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UNIVERSITY OF BIRMINGHAM

COUNCIL

20th April 2023 at 3.15 p.m.

MINUTES OF MEETING

Members present: Mr Mervyn Walker (Pro-Chancellor and Chair); Ms Lucy Baldwin; Mr Tim Gardam; Professor David Hannah; Dr Clive Hickman OBE; Mr Steve Hollis; Dame Lin Homer; Professor Stephen Jarvis (Provost); Mr Harjinder Kang; Professor Pam Kearns; Mr Mick Laverty; Mr Anthony Lilley OBE; Ms Tianjie (Alice) Liu, Guild International Officer; Professor Catherine Mangan; Ms Acacia Matthews, President of the Guild of Students; Dame Cilla Snowball; Ms Jacqueline Taylor; Professor Adam Tickell (Vice-Chancellor and Principal).

Also present: Professor David Adams (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor Hugh Adlington (Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Transfer)); Mr Ben Bailey, Dubai Chief Operating Officer - for Minute 23/22; Professor Richard Black (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor William Bloss (Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Mr David Boardman, Head of Strategic Projects and Partnerships (EPS) - for Minute 23/23; Ms Erica Conway (Chief Financial Officer); Professor Deborah Longworth (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education)); Professor Robin Mason (Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International)); Mrs Colette McDonough (Head of Governance); Mr Trevor Payne, Director of Estates - for Minute 23/23; Professor Clive Roberts, Director of the Birmingham Centre for Railway Research - for Minute 23/23; Dr Emma Robinson (Academic Registrar) - for Minute 23/27; Professor David Sadler, Dubai Provost - for Minute 23/22; Mr Lee Sanders (Registrar and Secretary); Mr Mark Senior (Chief of Staff); Professor Mark Sterling (Interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College); Professor Andrew Stockley (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Head of College);

Apologies: Professor Helen Abbott; Ms Deborah Cadman OBE; Ms Lisa Fretwell; Ms Rosie Harris; Mr Richard Swann.

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

23/17 Declarations of Interest

**Noted:** that declarations of interest were made in relation to the National College for Advanced Transport and Infrastructure as set out below at Minute 23/24.

23/18 Minutes

**Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 1st February 2023 be approved (CO.23.04.01).

23/19 Matters Arising from the minutes not addressed elsewhere on the agenda

**Reported:** that there were no Matters Arising.

23/20 Pro-Chancellor's Items

(1) Council Strategy Day

**Reported:** that Council had held a Strategy Day on 20th April 2023, noting that:

- (a) the Strategy Day had commenced with a report from the Vice-Chancellor **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**;
- (b) the focus of the Strategy Day had been on Education. It comprised:
  - (i) Achieving Excellence in Education and Student Experience;
  - (ii) Knowledge, Attributes, Skills and Competencies: what is "Educational Gain" and how we measure it, including:
    - (a) models of learning for the future;
    - (b) preparing students for successful futures, noting the importance of the University of Birmingham Graduate Attributes in this regard;
    - (c) the implications of Artificial Intelligence for teaching, learning and assessment design;
    - (d) the platform put in place by the University to deliver education excellence and innovation in terms of education leadership, understanding and responding to the student voice and new approaches to Timetabling and the Compact Process;
  - (iii) a roundtable on Education Equity;
  - (iv) observation of scheduled learning and teaching activities across the campus;
- (c) a buffet lunch had been held with the Guild of Students Sabbatical Officers and students from each College to provide members of Council with the opportunity to hear directly from students about their experience at the University;
- (d) the focus of this Strategy Day had also provided additional assurance to members of Council on academic matters beyond that routinely provided throughout the year (Minute 22/73 refers).

(2) Appointment of Lay Member of Council

**Reported** that:

- (a) Council was invited to consider the recommendation that Mr Nick Owen be appointed as a Lay Member of Council for four years with effect from 1st August 2023;
- (b)-(d) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

**Resolved:** that Mr Nick Owen be appointed as a Lay Member of Council for four years with effect from 1st August 2023.

(3) Appointment of Next Chancellor

**Reported** that:

- (a) Council had approved the process for appointment of the next Chancellor last November;
- (b) the first meeting of the Chancellor Appointment Committee would be held on 18th May 2023;
- (c) following a competitive procurement process, Saxton Bampfylde had been appointed to support the University in the search for the next Chancellor;
- (d) a further progress update would be provided to Council in due course.

23/21 Vice-Chancellor's Items

**Considered:** the report of the Vice-Chancellor (CO.23.04.02).

(1) Industrial Action

**Reported** that:

- (a) despite positive talks between UCEA and UCU, facilitated by ACAS, UCU had not brought an end to their current period of industrial action and had secured a further six month mandate for industrial action from April 2023. UCU had called a marking and assessment boycott with effect from 20th April 2023;
- (b) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (c) the priority remained to minimise the impact of the industrial action on students, including ensuring that they received their marks and feedback, and – as long as they met the requirements of their course – were able to progress to the next stage of study or to graduate. Students had already been assured that all exams and assessments would continue to take place as planned, and that they should therefore continue to study and prepare for their exams and assessments in accordance with the published deadlines;
- (d) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (e) a further update would be provided to the next meeting of Council.

(2) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

(3) Honorary Professorship - Liam Byrne MP

**Reported:** that Liam Byrne, MP for Birmingham Hodge Hill, had accepted the offer of a three-year honorary professorship with the University. Mr Byrne would share his expertise and experiences of politics and serving in government, as well as his work on wealth inequality and international development, with students and academics.

23/22 University of Birmingham Dubai

**COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE**

(1) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

(2) Annual Report to Council

**Considered:** the Annual Report of the University of Birmingham Dubai to Council (CO.23.04.04).

**Reported** that:

- (a) Paper CO.23.04.04 reported progress on campus development, new programme development and accreditation, student recruitment and student experience, staffing, and key external partnerships and environment;
- (b) most of the post-occupancy challenges with the campus facility had now been addressed. These included the opening of the Dubai Roads and Transport Authority's sub-leased suite, the general engineering and wet labs, and the adjacent parkland space;
- (c) the campus had been inspected successfully for the first time under Ministry of Education compliance processes **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**. Fourteen programmes were being delivered for the first time in 2022/23;
- (d) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**. The student experience was becoming more dynamic as the campus scaled up, and the University had developed robust student

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- feedback processes;
- (e) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
  - (f) a cross-campus CoP28 Strategy Group had been created, co-chaired by the Head of Birmingham Institute for Climate Action and the Dubai campus Head of Research. A year-long programme of events and activity had been mapped out. As part of a strategy to create a wider regional role for the campus, several initiatives had involved the development of linkages outside the immediate environs of the GCC;
  - (g) research in and through Dubai would be policy-focused and impact-oriented. **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
  - (h) the discussion of Council covered:
    - (i) the scope for growing the University's research activities in Dubai **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**. A research showcase event to raise awareness and generate discussion of academic colleagues of research opportunities in Dubai was being held in Edgbaston in early June. The scope for alignment of the areas of priority for Dubai with the University's Research Themes, which had been shared with Council in February 2023, was noted;
    - (ii) the quality of the student experience at the University of Birmingham Dubai, noting that there was now a growing range of student-led activities, societies and sports, and that robust student feedback processes were in place;
    - (iii) the importance of engaging students in Dubai with the University's plans to grow the student population over time and the development of the student experience;
    - (iv) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**;
    - (v) the opportunities to grow student mobility between Edgbaston and Dubai as well as continuing to develop opportunities for connection of the student experience between the two campuses, for example, such as the provision of virtual internships;
    - (vi) the continued sensitivity of issues of equality, diversity and inclusion in the regional operating context and the University's effective response to these. The campus lead for EDI was a member of the campus Senior Management Team and of the University's Equality Change programme. All new staff were required to undertake an EDI awareness induction, which positioned the values of the University within the parameters of the Dubai operating context. This approach was operating successfully, and the campus was a safe, tolerant and inclusive environment;
    - (vii) the positive relationship between the Dubai Ministry of Education and the University of Birmingham Dubai.

**Resolved** that:

- (i) the Annual Report on University of Birmingham Dubai be approved as set out in Paper UEB.23.04.04;
- (ii) the Dubai Provost and Dubai Chief Operating Officer were thanked for all of their work and their progress in development of the University of Birmingham in Dubai to date.

23/23 Centre of Excellence for Railway Testing, Validation and Customer Experience (South Wales) and Centre of Excellence for Railway Through-Life Engineering (Humberside)

**COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE**

**[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

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23/24 National College for Advanced Transport and Infrastructure

**STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL AND COMMERCIAL IN CONFIDENCE**

**[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

*[Professor Stephen Jarvis and Richard Swann declared an interest in this agenda item by virtue of their membership of the NCATI Governing Board and were not party to the above resolution agreed by Council].*

23/25 Annual Risk Register Update

**Considered:** the Annual Risk Register Update (CO.23.04.07).

**Reported:**

(a) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

(b) that, as a result of considering regular risk register updates, UEB had been able to ensure that existing mitigating actions were in place and working effectively, and in some cases had identified specific further actions, **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**  
The actions agreed at the Away Day would subsequently be reflected in the Risk Register;

(c) that UEB reviewed the risk register on a quarterly basis (September and December 2022, and March 2023), whilst Audit Committee considered the register every six months (September 2022 and March 2023). The version in Paper CO.23.04.07 was the same as that considered by UEB and Audit Committee in March, noting that the Chair of Audit Committee confirmed that Audit Committee had been content and had not required any changes to the Register;

(d) the Council discussion of the Risk Register focused on:  
(i)-(ii) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

**Resolved:** that the Annual Risk Register Update be approved as set out in Paper CO.23.04.07.

23/26 Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee

**Considered:** the report from the meeting of the Strategy, Planning and Resources Committee held on 28th March 2023 (CO.23.04.08).

(1) Recruitment and Admissions Update

(a)-(g) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

(2) Q2 Projected Financial Outturn

(a)-(d) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

(3) 2023/24 Budget Principles and Assumptions

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**Noted:** the principles and assumptions for the 2023/24 Budget as set out in Appendix 1 to Paper CO.23.04.08.

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### (4) Pay and Pay Bargaining

#### **Noted:**

- (a) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (b) that SPRC had agreed that support staff should receive an annual uplift with effect from August in line with the 5%-6% that would have applied if these grades had been included in the national bargaining framework;
- (d) the impact of implementing the UCEA offer for 2023/24 to staff in Grades 6-10 in two tranches;
- (e) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (f) that the Pro-Chancellor, on behalf of SPRC, had granted approval, at the beginning of March 2023, for the University's 2% non-consolidated salary supplement for Grades 6 and above to continue until the end of July 2023;
- (g) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (h) **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

### 23/27 Senate

**Considered:** the report from the meeting of Senate held on 15th March 2023 (CO.23.04.09).

#### (1) Enhancement of the Academic Teaching Year and Assessment Calendar

#### **Considered:**

- (a) the proposed changes to the academic teaching year and assessment calendar as set out in Paper CO.23.04.10, with effect from the 2023/24 academic year;
- (b) the proposed academic teaching year dates for 2023/24 to 2027/28 as set out in Appendix 2 of Paper CO.23.04.10.

#### **Reported** that:

- (a) the structure of the University's current academic teaching year (known as NATY – New Academic Teaching Year) had been introduced from the start of the academic year 2020/21, having been approved by Council, on recommendation of Senate, in 2018. At that time, the changes had involved: the introduction of a two-week formal assessment period at the end of Semester One, the addition of a revision week at the end of each semester in week 12, the reduction of the Christmas and Easter vacation periods to three weeks each (from four), and the reduction of the summer assessment period to three weeks (from five). They had also included an inter-semester week (UoBe Festival) in January, between the assessment period and the start of Semester Two teaching, and a summer period, after assessment, intended to focus on skills development;
- (b) as part of the ongoing priority to improve student experience, and with two years experience of operating the NATY, the current academic teaching year and assessment calendar had been reviewed in response to student and staff feedback, and within the context of National Student Survey outcomes and wider strategic thinking about the University's assessment model. **[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**
- (c) Paper CO.23.04.10 proposed adjustments to the current 'standard' academic teaching year and assessment calendar (recognising that alternative calendars already operate for a number of professionally regulated programmes, including clinical programmes in Medical and Dental Sciences, and initial teacher education programmes in the College of Social Sciences). This revised structure would:
  - (i) retain the current two 11-week teaching periods, but introduce a mid-point

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- assessment support week and in-class revision and assessment support in week 11, and increase the vacation periods at Christmas and Easter to four weeks each;
- (ii) restructure the five formal assessment weeks, to provide one assessment week in January and four assessment weeks in the summer term;
  - (iii) move the current UoBe Festival week to after the summer assessment period, for a three-week duration, to include College and School-based transition and progression activity, a skills development programme, and interdisciplinary research project opportunities;
- (d) the update to the calendar structure was part of a wider University strategic review of assessment and feedback which also included new principles and guidelines for assessment design, managing marking loads and turnaround times, and the flexibility for programmes to assess integrated learning across both semesters where pedagogically appropriate;
- (e) specific dates for the academic teaching year had also been mapped from 2023/24 to 2027/28 and were included in Appendices 1 and 2. However, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) reported that further consideration had been given to the start date for the 2024/25 academic year, since this had been considered by Senate, and it was now recommended to Council that this be delayed by one week from 16th September to 23rd September 2024;
- (f) Council emphasised the importance of ensuring that Colleges and Schools fully engaged with the implementation of the proposed changes, especially given the significant amount of student support for them and their potential to transform the academic teaching year and assessment calendar. It was noted that the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), Academic Registrar and the rest of the Senior Education Team would work closely with Colleges and Schools to ensure effective delivery of this transformational enhancement of the academic teaching year and assessment calendar.

### **Resolved** that:

- (i) the proposed changes to the academic teaching year and assessment calendar be approved as set out in Paper CO.23.04.10 with effect from the 2023/24 academic year, subject to the amendment of the start date for the 2024/25 academic year from 16th to 23rd September 2024;
- (ii) the proposed academic teaching year dates for 2023/24 to 2027/28 be approved as set out in Appendix 2 of Paper CO.23.04.10, subject to the amendment of the start date for the 2024/25 academic year from 16th to 23rd September 2024.

### 23/28 Audit Committee

**Noted:** the report of the meeting of Audit Committee held on 23rd March 2023 (CO.23.04.11).

### 23/29 Capital Projects

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- (1) Molecular Sciences Building Project Update

**[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]**

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(2) Capital Projects Over £1m

**Noted:** the progress update on Capital Projects over £1m (CO.23.04.13).

23/30 Affixing of the University Seal

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**Received:** a report noting the transactions which had required use of the University Seal since the last meeting of Council (CO.23.04.14).

23/31 Any Other Business

**Reported:** that there were no items of Any Other Business.

23/32 Programme of Meetings

**Noted:** the programme of meetings of Council for the remainder of 2022/23 and for 2023/24:

2022/23

Tuesday 27th June 2023, 5.00pm, Council Presentation and Dinner

Wednesday 28th June 2023, 9.00am, Council Meeting

2023/24

Tuesday 10th October 2023, 6.00pm to 9.00pmm, Council Dinner

Wednesday 11th October 2023, 9.00am to 6.00pm, Council Strategy Day

Tuesday 28th November 2023, 5.00pm to 9.00pm, Council Presentation and Dinner

Wednesday 29th November 2023, 9.00am to 12 noon, Council Meeting

Tuesday 6th February 2024, 5.00pm to 9.00pm, Council Presentation and Dinner

Wednesday 7th February 2024, 9.00am to 12 noon, Council Meeting

Wednesday 24th April 2024, 9.00am to 9.00pm, Council Strategy Day and Dinner

Tuesday 25th June 2024, 5.00pm to 9.00pm, Council Presentation and Dinner

Wednesday 26th June 2024, 9.00am to 12 noon, Council Meeting