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| **Meeting title:** | | | Council | | |
| **Date:** | | | Wednesday 26th May 2021 | **Time** | 12.30pm |
| **Location:** | | | Via Microsoft Teams | | |
| **Present:** | | | Mr P Greenish (Chair), Prof. Dame M Atkins, Ms F Barnes, Dr V Cardo, Mr R Cartwright, Mr P Hollins, Professor J Holloway, Dame J Macgregor (Vice-Chair), Ms H Pawlby, President & Vice-Chancellor, Dr D Price, Professor P Reed, Mr W Shannon, SUSU President, Vice-President (Education), Dr A Vincent, Mr T Whitmore and Mr S Young. | | |
| **In attendance:** | | | Clerk to the University Council & Senate, Chief Operating Officer, Executive Director - Finance & Planning, Vice-President (Research & Enterprise), Dean of the Faculty of Environmental & Life Sciences, Director of Health, Safety & Risk, Dean of the Faculty of Social Sciences. | | |
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| **75** | **Apologies**  There was an apology from Mr G Hobbs. | | | | |
| **76** | **Minutes**  **RESOLVED** That the minutes of the last ordinary meeting held on 25th March 2021 confirmed as a correct record and signed. | | | | |
| **77** | **Actions and Matters Arising**  Council noted the Annual Calendar of Business and Council Responsibilities.  The outstanding actions (with the exception of an action for 2022) were to be discussed on this agenda. | | | | |
| **78** | **Declarations of Interest**  Dame Judith Macgregor declared an interest in respect of minute 84 as a member of the GCRF Advisory Group.  Chair of Council declared an interest in respect of minute 84 as a member of the UKRI Performance & Risk Committee.  Dame Madeleine Atkins and all staff present declared interests in respect of minute 90 as members of the USS pension scheme. | | | | |
| **79** | **Publication of unrestricted papers**  RESOLVED That only papers deemed not commercial in confidence be released. | | | | |
| **80** | **President and Vice-Chancellor’s Report**  Council noted highlights from the April and May 2021 editions of the Vice-Chancellor and Executive report.  The Vice-Chancellor highlighted:   * The University’s involvement and obligations related to the Broadlands Papers archive * The latest position regarding national research funding * Recent discussion regarding the obligations and action on universities to tackle sexual misconduct on campus * Items from the Queen’s Speech that affected the HE sector * The emerging responses to the Augar Review, including the potential for UK university fees to be reduced * Recent University success in the Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) assessment   The University’s involvement in Futurelearn activity was raised. It was noted that the University was very active in this area offering courses on a range of subjects from medical, finance to ocean and earth studies, and also was working to provide more online and Continuous Professional Development courses. An offer was made that the Vice-President (Education) would brief the Council member raising the query over Futurelearn, A report would come back to Council analysing the KEF outcome.  **ACTION: Futurelearn Vice-President (Education)**  **ACTION: KEF Analysis Vice-President (Research & Enterprise)**  **RESOLVED** that the update be noted. | | | | |
| **81** | **Report from the President of the Students’ Union** | | | | |
|  | Council considered a report by the President of the Students’ Union which provided an update on recent SUSU activity.  The President highlighted:   * Recent campaigns and events such as Welcome 2021, Summer Festival in June and events on Sustainability * Rent rebate activity and the support from one of the local MPs * Varsity events competing against the University of Portsmouth * Clubs and Societies activity, which would be returning for the summer term * Plans to re-open bars and spaces within SUSU on campus * SUSU 2021 Academic Awards which had been held online * Work on the SUSU strategy, governance review and budget position * An outline of future plans for SUSU buildings * Students concerns including uncertainty over the future of education delivery, assessment & feedback and student safety concerns as many students emerge from lockdown and prolonged periods of isolation   Thanks were expressed to the outgoing President, at her last formal Council meeting, for excellent leadership of the union under very difficult circumstances over the past year.  **RESOLVED** that the report be noted. | | | | |
| **82** | **President and Vice-Chancellor’s Annual Report on Health and Safety**  Council considered a report by the President and Vice-Chancellor which was the annual report on Health and Safety to Council. It provided a review of Health and Safety performance by the University during 2020, using the principles of Plan, Do, Check, Act. The objective of the report was to provide assurance of legal compliance to University Council and the Executive although there may be occasions when full assurance cannot be given. During both 2019 and 2020 a number of hazard themed audits were carried out on activities and risks which had the potential to cause very serious injury or death. Those audits identified several areas of concern, many of which were now being addressed. The Health, Safety & Risk directorate were, with the support of the University Health & Safety Committee and the Health & Safety Audit and Assurance Committee, continuing to work closely with Schools and Directorates to ensure all necessary action was taken as quickly as possible.  2020 had been dominated by the COVID-19 pandemic which had both positive and negative impacts on H&S. Positives included the improved collegiate approach to working in the University and also the increased profile of health and safety generally. It had also shown the benefits of having good University relationships with Southampton City Council, local NHS providers and local resilience forums.  Over the past year the Health and Safety team had lost experienced staff members and work was continuing to replace with competent staff members. The subject of wellbeing and mental health of both staff and students had been a major subject for the team which was addressed through the addition of counselling, CBT, training and awareness.  Recent hazard themed audits that had been undertaken by Health, Safety & Risk revealed areas of concern and while this was recognised as an issue, the fact that the audits identified the problems so they could be addressed was identified as being very positive and welcomed by Council. Corrective action now being put in place would increase resilience and make the University both safer and more robust for the future.  With regard to “near misses” reporting it was stated that reporting these incidents was generally good as shown by the data trends.  Council suggested that a major area of work for the team would be staff and student mental health and support as University life returned to normal over the coming year.  **RESOLVED** that the report be noted and the approach outlined for the development of University Health and Safety be endorsed. | | | | |
| **83** | **Health & Safety Audit & Assurance Committee (HSAAC)– Annual Report to Council**  Council considered a report by the Chair of the HSAAC Committee which set out the Health and Safety Audit and Assurance Committee’s annual report to Council on its findings following a day long Video meeting held in March 2021.  The HSAAC meeting had been held in March and it was noted that much work had been carried out the last two months since. Some weaknesses were highlighted to the Committee which then raised concern about potential additional unknowns. On this particular occasion after careful consideration, the Committee was unable to provide full assurance to Council because of the audit findings which had still to be resolved at the time of the HSAAC meeting. With regard to the University’s response to the pandemic, the Committee was of the firm view that the response had been extremely good and, in many ways, better than many other large organisations in the UK.  Council understood the partial assurance position provided by the Committee and also recognised that many improvements had been made since the Committee was held in March. The Chief Operating Officer outlined the work that had taken place not only recently in light of Covid-19 but also work undertaken over recent years and highlighted that training had improved significantly together with the introduction of new IT solutions to help the team monitor health and safety more effectively.  In order to provide an increased level of comfort, Council requested that an update report be provided after the next meeting of HSAAC in November which should detail an overall update but also focus on the mandatory aspects that had been identified by the Committee. **ACTION: Chair of HSAAC**  Council thanked the Health, Safety and Risk team for their work on leading risk management during COVID and for the improvements made during the past few years on health and safety for the university.  **RESOLVED** that the Health and Safety Audit and Assurance Committee’s report be noted and its assessment of the University’s health and safety performance endorsed. | | | | |
| **84** | **Research & Enterprise Strategy Update**  Council considered a report by the Vice-President (Research & Enterprise) which provided an overview of key elements of research and enterprise performance at the University of Southampton over the period August 1st 2019 to July 31st 2020 and its progress against the Research and Enterprise Strategy.  In presenting the report it was noted that the HESA data comparison had been delayed and there would be more on the KEF success reported at the July meeting, but overall it had been a better year than expected with both applications and funding awards exceeding expectation.  While it was noted that the University now had twelve subjects in the top 20 for funding per FTE, up from eleven last year, the fact that traditionally strong subjects for Southampton such as Engineering, Ocean and Earth Sciences and Medicine are outside the top 20 by this metric remained a concern.  Equality, Diversity and Inclusion should feature more prominently within the strategy especially in light of the good progress that had been made in this area generally in the University over the last two years.  With regard to setting out the priority of spend over the coming years, Council noted that the emerging University Strategy which would come to Council in the autumn, would influence to some extent the spending on research and enterprise and that some early discussion with major companies in differing sectors was underway to help set the scene for the future.  **RESOLVED** that the report be noted. | | | | |
| **85** | **Bridging Strategy KPI Update**  Council considered a report by The President and Vice-Chancellor which provided the latest progress report of the Bridging Strategy’s Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets. New data had become available to update three of the nine KPIs, generating flags in student success (KPI 4) and income (KPIs 5 and 6).  **RESOLVED** that the report be noted. | | | | |
| **86** | **Council Task & Finish Group – Council Operation**  Council considered a report by the Chief Operating Officer which set out the work and recommendations of a Council Task & Finish group that had been established to review Council and Committee operation. The group’s purpose was to review the current organisation of Council and Committee meetings and to make recommendations for change as required. Council must have due to regard its primary responsibilities, charitable status and regulatory requirements and this will guide delegation and decisions.  Council was supportive of the group’s recommendations.  **RESOLVED** that the following be approved and implemented:  (i) Have 2 strands of Council meetings  • One strand of 4 meetings per year of 3.5 hours duration, preceded by dinner the previous evening and a Faculty visit in the morning, including students. If at all possible, these meetings are in person and on campus.  • Another strand of 3 meetings per year of 2 hours maximum using Teams as virtual meeting.  (ii) Continue with an annual full-day away day for Council – normally alternating between virtual and in person.  (iii) Committee meetings to be sequenced so that they take place on fewer separate days and if possible are close to Council meeting days.  (iv) Agendas of Committee meetings and Council to be arranged so as to minimise re-presentation and re-discussion of items – consistent with probity and good governance.  (v) Council papers to have an Executive Summary, a reduced maximum length and revised coversheet to aid navigation; and to be “sponsored” by an executive member to ensure standards.  (vi) These proposals to be implemented through a full annual cycle (2021/22 academic year) starting September 2021 and then reviewed – for confirmation or revision. | | | | |
| **87** | **Management Information Proposal**  Council considered a report by the Executive Director, Finance & Planning set out how University intended to replace the Bridging Strategy’s Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets. It outlined some design principles for a new suite of KPIs together with the previous set of KPIs and an illustrative example of how a new set could be presented. It proposed a timeline for design and development of the new KPIs.  **RESOLVED** that the approach and the proposed design principles be endorsed. | | | | |
| **88** | **HR Matters**   1. Proposal for Redundancy – Health Research Group   **RESOLVED** that the report be approved.   1. Proposal for Redundancy – Global Recruitment & Admissions   **RESOLVED** that the report be approved. | | | | |
| **89** | **Update from First Meeting of Estates & Infrastructure Committee**  The first EIC had taken place with the focus on  -Checking the Committee’s understanding of its brief plus the key assumptions and constraints of the overall cash envelope  -Prioritising its 2021 agenda content and project reviews, plus considering -The decision tree process for the later projects  Council had seen in the UEM the overall planned spend of £500m over 5 years. The 5 year list of projects was considered for a sense check on timing, sequencing and logging any yet to appear assumptions such as business case and alignment to revised strategy. These projects include:  The Heart of Campus projects impacting on the student experience, Jubilee sports, SUSU, Library and Nuffield theatre. Total allocated spend of £75m internal funded and £25m external (Nuffield). The Jubilee sports project will be presented to Council in July.  Two longer term projects were noted:  -Winchester Cultural and Creative Hub  -Medical and Health research  **RESOLVED** That the update be noted. | | | | |
| **90** | **USS Pension Consultation**  At the November Council, members were given a brief on the progress of the 2020 valuation for the USS pension fund and the written response to the formal consultation on the Technical Provisions or liabilities. Based on the proposals put forward for consultation, and depending on the extent to which employers were able and committed to supporting the scheme, the fund’s deficit at 31st March 2021 could range from £9.8bn to £17.9bn, compared with £3.6bn at 2018 valuation. This would result in total contribution having to rise representing a simply unaffordable burden on both employers and staff.  The consultation material was complex and extensive and Council made the decision to form a Pension Committee to frame responses and make recommendation to Council on all future consultations on valuations or benefit reforms. This Committee met for the first time in February and has met 4 times this year to consider a valuation update from the USS Trustees and an employer consultation from UUK.  In March, the Committee received the Trustees update on the Technical Provisions based upon 3 scenarios linked to specific covenant support conditions, showing that total contributions from 1 October 2021 would have to rise which was not sustainable. The Trustees also indicated what would be needed, in their opinion, in terms of possible benefit reform against each covenant support scenario to maintain contributions at the current level. They did, however, make clear that NO meaningful future defined benefit pension provision would be possible without serious covenant support measures.  In April, UUK launched a consultation with employees seeking views on potential outcomes to the 2020 valuation. Most importantly, it sought views from all 340 employers on an alternative set of covenant support and benefit reforms that could keep current contributions unchanged with support for USS trustees.  The University has held a number of engagement sessions with staff on the current situation and has used a UUK survey to collect feedback from eligible members. Although the response rate was only 11% of those surveyed, the feedback did confirm the importance given by staff to the defined benefit and the general concern about contributions increasing. There was some criticism of the wording used by UUK, but the Committee felt it was better to use the survey unamended to remain consistent with all the other employers and to avoid concerns from staff that we were adding any of our judgement into the questions. The Committee also met twice with representatives from UCU to discuss their views.  Our response to the consultation was submitted on the 24th May 2021. The Joint Negotiating Committee will meet to discuss proposals from both UUK and UCU in the summer and formal consultations will probably take place in the Autumn.  Finally, there has been a response from the USS Trustees on their initial analysis of the modified hybrid structure proposed by UUK. They saw grounds for cautious optimism around the proposal but await to see what mandate UUK were given and what alternative proposals may come from UCU.  **RESOLVED** that the update and formal consultation response be noted. | | | | |
| **91** | **Degree Outcomes**  Council received a report from the Vice-President (Education). At the November 2020 meeting of Council, it was agreed that a ‘deep dive’ session be held into degree outcomes immediately before this May 2021 meeting, looking at in particular at:  • potential correlation between special considerations processes and degree outcomes;  • Summer 2020 degree outcomes and potential grade inflation, including comparative data from the Russell Group;  • attainment gaps between Black students and White students.  Following discussion with the Chair, it was agreed a single deep dive session covering all of the above would not be the most effective way of informing and engaging Council members on these topics. The topic of special considerations processes and degree outcomes would be covered under the Annual Assurance Statement (which Council will receive in November), and the topic of attainment gaps will be covered in the next report on progress against the Access and Participation Plan (which will also come to the November meeting of Council). **ACTION: Vice President (Education)/Academic Registrar**  The report provided an update for Council on the Summer 2020 degree outcomes data, considered against Russell Group comparators and within the wider context of the University’s Quality, Monitoring and Enhancement framework.  **RESOLVED** that the report be noted. | | | | |
| **92** | **Sealing of Documents**  Council received and noted a report detailing the documents sealed since the last report to Council. | | | | |
| **93** | **Chair’s Actions**   1. 22 April 2021 - approval of L7 Promotion for Dr Konstantinos Katsikopoulos – Southampton Business School 2. 12 April 2021 - Dr Stephan Onggo of the Southampton Business School promotion to level 7 and Dr Di Luo also from the Business School promotion to Level 6   **RESOLVED** that the actions be noted. | | | | |
| **94** | **Sustainability Strategy Update**  Council received an update on progress with the development and implementation of the University’s Sustainability Strategy. A reminder of the six sustainability goals was set out together with progress against each one. The roadmap to net-zero carbon emissions was also set out. Data was also provided that showed sustainability progress compared to competitors and how the University was working in partnerships with other organisations to help progress.  Council was reminded of the risks that could slow down the progress, including the recent political change at Southampton City Council which could reverse some previously agreed local sustainability policies.  **RESOLVED** that the update be noted. | | | | |
| **95** | | **Committee Minutes**  **RESOLVED** that the minutes be noted. | | | | |
| **96** | | **International Strategy Update**  Council considered reports by the Vice-President (International) – Interim, which provided details on progress with Trans National Education and also the Asia-Pacific Region Strategy.  Trans National Education  The report proposed a framework for assessing and selecting TNE projects.  The rationale was that TNE projects would enable the University to become a more global institution, enhancing its reputation and recognition worldwide as a leading University.  The objective was to develop a common, and hence consistent and transparent approach to assessing TNE opportunities.  The overall outcome would be identification and selection of TNE projects that enabled the University to achieve its overall strategy, as well as improving key aspects of University activity in particular reputation, academic capacity and risk mitigation related to international student mobility and incomes. The result would be an active portfolio of TNE projects that were subject to effective due diligence and project management, and so deliver greater benefits to the University.  The spread of international education opportunities was highlighted and it was stated that international student recruitment had risen from USA, Nigeria and India in particular over the last year. Over reliance on the Chinese market, while successful in the past, should not be the primary focus.  With regard to the investment in overseas capital, it was agreed that the words “large scale” be added to the recommendation to enable the University executive to have a degree of negotiation space.  **RESOLVED** that   1. a diversified portfolio of TNE is developed, in terms of different forms of TNE and multiple locations and partners be approved. 2. the framework and methodology outlined in recommendations 2-9 in the report, to achieve the diversified portfolio of TNE be approved.   Update on the Asia Pacific Region Strategy  The report provided an update on current activities in the Asia/Pacific region. A refreshed strategy for ASEAN under development by the VP International and PVC ASEAN (Prof. Rebecca Taylor), will explicitly draw upon the opportunities provided by UoS Malaysia.  The Asia-Pacific provided excellent further potential for greater partnership, alumni engagement and student recruitment. Within the region Southampton was particularly connected with Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO) and British Council staff in Australia, China, Hong Kong, India, Indonesia, Japan, Malaysia, New Zealand and Singapore. The Association of Commonwealth Universities and Worldwide Universities Network also provide excellent support in brokering connections in the region.  Southampton had strong and vibrant alumni groups in China, Singapore, Indonesia, Vietnam and Thailand which were keen to support the University. In-country staff were now based in China, Malaysia and India.  UoS Malaysia had the potential to provide a hub for ASEAN activities but the potential opportunities had yet to be fully understood and exploited. It was also recognised that the need to further strengthen alumni engagement in the region to raise profile and support recruitment and industry links was required.  A key focus in 2020/21 had been to increase PGT recruitment, conversion calling and targeting underperforming subjects. At under-graduate level, there had been continued focus on long term sustainable recruitment though partner and feeder institutions.  **RESOLVED** that the report be noted. | | | | |

**The meeting concluded at 4.07pm**

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**Actions**

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| **Min No./Year** | **Minute Title** | **Action Summary** | **Owner** | **Report Back Date** |
| 80/2021 | VC Report | KEF analysis | Vice-President (Research and Enterprise) | July 2021 |
| 80/2021 | VC Report | Give specific feedback to relevant Council Member on FutureLearn Activity | Vice-President (Education) | NA |
| 83/2021 | HSAAC Report to Council | Report back on progress of H&S recommendations | Chair of HSAAC | Nov 2021 |
| 91/2021 | Degree Outcomes | Special considerations processes and attainment gaps analysis | Vice-President (Education)/Academic Registrar | Nov 2021 |

