Provost and Deans in to best respond to student choices and market opportunities.
- **Raising the University Profile:** The research carried out on the University's profile had proved very useful. It was clear that it was regarded as a very good institution by those who had had contact with the University; but for many people not connected to it, their perceptions of the University were vague. It was essential that the University be proactive in reaching out to key constituencies, and a major initiative to celebrate the University's 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary will provide a platform for this activity in 2012.
- **Rebuilding the agenda around our enterprise activity:** The University was in the Top 5 for enterprise activities and would continue to work to maintain this performance.

In response to a question from Dr Spittle, the Vice-Chancellor noted that a report would be submitted to Council on the detailed proposals in relation to plans to allow students to personalise their own education. This would include proposals for the provision of support for students when considering pathways available to them.

Council noted that the University had employed an external agency to advise on the programme of activities to mark the Diamond Jubilee year. These proposals would be shared with the Council.

- Resolved**
- (i) To note the report.
  - (ii) That the Communications Management reputational survey report be circulated to all members of the Council.
  - (iii) That Council receive a schedule of when the detailed proposals in relation to the Away-Day activities, especially those relating to enterprise activities, would be brought back to them.

56 **University of Southampton Student Support Arrangements (Agenda Item 6)**  
[This item is commercial in confidence and a separate confidential minute is circulated to members of Council only.]

57 **Update on USMC Project (Agenda Item 7)**

**Received** A paper headed 'University of Southampton Malaysia Campus (USMC) – Progress Report' (*This paper was circulated as commercial in confidence*).

The Vice-Chancellor reported that the building work was progressing. The Director of Estates and Facilities was of the view that it would be completed on time, although some risks remained and progress would need to be monitored carefully. The Vice-Chancellor was confident that the academic programme would be complete; staff recruited had been of a very high calibre. The recruitment of students was of particular concern and was a significant risk. The University was working on contingency plans in relation to both the building work and student recruitment numbers. Council noted that the Chief Operating Officer would be taking over the project management from the University Secretary for the remaining 10 months of this phase of the project.

Consideration was needed at this stage to Phase 2 of the project. An initial report on this will be to the July Council meeting. Much had been learnt from Phase 1 and this learning would be applied in planning Phase 2.

- Resolved**
- (i) To note the progress, risks and mitigation set out in the progress report;
  - (ii) That the March Council Meeting receives a further update on progress with the project and with the recruitment of student numbers in particular.

58 **Report on USS Valuation (Agenda Item 8)**

**Received** A paper from the Director of Finance updating Council on the latest USS Valuation and the publication of a proposed recovery plan for the scheme deficit on 7 December 2011.

Council noted that the 31 March 2011 valuation had used a conservative and short term set of technical assumptions which had resulted in a deficit figure of £2.9bn. The information contained in the proposed Recovery Plan was more positive. The move to career revalued benefits in particular enabled the maintenance of current employer contributions of 16% for the six years to 31 March 2017. This provided reassurance for Council that the review had delivered a settled outcome for the University going forward.

**Resolved** (i) To note the report.  
(ii) That Council be kept apprised of superannuation issues on a regular basis as needed.

59 **Report from the Nominations Committee 25 January 2012 (Agenda Item 9)**

**Received** A tabled report from the Nominations Committee on 25 January 2012 recommending the appointment of an additional Class 2 member of Council.

The Chair reported that she had received a letter of resignation from Roger Henderson, QC and this had been accepted.

**Resolved** To appoint Ms Seetha Kumar as a Class 2 member of Council for an initial term of three years, commencing on 28 March 2012.

60 **Potential Collaboration with Azad University (IR) in Oxford (Agenda Item 10)**

**Received** A paper from the Vice-Chancellor seeking Council's views on a proposed co-sponsorship agreement between the University of Southampton and the Azad University (IR) in Oxford Limited (AUO). *(This paper was circulated as commercial in confidence).*

**Resolved** That, in the light of the potential intellectual benefits to be gained from such an agreement, Council supported the proposals subject to the inclusion of annual review arrangements within the agreement.

61 **Vice-Chancellor's report (Agenda Item 15)**

**Received** The Vice-Chancellor's report, dated 25 January 2012.

The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the following areas from his report:

- **Open Data Institute**  
This was a particularly welcome opportunity for the University.
- **Selected press coverage since the last meeting of Council**  
Recent press coverage had been particularly regular and positive. Council Members highlighted how useful they found the media summary.
- **Student applications and number controls**  
Members noted that the position with regard to student numbers was a volatile one and it was difficult to draw any conclusions from it at this stage. Overall the numbers showed a 4% reduction, but there was huge variations between disciplines. There was also no information regarding the national picture in terms of student application numbers.

**Resolved** (i) To note the Vice-Chancellor's report.  
(ii) That a more detailed report on student numbers be submitted to the March Council Meeting.

62 **Report from the President of the Students' Union (Agenda Item 16)**

**Received** An oral report from the President of the Students' Union.

Mr Ling presented his report under the following headings:

- **Governance (including appointment of trustees)**  
Council noted that the Trustee Board was being developed further. A second external trustee had recently been appointed to the Board and it was hoped to recruit two more trustees of equal quality shortly. The Students' Union recognised the benefits of the expertise the external trustees brought to their governance. The Union had held its first trustee away-day which had focussed on gaining a full understanding of risk management issues.
- **Student Union Master Plan**  
The Student Union plan was intended as a living document, which would be reviewed every year. Consideration was being given to the relationship between the Union and the University. Union

officers would be taking a trip with Estates and Student Services staff to look at how other universities and unions delivered a first rate experience for their students.

- **USMC Project**

The Union was giving consideration currently to how it would provide facilities to students on the Malaysia campus.

- **Level 4 Project**

The newly refurbished level 4 in the Students' Union building was being launched on 26 January 2012.

- **Prayer Space**

Mr Ling highlighted the importance of the Prayer Space for the University. The project was ready to commence and the space would be available by the next academic year. This was something which the University could be justifiably proud of.

- **Student Union Campaigning on Higher Education Issues**

The Union was working to improve its political influence locally and to link up with other unions to give itself more than just a local voice.

**Resolved** To note the report.

63 **Financial Comparisons with other Russell Group Universities (Agenda Item 17)**

**Received** the fourth annual set of financial statistics comparing Southampton with other mid-range English Russell Group institutions.

Council noted that the University's financial performance had improved. However, so had those of all the similar institutions.

**Resolved** To note the report.

64 **Annual grant letter from the Department for Business, Innovation and Skill to HEFCE (Agenda Item 18)**

Council noted that, at the time of the meeting, the letter had not been received and would be circulated as soon as it was available.

65 **Report from the Health and Safety Audit and Assurance Committee**

**Received** A report from the meeting of the Health and Safety Audit and Assurance Committee held on 25 November 2011. Ms Rivaz, Chair of the Committee, presented the report and highlighted two health and safety issues and the actions taken as a result.

**Noted** The two health and safety issues detailed in Minutes 3 and 4 the and actions taken as a result.

66 **Financial Monitoring 2011/12: November 2011 Management Accounts (Agenda Item 22)**

**Received** The November 2011 management accounts, with a covering paper from the Director of Finance, dated 11 January 2012.

**Noted** The November 2011 financial statements.

67 **Minutes of the Audit Committee 9 November 2011 (Agenda Item 22)**

**Received** The minutes of the Audit Committee on 9 November 2011.

**Noted** The Audit Committee minutes.

68 **Sealing of Documents**

**Received** A paper listing the documents sealed, dated 18 January 2012.

**Noted** The list of sealed documents.

69 **Valedictions**

Council recorded its particular thanks to Tony Strike, the University Secretary, who was leaving on 18 March 2012 to take up the position of Director of Strategy, Planning and Change at the University of Sheffield.