



University of Exeter

**COUNCIL**

**MINUTES AND ACTIONS – APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

18 April 2024

10.00am-2pm

Masters Suite, Penryn Campus (Cornwall) and online via Microsoft Teams

NB text in BLACK for publication; text in BLUE has been redacted for publication

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Council Meeting

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- 23.87 Final University Terms and Academic Calendar
- 23.88 Faculty of HASS: Strategic Update Session
  - a) Introduction to the Faculty Team and Faculty Performance
  - b) HASS Faculty Roadmap: Major Initiatives delivering Strategy 2030
    - i. Law 2030
    - ii. Creative Industries
    - iii. International Relations and Politics (including Defence & Security, Centre for Computational Social Science, Forensics)
  - c) Faculty of HASS: Research Spotlight Session
- 23.89 Chair's Closing Remarks
- 23.90 Part II (For Approval)
- 23.91 Part II (For Noting)

**Attendees:****MEMBERS PRESENT**

Quentin Woodley	Pro-Chancellor and Chair
Professor Lisa Roberts	President and Vice-Chancellor
Professor Tim Quine	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience)
Professor Dan Charman	Senior Vice-President and Provost
Sally Cabrini	Pro-Chancellor and Senior Independent Governor
Damaris Anderson-Supple	Independent Member
Nicholas Cheffings	Independent Member
Karime Hassan	Independent Member
Professor Malcom Skingle	Independent Member
Alison Reed	Independent Member
Tim Weller	Independent Member
Glenn Woodcock	Independent Member
Sarah Matthews-DeMers	Independent Member
Professor Barrie Cooper	Senate Representative
Professor Sue Prince	Senate Representative
Professor Karen Knapp	Senate Representative

Shades Chaudhary	Professional Services Representative
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**SECRETARY**

Mike Shore-Nye	Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary
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**MEMBERS APOLOGIES**

Richard Atkins	Pro-Chancellor and Deputy Chair of Council
Andrew Greenway	Independent Member
Salam Katbi	Independent Member
Alex Stanley	Education Officer and Representative of the Exeter Students' Guild
Connie Chilcott	President Exeter, Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union
Ali Chambers	Chief Executive Officer, University of Exeter Guild of Students

**STAFF IN ATTENDANCE**

Dave Stacey	Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Executive Divisional Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Commercial Services
Alison Chambers	Chief Executive Officer, University of Exeter Guild of Students
Imelda Roberts	Executive Divisional Director of Human Resources
Dr Jeremy Diaper	Assistant Director, Governance (minutes)

**Minute Item 82**

Professor Richard Follett	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement)
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**Minute Item 88 - Faculty of HASS**

Professor Gareth Stansfield	Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean
Professor Adam Watt	Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Faculty of HASS)
Professor Helen Berry	Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Faculty of HASS)
Professor Duncan Russel	Associate Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education and Student Experience

**Minute Item 88c – Research Spotlight Session**

Dr Ina Inge	Senior Lecturer in German
Professor Kate Fisher	Professor of History
Professor Rebecca Flemming	Professor of Ancient Greek Scientific and Technological Thought
Professor Maziyar Ghiabi	Professor of Social Sciences
Dr Lewys Brace	Senior Lecturer in Computational Social Science
Dr Carly Ameen	Lecturer in Bioarchaeology
Richard Moorhead	Professor of Law and Professional Ethics
Professor Jamie Hampson	Associate Professor of Rock Art and Indigenous Heritage
Professor Jose Iriarte	Professor of Archaeology
Dr Simon Hayhoe	Associate Professor of Special Educational Needs
Professor Hugh Roberts	Professor of French Renaissance Literature
William Galloise	Assistant Director, Arab and Islamic Studies
Professor Ayesha Mukherjee	Associate Professor of Early Modern Literature and Culture
Professor Leif Isaksen	Director of Digital Humanities
Rob Sherman	Lecturer in Digital Liberal Arts
Dr Rebecca Hillman	Senior Lecturer in Drama

**79. Chair’s Welcome and Declarations of Interest**

79.1 the Chair welcomed Council members to the Council Strategic Away Day.

79.2 the Chair noted that apologies had been received from Richard Atkins, Ali Chambers, Connie Chilcott, Andrew Greenway, Salam Katbi and Alex Stanley.

**80. Chair’s Business and Matters Arising**

80.1 the Chair provided the following updates to the Committee:

**a) Students’ Union SuperAnnuation Scheme (SUSS) Update**

80.1.1 further to Council’s approval in December 2023 to provide formal “giving of notice” to the Students’ Union Superannuation Scheme (SUSS), a final section 75 debt payment of £4.65m was confirmed on 31 January 2024, with payment made on 23 February 2024;

80.1.2 a letter of thanks from the Education Officer of the Guild and interim Chair of the Board of Trustees had been received by the Chair of Council which expressed gratitude to Council for extinguishing the previous financial liability and exposure to risks surrounding annual deficit payments;

**b) Revolving Credit Facility**

80.1.3 following Council’s approval in February 2024 to proceed with the proposed approach to the tender and negotiation of a replacement Revolving Credit Facility, the Chief Financial Officer had received a series of Lender Presentations. Submissions had been received on Thursday 11 April 2024 with all lenders making very strong bids;

80.1.4 the University would be proceeding to commercial negotiations with the leading bidder to determine the most advantageous option. A further progress update would

be provided to the Council Financial Review Sub-Committee on 9 May 2024;

**c) Chair's Action: Updates to Financial Regulation Thresholds**

80.1.5 the Chair of Council approved via Chair's Action a minor update to the University's Financial Regulations to ensure these were in alignment with UK Procurement Thresholds that came into effect earlier this year (1 January 2024). The Financial Regulations had been updated and re-published on the relevant University webpage;

**d) Chair's Action: Updated Student Protection Plan**

80.1.6 following close consultation and collaboration with student representatives and formal endorsement by UEB, Senate and the Student Experience Partnership Board, the Chair of Council signed-off via Chair's Action on the formal submission of the updated Student Protection Plan to the Office for Students (OfS);

80.1.7 the Updated Student Protection Plan had been submitted to the OfS with a wider update on key aspects related to Condition E (Good Governance), including an initial indication that the Council Assurance Review full report and recommendations would be considered by Council on 18 April 2024. Further information would be provided to the OfS following the meeting;

80.1.8 A copy of the revised and updated Student Protection Plan had been included in Part II for information.

**e) St Luke's Masterplan Framework Presentation**

80.1.9 further to the update on the Capital Strategy provided at the Council meeting in February 2024, a link to a 20-minute video presentation on the St Luke's Masterplan Framework delivered by James Hutchinson (Director of Estates Services) and Robin Holloway (Assistant Director, Capital Development) had been circulated to Council on 15 March 2024 for information ahead of the scheduled public consultations in April 2024;

**f) Council Member Recruitment AY 2024-25**

80.1.10 a number of strong candidates had been identified in the recruitment search for an Independent Member of Council with the requisite credibility and experience to join Council from 1st August 2024;

80.1.11 a shortlisting meeting would be held with Odgers Berndtson on 1 May 2024. Following a robust selection process, including due diligence checks and a series of informal 1-2-1 meetings and panel discussion with shortlisted candidates, a recommended candidate would be presented to Nominations Committee for endorsement to Council for final approval on 11 July 2024;

80.1.12 the Chair of Council had consulted individually with Glenn Woodcock and Salam Katbi (Independent Members – Class II) regarding an extension to their current Terms of Office for a third term until 31<sup>st</sup> July 2027. Both individuals had enthusiastically confirmed their willingness and availability to extend their current term of office for a third and final term;

80.1.13 Nominations Committee had unanimously agreed to endorse to Council the proposed extension to the Terms of Office for Salam Katbi and Glenn Woodcock.

**AGREED:** to approve the proposed extension to the terms of office for Salam Katbi and Glenn Woodcock for a third and final term from 1<sup>st</sup> August 2024 until 31<sup>st</sup> July 2027.

**g) Appointment of the Divisional Director of Digital Transformation**

80.1.14 that Christ Frost (currently Head of Digital Services and Customer Experience at the Met Office) had been appointed as the new Divisional Director of Digital Transformation following an extensive external recruitment process and would take up the role from 17 June 2024.

**81. Sector Update, including UK Higher Education Financial Sustainability (CNL/107/23-24 Confidential)**

*The President and Vice-Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer delivered a presentation providing Council with a Higher Education Sector Update.*

81.1 that in spite of the forthcoming General Election 2024, there was no indication that there would be any significant shift in the government HE policy landscape. An imminent change to the UK HE fee structure or increase in funding for Universities was considered to be highly unlikely;

81.2 the Secretary of State for Education had issued guidance to the OfS in April 2024 that indicated the amount allocated to HE Providers funding for Student Premiums must be increased by at least £5m to support students in financial hardship as a result of cost-of-living pressures;

81.3 Luke Hall had been appointed in March 2024 to replace Robert Halfon as Minister of State for Skills, Apprenticeships and Higher Education. First elected as a Conservative MP for Thornbury and Yate in the 2015 election, he had previously been Deputy Chair of the Conservative Party and was the first Minister for Higher Education that had not previously been to University;

81.4 the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) had accelerated the timeframe for publishing the report of its review into the graduate route to 14 May 2024. The Graduate route visa had led to a c. £60bn boost to the UK economy and remained central to international student recruitment in a globally competitive market. There were significant sector-wide concerns that the MAC review could result in removal of the post-study work visa for international students which would make the UK HE sector less attractive as a destination to study;

81.5 the PWC report on UK Higher Education Financial Sustainability published in January 2024 emphasized the significant financial challenges facing the sector. In spite of the fact the report was based on a small sub-set of higher performing and more resilient institutions, it highlighted an extremely challenging financial outlook, with funding per domestic student down 39% in real terms and a significant rise in cost base;

81.6 in light of the extremely challenging sector-wide environment it remained imperative to continue investment in the Strategy 2030 ambitions and to enhance the global reputation, grow research power and develop a distinctive and attractive educational model;

81.7 that it would be critical to maximise the £9,250 tuition fees and to generate a financial margin on this through alternative delivery models and more efficient modes of delivery of teaching;

- 81.8 the University also needed to expand its educational offering into TNE, Executive Education and Continuing Professional Development;
- 81.9 that there was no change in Exeter's overall performance in terms of total income generated in 2022/23, with the University placed in the middle of the Russell group for growth of income;
- 81.10 that the few institutions who had been able to grow postgraduate taught international in the current challenging recruitment context had attributed this to a top 100 ranking in the QS league table and alignment with key growth areas, including: Computer Science; AI and Engineering.

### Closed Minute – Confidential

#### **82. Update on Student Numbers and Admissions for 2024-25 (CNL/108/23-24 Confidential)**

*The Chair welcomed Professor Richard Follet (Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Global Engagement) to the meeting to deliver an update presentation on Student Number and Admissions for the Academic Year 2024-25.*

- 82.1 the main application period for Undergraduate admissions had concluded. The deadline for applicant decisions to either confirm the University as a firm offer, insurance or rejection was 6 June 2024. A-level results would be released to candidates on 15 August 2024, with the confirmation and clearing process following on from this;
- 82.2 the international applications cycle was two-thirds complete. Postgraduate Taught applications would continue to be accepted until late August for International students and September for home students;
- 82.3 the main focus was on conversion activity, with a range of key elements being enhanced to increase the University's competitive advantage;
- 82.3 a summary of the University's current admissions position was provided:
- 82.3.1 the University's UG Home applications was currently expected to meet target. The University had secured the 8<sup>th</sup> largest number of applications in the UK and achieved 10% growth on last year. This would be achieved through routine grade softening and clearing. The provision of unconditional offers had resulted in students accepting and firming up offers which was a positive sign;
- 82.3.2 in terms of the University's UG international admissions this was not expected to meet target, despite continued growth and potential highest ever intake;
- 82.3.3 the PGT international market continued to be extremely volatile and challenging, with sector-wide applications down between 20-45% on last year. Across the UK sector applications were typically down by c. 28% which was being driven by a number of factors, including economic, government policy on visas and dependants, and increasing competition from Australia, North America and Hong Kong;
- 82.3.4 the University was on track to meet its targets in Degree Apprenticeships and online;

82.3.5 intake modelling scenarios and reprofiled international student number plans for the next 5 years were currently being finalised and would be shared with Council in the May Admissions Report. In light of the market volatility, this would include upper and lower thresholds;

### Closed Minute – Commercial in Confidence

*The Chair thanked Professor Richard Follet (Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Global Engagement) for his contribution to the meeting and invited him to leave.*

### **83. Update on the Capital Strategy (CNL/109/23-24 Confidential)**

*The Chair invited Mike Shore-Nye (Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary) to deliver a presentation on the Capital Strategy.*

83.1 further to the feedback provided to Council at the meeting on 28 February 2024, a presentation was delivered to provide additional information on the following:

83.1.1 a progress report on the decarbonisation of the estate and the next stage of its evolution;

83.1.2 an amended capital strategy responding to Council's feedback, including creation of investment capacity for Streatham Library optimisation and Cornwall Sport;

83.1.3 an overview of the estate long-term maintenance strategy;

83.1.4 the Capital project Council decision gateways for 2024/25;

83.2 in relation to the Infrastructure Decarbonisation Master Plan:

83.2.1 the Infrastructure Decarbonisation Master Plan incorporated a series of decarbonisation projects totalling c. £91.7m allocated over 10 years. The Heat work study currently underway would inform whether this placemaker could be reduced. The Business Case was being reviewed by the Strategic Investment Committee (SIC) and Council would be updated on progress and any proposed changes to the plan in due course;

83.2.2 in addition to the Solar PV/Wind on the top of buildings on the Streatham and Cornwall campuses, there was a further opportunity to reimagine additional space on a field site in Cornwall for renewable energy which could be expanded on a commercial basis;

83.2.3 the HV upgrades related to enhancing the energy efficiency and electricity infrastructure of research lab equipment;

83.2.4 the smart buildings investment would provide capacity to switch off heating and lighting in a more agile fashion in older buildings.

83.2.5 to address c. £36m of identified maintenance requirements the IDM budget had been reprofiled and identified c. £24.5m of projects which can be reallocated to LTM, whilst remaining within the overall capital envelope;

83.3 in response to feedback at the Council meeting in February 2024, investments totally c. £7m for Library Optimisation at Streatham had been incorporated within the plan to enhance the quality of study space in the library, along with c. £3m for Sport in Cornwall in recognition that this remained an important aspect of the student experience and integral to enhancing

student health and wellbeing.

83.4 in relation to the 10 year Long Term Maintenance (LTM) Plan Overview:

83.4.1 in light of the c. £233m of long-term backlog maintenance, prioritisation had been given to projects that addressed combined LTM and sustainability needs and had maximum impact and longevity;

83.4.2 a revised LTM plan would be developed and where possible a holistic project approach would be adopted to realise synergies, by combining LTM with decarbonisation initiatives, learning space upgrades and digital infrastructure to deliver maximum impact and efficiency, both financially and operationally;

83.4.3 the identified funding model for the LTM plan would result in a reduction to 9.3% by 2032/33 in alignment with industry benchmarks, which defined a manageable backlog level of 10-15% of the insurance reinstatement value of the estate;

83.5 the stages of Council Approval for Capital Projects (Strategic Outline Case, Outline Business Case and Final Business Case) would provide an opportunity to comment and feedback on the details of each project and ensure appropriate alignment with Strategy 2030 and key strategic enablers;

83.6 Council noted the proposed Council decision gateways over a 12 month period between March / April 2024 and March / April 2025;

83.6 in discussion:

83.6.1 that there was an opportunity to more proactively promote the significant investment the University was prioritising in decarbonisation of the estate to affirm the continued institutional commitment to sustainability in alignment with the University's ambitions within Strategy 2030;

83.6.2 that as part of the Business Case approval process it would be important to provide options analysis to Council and a clear strategic rationale for the proposed investment including why it constituted the optimal use of funds, particularly in an increasingly challenging economic environment and backdrop of strong sector-wide financial headwinds;

83.6.3 as part of early discussions on capital projects it would be beneficial to provide Council with more detail about the requirements for each building and how it would enable the University to maximise strategic ambitions to ensure each development was aligned with delivery of strategy 2030;

83.6.4 that it would be helpful for Council to be provided with an indicative sense of the key strategic issues that would need to be reflected on as part of the development of the capital plan and prior to the Strategic Outline Case;

83.6.5 that it would be important to incorporate a clearer alignment and interconnection between the proposed investments and projected international student numbers, to ensure Council had assurance that the international student recruitment numbers were achievable prior to further investment. It was noted that the Penryn 2.0 Full Business Case Summary had been deferred to October 2024 to ensure that there was sufficient confidence in the projected growth postgraduate student numbers;



83.6.6 it was recognised there was need to provide further detail to Council surrounding the future approach to pedagogical provision and how the curriculum for change programme would impact the way in which teaching was delivered to students and the related future requirements for learning and teaching spaces. Council were notified that a detailed discussion would be held on the curriculum for change programme at the Joint Senate / Council meeting in May 2024;

83.6.7 whilst Exeter's rate of capital investment had fallen from 3<sup>rd</sup> lowest in the Russell Group in 2021-22 to the lowest in the Russell Group, it was recognised that following the Covid-19 pandemic there had been a rapid shift towards digitalisation both in the HE sector and beyond which made it important to also reflect on wider societal shifts enabled by rapid technological advancement. It was highlighted that the 21<sup>st</sup> century student experience would require utilisation of latest digital enhancements (including Artificial Intelligence and Digital), but that even a transition towards digital delivery would not result in a binary distinction between face-to-face and online, but incorporate blended elements of pedagogical experience;

#### Closed Minute – Commercial in Confidence

#### **84. Accelerating Data Science and AI (ADA Initiative): Full Business Case (CNL/110/23-24 Confidential)**

84.1 Accelerating Data Science and AI (ADA) was a major initiative of Strategy 2030, delivering against the key strategic drivers of STEMM growth, research power growth and high margin activities, including: growing the international student population;

84.2 through the investment in Accelerating Data Science and AI (ADA), the University would be able to grow the Computer Science academic workforce from 65 FTE to 250 FTE (inclusive of externally funded research posts), and deliver a cumulative £31m increase in research income over a five-year period;

84.3 as part of the 10-year capital strategy the proposed capital investment would extend the current departmental home through modification of existing and learning spaces in Innovation Centres 1 and 2 on the Streatham campus to provide larger Data Science and AI teaching labs to support student growth, additional research space and increased flexibility for Professional Services;

84.4 the University had already recruited high-quality staff to support the proposed growth and the investment was focused on capital development;

84.5 in order to efficiently create Data Science and AI teaching and research spaces within our existing buildings, Professional Services teams from the Research Services, Exeter Innovation and External Engagement and Global (currently based in Innovation Centre 2) would be housed in remodelled spaces through enabling the space gain resultant from adopting hybrid working across those divisions. Further work was underway to continue to develop a full communications plan to enable effective engagement with impacted teams to ensure their support;

#### Closed Minute – Commercial in Confidence

**AGREED:** that all Business Cases for capital developments presented to Council would in future contain a clearer rationale for any associated student number growth and a clear diagram illustrating the differential between student and staff numbers before and after the investment.

**APPROVED:** the Capital Development to enable the 'Accelerating Data Science and AI' (ADA) Initiative as detailed in the Full Business Case Summary.

### **85. Enabling 2030 Strategy Update (CNL/111/23-24 Confidential)**

85.1 the Enabling 2030 Group (co-chaired by the Senior Vice-President and Provost and the Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary) had responsibility on behalf of UEB to oversee and support efficiency initiatives across Faculties and Professional Services in the 5 key workstreams, including: Research, Teaching, Non-Pay, Professional Services Redesign and Digital, and Workforce Planning;

85.2 Council noted the current focus and aims across each of the 5 Enabling workstreams and the particular focus on delivering outcomes to enable financial efficiencies;

85.3 in relation to the Voluntary Severance Scheme:

85.3.1 following announcement of the Scheme on 25 March 2024, the Voluntary Severance Scheme would open to applicants on 7 May 2024 for 5 weeks;

85.3.2 the Institutional Voluntary Severance Panel would meet to approve applications on 4-5 July 2024, with an update provided to Council on the Voluntary Severance Scheme outcomes on 11 July 2024;

85.3.3 to enable successful delivery of the Voluntary Severance Scheme, the University had supported leaders across the University with delivery of 2 phases of training for over 120 staff across all Faculties and Divisions;

85.3.4 to support staff in making informed decisions, a refreshed Voluntary Severance website had been updated following the institutional announcement to include video guidance and a dedicated team to support applicants;

85.3.5 a clear focus had been maintained on ensuring a consistent communications narrative was aligned within the positive context of continued commitment to Exeter's strategic future, delivery of strategy 2030 and importance of retaining key staff along with providing career development opportunities;

85.3.6 a range of engagement activities had been undertaken for key groups, including: Senate, the Senior Leadership Forum, Trade Unions, the Students' Union / Guild and external stakeholders;

85.3.7 the Enabling Strategy 2030 and Voluntary Severance workstream risk registers had been reviewed by Audit and Risk Committee on 5 March 2024 and 2 Business Continuity workshops had been held to inform future plans;

**Closed Minute – Strictly Confidential**

**86. Council Assurance Review (CNL/112/23-24 Confidential)**

86.1 in the Academic Year 2022-23, Nominations Committee and Council approved the establishment of a Task and Finish Group to oversee a Council Assurance Review in order to examine the current assurance processes in detail and identify the most effective mechanisms for providing Council with oversight, assurance and the appropriate levels of scrutiny in relation to institutional strategies and policies, major strategic initiatives and management of key risks;

86.2 the proposed Membership, Terms of Reference, Methodology and Scope of the review had been endorsed by both Nominations Committee and Council. The Council Assurance Review Group was chaired by Quentin Woodley (Chair of Council), with representation from Mike Shore-Nye (Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary), Professor Dan Charman (Senior Vice-President and Provost) and Sir Richard Atkins (Pro-Chancellor and Deputy Chair of Council). Professor Janice Kay (Special Advisor to the Vice-Chancellor) was previously an ex-officio member of the Review Group in her previous role as Provost and attended the first meeting of the Review Group in May 2023;

86.3 the Council Assurance Review was undertaken over a period of 11 months from April 2023 – March 2024 and was led by the Assistant Director (Governance) who was responsible for undertaking a series of 1-2-1 interviews (including independent Members of Council, UEB and key professional services staff), a detailed desktop analysis, benchmarking exercise, and wide-ranging review of international and external governance documentation, which informed the production of a comprehensive 119 page report;

86.4 the review was one of the most detailed and comprehensive reviews of institutional governance undertaken in the UK Higher Education sector in the last 5 years and was distinguished from other governance effectiveness reviews by a range of leading-edge sector practice, including:

86.4.1 incorporating extensive benchmarking analysis across a wider range of peer institutions, Including: all of the Russell Group, former 1994 Group of Universities, and selected overseas competitors (including USA, Canada and Australia);

86.4.2 includes a more detailed and analytical desk-based review of the minutes, agendas and papers of Council and its sub-committees over a 5 year period (Academic Year 2018-19 to Academic Year 2022-23);

86.4.3 informed by a comprehensive review of every publicly accessible HE governance effectiveness review undertaken in the last 5 years across a range of institutions, including externally commissioned reviews by Shakespeare Martineau, Advance HE, Halpin, the Good Governance Institute, Nous Group and internal reviews undertaken by governance teams;

86.5 the full report and all 57 recommendations within the report (included as Appendix B) had been unanimously endorsed by both the Council Assurance Review Group (28 February 2024) and Nominations Committee (28 March 2024);

*86.6 the key recommendations of the Council Assurance Review Group, included:*

86.6.1 the discontinuation of Dual Assurance as a mechanism of governance from the 2024-25 Academic Year for providing assurance and cessation of all of the current portfolios from the beginning of the Academic Year 2024-25, in order to:

86.6.1.1 reduce the singular form of reliance placed on one individual in significant areas of risk against an increasingly volatile and challenging Higher Education landscape;

86.6.1.2 enhance the wider knowledge and understanding of key strategic issues across the entirety of Council;

86.6.1.3 minimize the challenges for Council succession planning and recruitment;

86.6.2 the introduction of a carefully designed, effective and streamlined Council sub-committee system to provide a more rigorous form of assurance to Council in areas of significant risk and help to:

86.6.2.1 reinforce the collective responsibility of Council and importance of wider discussion and decision making;

86.6.2.2 enable a regular mechanism for constructive challenge and scrutiny to be undertaken across a wider membership of Council;

86.6.2.3 mitigate the risk of Independent Members straying into operational matters;

86.6.2.4 help develop a healthy board dynamic, strong team spirit across Council and a more collective and deep-seated understanding of key strategic challenges, risks and opportunities, rather than emphasis on individual Independent Members with specialist knowledge and capabilities in a single sphere;

*86.6.3 the proposed constitution of the following Council sub-committees from the Academic Year 2024-25:*

86.6.3.1 Academic Governance, Education and Student Experience;

86.6.3.2 Finance and Investment Sub-Committee, including:

- disbandment of the current Financial Review and Financial Investment Groups, which had historically met on an ad-hoc basis;
- development of formal reporting lines of the Investment and Endowment Sub-Committee into the Finance and Investment Sub-Committee;

86.6.3.4 Research and Innovation Sub-Committee;

86.6.3.5 Governance and Nominations Committee, which would expand the remit of the Council Nominations Committee to ensure enhanced focus on the operation and effectiveness of the University's governance arrangements;

86.7 the following was noted in discussion:

86.7.1 Council commended the Assistant Director (Governance) for producing such a meticulous and comprehensive report and unanimously endorsed the broad direction of travel and key recommendations.

86.7.2 that Council would not delegate any decision-making power to the committees which would avoid disempowering Council and would still enable Council to challenge specific papers or proposals that had been previously endorsed or supported by sub-committees;

86.7.3 agendas would be aligned with Council agendas, with the sub-committees tasked with reviewing and scrutinising papers prior to wider assessment to Council.

86.7.4 that it was recognised that when Dual Assurance had first been proposed as a mechanism of Assurance in 2007 the University's operations and external environment had been markedly different, with the University approximately one third of its current size, c. 90% of income secured from government sources and there were student number controls in place. The new landscape of Higher Education was significantly more uncertain, volatile and challenging and the proposed establishment of additional sub-committees would help to further enhance the effectiveness of institutional governance and ensure there was even more deep-seated understanding of all assurance areas and empower members to make a collective contribution to discussion and decision making;

86.7.5 that the expanded Governance and Nominations Committee would monitor on behalf of Council the overarching compliance with the OfS Conditions of Registration and CUC HE Code of Governance. However, the more specific legal regulations and financial codes would remain within the purview Audit and Risk Committee. It was recognised that there would be some interconnection between the two groups, but the Terms of Reference would be carefully crafted to ensure there was effective alignment between these groups and clarity surrounding the fundamental role and duties of each group;

86.7.6 that there would be a conscious effort to avoid the proliferation of additional papers and Terms of Reference would be developed in close consultation with relevant Professional Services staff and UEB leads to ensure there was clarity around the scope and remit of each group;

86.7.7 whilst it was recognised that there was a potential risk that the new sub-committee structure could lead to over-governance this would be closely monitored by the Assistant Director (Governance) to ensure that the committees were closely aligned with Council operations and Business Schedules and did not lead to parallel activity or additional workload on colleagues to produce more committee papers. It was highlighted that the University currently had one of the leanest Council sub-committee structures in the sector and that the tendency for increased activity was more pronounced within the UEB sub-committee and sub-group structure where the latest review had highlighted in excess of 130 sub-groups were in operation;

86.7.8 whilst it was acknowledged that the Education Dual Assurance portfolio had functioned particularly effectively and helped to maintain scrutiny and oversight of academic standards, this still placed a singular form of reliance on an Independent Lead and that given the widespread nature of activities which coalesced around Education and Student Experience, it was ultimately unsustainable for one Independent Member to be able to manage this effectively and to provide assurance to Council;

86.7.9 whilst Council continued to take assurance from recent exceptional performance (including the solid gold performance in the TEF 2023 assessment), it was noted this was based on lagging indicators and the CUC HE Code of Governance now required Council to more actively seek and receive assurance on academic standards and the integrity of academic qualifications and work with Senate to maintain standards and continuously improve quality. The new Academic Governance, Education and Student Experience Sub-Committee would help Council to fulfil this regulatory

responsibility and a number of institutions had already established a similar sub-committee or were actively considering this;

86.7.10 that the decision to not have a separate sub-committee focused on sustainability and environment was based partly on the limited capacity of Council members to sit on additional sub-committees, but also the need to ensure that every discussion across Council and its sub-committees embedded sustainability at the front and centre of all deliberations;

86.7.11 that one of the challenges with Dual Assurance was that there were so many cross-cutting themes within the sustainability portfolio (including civic engagement, procurement, research and travel) that it was not feasible for this to be considered in isolation from wider discussions;

86.7.12 the potential external optics of not having constituting a Council sustainability sub-committee when there was an emerging trend across the HE sector and beyond to constitute such a committee was acknowledged. However, it was highlighted that the Terms of Reference for the Finance and Investment Sub-Committee would clearly foreground that Sustainability would be a key area of consideration and provide a clear signal that this remained of paramount importance to the University's strategic ambitions and institutional mission;

86.7.13 that it would be important to ensure there was sufficient range of expertise from the Independent members of Council on each sub-committee to ensure there as breadth of perspective and insight. Further consideration would be given to the specific membership of each committee following 1-2-1 discussions with the Chair of Council and a formal proposal would be presented to Council in July 2024;

86.7.14 that it was recognised that 'good governance' was a continuous process and would continue to be reviewed to embed further enhancements;

**APPROVED:** the final version of the Council Assurance Review report and all 57 recommendations.

**APPROVED:** the recommendation to disband all Dual Assurance portfolios from the Academic Year 2024-25.

**APPROVED** the proposed establishment of the following additional Council Sub-Committees from the Academic Year 2024-25;

- a) Finance and Investment Sub-Committee
- b) Academic Governance, Education and Student Experience Sub-Committee
- c) Research and Innovation Sub-Committee

**APPROVED** the expanded role and remit of Nominations Committee to a 'Governance and Nominations Committee' from the Academic Year 2024-25.

**AGREED:** that Council review the implementation of the new sub-committee structure after 1 year of operation to ensure it had helped to enable more streamlined governance processes.

**AGREED:** that Governance and Nominations Committee would monitor implementation of the Council Assurance Review recommendations.

**AGREED:** that the enhanced committee structure would necessitate an expanded team and the levels of required resourcing would be reviewed over the summer by the Assistant Director (Governance) in consultation with the Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary and the Divisional Director of University Corporate Services.

**AGREED** that Terms of Reference would be developed for each of the Council Sub-Committees by the Assistant Director (Governance) in consultation with the Chair of Council and relevant UEB leads, prior to wider dissemination to Council for review and comment.

**AGREED** that the Terms of Reference, Membership and Committee dates for each of the Council Sub-Committees for AY 2024-25 would be presented to Council for final approval on 11 July 2024, following review and input from the wider membership of Council and endorsement from Nominations Committee.

### **87. Final University Terms and Academic Calendar (CNL/113/23-24 Confidential)**

87.1 in response to feedback provided at the Council meeting on 29 February 2024 and received offline via email, a number of additional changes had been incorporated within the University Terms and Academic Calendar

87.2 that the Council meeting in December would be held in person (rather than online) in light of the fact that there was no scheduled meeting in November and would otherwise result in a significant gap of no in-person of meetings. Further consideration would be given to the specific date to avoid and meeting room to avoid disrupting preparations for the degree congregations ceremonies, whilst also avoiding any pre-existing diary conflicts of Independent Members to maximise the possibility of their attendance;

87.3 a provisional meeting would be tentatively scheduled for Tuesday 29 April 2025 in case a meeting of Council was required. The meeting would only be utilised if necessary to progress any time critical, urgent or unforeseen items of business and would be held online if and when required;

87.4. a number of Audit and Risk Committee dates had been rescheduled as detailed in the paper to resolve diary conflicts in September and November 2024.

**Approve** the proposed University Terms and Academic Calendar 2024-25, noting that a further paper would be presented to Council on 11 July 2024 with a final proposal for additional Council sub-committee dates for newly constituted committees based on consideration of optimal timing and meeting frequency.

### **88. Strategic Update Session: Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences (HASS)**

#### **a) Introduction to the Faculty Team and Faculty Performance (CNL/114a/23-24)**

Professor Gareth Stansfield (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean for the Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences) was invited to deliver an overview of the Faculty, current performance and strategic areas of focus:

88.1 while recruitment to HASS subjects across the UK was down by c. 8.5% over the past 5 years, it had continued to increase at the University of Exeter and in the Russell Group;

88.2 HASS disciplines aligned to specific professions (e.g. Law, Education, Communications) tended to be more attractive to international students;

88.3 the distribution of humanities across institutions and individual disciplines had shifted. The redistribution across different types of institution and Russell Group humanities presented

strategic opportunities for the University;

88.4 there were a number of key strengths across the Faculty of HASS:

88.4.1 Arts and Humanities broad subject area remained the highest performing area and only top 100 for Exeter in QS World Rankings;

88.4.2 Four of the Faculties subjects were in the top 10 for REF 4\* ranking;

88.4.3 there had been growth in International Student numbers, with an increase in entrants by over 30% from the previous year of entry;

#### Closed Minute – Commercial in Confidence

88.9 overall the Faculty's education performance in terms of NSS and graduate outcomes was strong. Teaching and learning Resources were the top scoring NSS areas for the faculty and the overall NSS KPI was c. 80.7%. Three Priority areas had been identified for further enhancement, including: Law, Drama; Politics and SPA;

88.10 there remained a focus on teaching efficiencies, innovation and employability, including extensive curriculum reform and streamlining across departments, withdrawal of smaller modules and skills induction built into the curriculum;

#### **b) HASS Faculty Roadmap: Major initiatives delivering Strategy 2030 (CNL/114b/23-24)**

88.11 Council noted the overview of the HASS Faculty Roadmap and major initiatives delivering Strategy 2030, including: Law 2030, Creative Industries, Defence and Security, Al-Qasimi Initiative.

#### **i) Law 2030**

*Adam Watt (Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor) delivered a presentation on Law 2030.*

88.12 in relation to Law 2030:

88.12.1 Law 2030 was an ambitious and strategic expansion of the Law School through planned and phased growth on the Streatham campus. The strategic ambition was for Exeter's Law School to become a Top 10 UK Law School and top 100 in the QS ranking. This would require enhanced research quality and power and an emphasis on cohort rebalancing to reshape the taught portfolio with expansion of PGT Law and launch of new courses on Human Rights, European Law, International Finance Law and International Business Law;

#### Closed Minute – Commercial in Confidence

88.12.5 in discussion, the importance ensuring there was clear scoping and assessment of distinctive aspects of the Law provision at the University ensure there was clarity around strategic opportunities for specific programmes and products in an increasingly competitive Russell Group market place;

#### **ii) Creative Industries**

*Helen Berry (Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor) delivered a presentation on Creative Industries*



88.13 in relation to Creative Industries:

88.13.1 that the UK's creative industries were identified as one of the 'growth sectors of the future' in the Spring Budget 2024 and one of the largest sectors, including: games, software, services, film and TV, advertising and marketing;

88.13.2 there were approximately 2.1m jobs within the Creative Industries, with job opportunities growing 3 times faster than the UK average and was set to benefit from new tax reliefs;

88.13.3 the Creative Industries were a diverse and cross-disciplinary subject area which included co-delivered courses across Departments of Communications, Drama and Film, Languages Cultures and Visual Studies, English and Creative Writing;

88.13.4 the Creative Industries Strategy included the launch of new programmes and refresh of existing programmes to align with international market demand. Curriculum growth and development, alongside investment in facilities, equipment and growing staff expertise would see further expansion into Creative Industries and enable growth in PGT international student numbers;

88.13.5 HASS was leading the regional consortium bid for multi-million AHRC Creative Cluster funding (2025-29) to anchor regional CI development, industry investment and large-scale national development funding;

#### Closed Minute – Commercial in Confidence

##### iii) **Politics and International Relations (including Defence & Security, Centre for Computational Social Science (C2S2), Forensics)**

*Professor Gareth Stansfield (Executive Dean and Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences) was invited to deliver an update presentation on strategic opportunities in Politics and International Relations*

88.14.1 a key strategic area of focus was on repositioning Politics and International relations, with a refresh of marketing and simplification of taught portfolio guided by market insights to enable PGT growth, enhanced market share and improved conversion;

88.14.2 the PGT offering would be developed to be more industry-facing, with enhanced work places and hybrid options.

##### c) **Faculty of HASS: Research Spotlight Session**

88.15.1 Council were invited to participate in an interactive exhibition showcasing research activity from across the Faculty and to engage with academics on a range of topics, including: identities, Culture and environments of Health; Computational Social Science; Forensics, Social Justice, Heritage, Inclusion, Global Studies, Digital Humanities, Social Change.

#### **89. Chair's Closing Remarks**

89.1 on behalf of Council, the Chair of Council thanked all of the staff from the Faculty of HASS for an extremely informative strategic away day and indicated that the interactive exhibition

showcase had been very engaging means to learn about the research.

89.2 the President and Vice-Chancellor thanked Professor Gareth Stansfield for hosting the Strategic Faculty Away Day and extended warm congratulations for being awarded an OBE in the New Year's Honours List for Services to the UK interests in Iraq.

### **90. Part II (For Approval)**

90.1 in accordance with the standard Council practice, the Chair confirmed that the following items in Part II For Decision, had been formally **APPROVED** by Council, including:

90.1.1 Election Procedural Guidelines (CNL/115/23-24 and CNL/115a/23-24)

90.1.2 Modern Slavery Act Transparency Statement (CNL/116/23-24)

*90.1.3 Amendments to Ordinances:*

90.1.3.1 Ordinance 20, 23 and 24 (CNL/117/23-24)

90.1.3.2 PGR Aegrotat and Posthumous Awards Ordinance (CNL/118/23-24)

90.1.3.3 Integrated PhD Ordinance CNL (CNL/119/23-24)

### **91. Part II (For Information)**

91.1 the following items were received by Council for information:

91.1.1 PWC – UK HE Financial Sustainability Report (CNL/107a/23-24)

91.1.2 Capital Strategy Update – Full Detailed Version (CNL/109a/23-24)

91.1.3 Academic Promotions (CNL/120/23-24)

91.1.4 Student Protection Plan (CNL/121/23-24)