

UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

COUNCIL

19th May 2020 at 4.00p.m.

MINUTES OF VIRTUAL MEETING HELD USING ZOOM

Members present: Mr Ed Smith CBE (Pro-Chancellor, in the Chair); Mr Derrick Anderson; Ms Deborah Cadman OBE; Mr Alan Davey CBE; Professor Sir David Eastwood (Vice-Chancellor and Principal), except for Minute 20/44; Mr Malcolm Harbour CBE; Mr Richard Haywood (Deputy Pro-Chancellor); Professor Tim Jones (Provost and Vice-Principal); Mr Harjinder Kang; Professor Una Martin; Professor Karen Rowlingson; Dame Lin Homer; Mr Mick Laverty; Mrs Caragh Merrick (Treasurer); Ms Joanne Park (Guild International Officer); Professor Corey Ross; Mr Richard Swann; Ms Jacqueline Taylor; Professor Nicola Wilkin; Mr Josh Williams (President of the Guild of Students).

Also present: Professor Kathleen Armour (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education)); Professor David Adams (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor Richard Black (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Mr Simon Bray (Director of Campus Services) - for Minute 20/42; Ms Erica Conway (Finance Director); Professor Andrzej Gasiorek (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Ms Cathy Gilbert (Director of External Relations) - for Minutes 20/41 and 20/44; Professor Laura Green (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor Robin Mason (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International)); Mrs Colette McDonough (Assistant Secretary); Ms Gillian McGrattan, Director of Human Resources - for Minute 20/41; Mr Trevor Payne, Director of Estates - for Minute 20/42; Ms Emma Robinson (Interim Academic Registrar) for Minutes 20/41, 20/42 and 20/44; Mr Lee Sanders (Registrar and Secretary); Professor Jon Rowe (Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Mr Mark Senior - for Minute 20/41; Professor Tim Softley (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Transfer)); Mr Will Spinks, External Consultant - observing as part of the Effectiveness Review of Council.

Apologies: Dame Una O'Brien.

Papers: The minute book contains copies of all written papers or reports to which reference is made below unless indicated otherwise.

20/37 Minutes

Resolved: that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 2nd April 2020 be approved (CO.20.05.01).

20/38 Matters Arising from the minutes not addressed elsewhere on the agenda

Reported: that there were no matters arising.

20/39 Pro-Chancellor's Items

Reported: that there were no Chair's Items.

20/40 Vice-Chancellor's Items

Considered: the report of the Vice-Chancellor (CO.20.05.02).

[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]

20/41 Coronavirus (Covid-19)

(1) National Position

Reported that:

- (a) the government's support package for universities and students did not provide any new money for the sector but instead brought forward tuition fee payments via the SLC and QR funding. It would not provide any compensation for loss of international student recruitment income for 2020/21. It was possible that a second support package might be sought by the sector when the student recruitment position had clarified in September but any further government support was not certain;
- (b) the Office for Students (OfS) was consulting on a new temporary registration condition **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

(2) Update

Considered: the update on the work of the University in response to the Covid-19 pandemic (CO.20.05.03).

Reported:

- (a) that a framework for re-opening of the campus was being developed and this would be considered in detail at the next agenda item;
- (b) the development of a framework for educational resilience for 2020/21. Although it was still difficult to predict exactly how campuses would be permitted to operate in the next academic year, it had become increasingly clear that the University would need to put in place a modified education offer if it was to be resilient. This would cover issues such as the impact of social distancing and restrictions on large gatherings on delivery of teaching, recording lectures, making modules available both on-campus and online, ways to simplify the curriculum, revised assessment arrangements and student support. The University Education Committee had considered the framework on 11th May 2020 and would be recommending it for approval by Senate on 10th June 2020;
- (c) that, at its meeting in April, Council had approved arrangements for the operation of Council and its Sub-Committees, emergency powers and delegations during the Coronavirus Emergency. A log of the major decisions that had been taken as a consequence of COVID-19 was included as an Appendix to Paper CO.20.05.03. It was recommended that these arrangements continued to operate until 30th September 2020 which was the date of the first meeting of Council in the 2020/21 academic year.
- (d) that members of Council expressed their appreciation of the significant work being undertaken by the University to respond to the challenges and mitigate the impact of Covid-19 and their support for the University's approach. The discussion covered:
 - (i) the importance of ensuring delivery of resilient education provision at quality in order to meet student expectations, noting the supportive position taken by the government that higher education institutions could continue to charge the full £9,250 annual tuition fee for undergraduates as long as

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- (ii) high standards of provision were maintained; equalities, diversity and inclusion considerations, noting these were being addressed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), the Senior Education Team, and the Deputy-Pro-Vice Chancellor (Equality, Diversity and Inclusion) ;
- (iii) recognition of the extra support which first year and returning students would require because of the disruption caused to their studies by Covid-19;
- (iv) the impact of the pandemic on career opportunities for the University's alumni, noting that the University was developing plans to support this group, **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (v) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (vi) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

Resolved that:

- (i) Council commended the work the University was undertaking in response to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the next steps;
- (ii) Council was fully supportive of the Framework for Educational Resilience 2020/21, noting the Framework was vital to enable the University to offer resilient education in 2020/21 on which the University largest source of income was dependent;
- (iii) the arrangements for the operation of Council and its Sub-Committees, emergency powers and delegations during the Coronavirus Emergency approved by Council on 2nd April 2020 continue to operate until 30th September 2020 which was the date of the first meeting of Council in the 2020/21 academic year.

20/42 Campus Re-Opening – Developing the Framework

Considered: the Campus Re-Opening Framework (CO.20.05.04).

Reported that:

- (a) given the complexity of re-opening, the University's approach had been to develop a framework with principles for re-opening over two broad phases. Phase 1 would be the initial re-opening and continue over the summer – June to August 2020. Phase 2 would be the start of the next Academic Year in September. In the first instance the focus and energy would be on the initial phase of re-opening once the government had confirmed that universities could open more activities;
- (b) 1st June had been taken as the earliest potential date for the re-opening of some initial activities. This was in line with step 2 of the government roadmap, although this would be dependent on any government guidance for opening universities and educational institutions and could be later. The priorities for this phase would be priority research, education/student facilities particularly for students in residences and for postgraduate taught students, and relevant Professional Services. Phase 2 would be required for the start of the 2020/21 Academic Year in September (which was currently due to start on 21 September) and would be informed by the work Professor Kathy Armour was leading on the approach to teaching and learning next year. This would need to accommodate induction and arrivals through to any arrangements for November or January start dates for some programmes. It might be necessary to develop further phases as the University adapted to how the pandemic developed and to new ways of working. It would therefore be important to be agile in adjusting the plan;
- (c) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (d) as part of step one of its roadmap, the government had indicated that researchers in scientific laboratories could now return to work if they could not work from home and the place of work was open. However, careful planning was required for this to

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be done safely, and the campus was currently only open for a very restricted range of activities, principally related to Covid-19, with the intention of opening lab-based facilities early on in the re-opening process;

- (e) the Framework would continue to be developed over the coming weeks and months, particularly in light of the government announcements on the national plan to ease lockdown measures and the University's own experience of the early stages of Phase 1;
- (f) the discussion covered:
 - (i) the importance of retaining flexibility to adapt the Framework in response to changes in government policy, evolution of the pandemic and in light of experience of its operation;
 - (ii) the arrangements for communication of the plans for campus re-opening to staff and students, including the creation of an intranet site with short videos and a training course for staff returning to campus;
 - (iii) how the University's plans compared with those of other higher education institutions, noting that the University was at the forefront of the Russell Group in terms of having developed a Re-opening Framework and was sharing good practice with other members of Universitas 21;
 - (iv) the arrangements for social distancing in its areas of open space that might be accessed by the public.

Resolved that the Framework for campus re-opening be endorsed as set out in Paper CO.20.06.04 **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

20/43 Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee

Considered: the report of the meeting of the Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee held on 12th May 2020 (Paper CO.20.05.05).

(1) Baseline Budget 2020/21

Considered: the University's baseline budget for 2020/21 and work in progress to establish a starting point budget for 2020/21 that would take into account the anticipated financial impact of Covid-19 (CO.20.05.06).

Reported that:

- (a) the 2020/21 academic year would be challenging and it was essential for the University to position itself financially to manage the impact of Covid-19 and prepare for future recovery;
- (b)-(f) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

Resolved: that the baseline budget for 2020/21 and the approach to savings be approved as set out in Paper CO.20.05.06, **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

(2) Staff Survey 2019/20

Noted: that the findings of the Staff Survey 2019/20 would be considered by Council on 23rd June 2020.

20/44 **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

20/45 Any Other Business

Reported: that, given that each member of Council had already met with Will Spinks to give their views on the effectiveness of Council, it had been agreed that the one-to-one meetings normally conducted by the Pro-Chancellor, Deputy Pro-Chancellor and Treasurer over the Summer would be replaced by an introductory one-to-one meeting for each member of Council with the Pro-Chancellor Elect, Mervyn Walker. He would then share his early reflections on these at the September meeting of Council.

20/46 Programme of Meetings

Noted: the programme of meetings of Council for 2019/20:
Tuesday 23rd June 2020, 5.00pm, Council Presentation and Dinner
Wednesday 24th June 2020, 9.00am, Council Meeting