



University of Exeter
COUNCIL

MINUTES AND ACTIONS – APPROVED BY COUNCIL

22 May 2024

11.00am-12noon

Holland Hall, Streatham Campus

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

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Council Meeting

No: Item:

23.92 Chair's Introduction and Declarations of Interest

23.93 Digital Strategy 2030 Update

23.94 Towards the Twenty-Second Century Library: A Strategy for the University of Exeter Library

23.95 Chair's Closing Remarks

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

Richard Atkins	Pro-Chancellor and Deputy Chair of Council
Sally Cabrini	Pro-Chancellor and Senior Independent Governor
Nicholas Cheffings	Independent Member
Andrew Greenway	Independent Member
Karime Hassan	Independent Member
Professor Malcom Skingle	Independent Member
Alison Reed	Independent Member
Tim Weller	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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Alex Stanley	Education Officer and Representative of the Exeter Students' Guild
Connie Chilcott	President Exeter, Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union

SECRETARY

Mike Shore-Nye Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary

MEMBERS APOLOGIES

Salam Katbi Independent Member

Damaris Anderson-Supple Independent Member

Glenn Woodcock Independent Member

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 Rogers Executive Divisional Director of Human Resources

Dr Jeremy Diaper Assistant Director, Governance (minutes)

Minute item 93

Helen Cocks Interim Digital Leadership

Minute item 94

James Antony-Edwards University Librarian

92. Chair's Welcome and Declarations of Interest

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

92.2 the Chair noted that apologies had been received from Damaris Anderson-Supple, Salam Katbi, and Glenn Woodcock.

93. Digital Strategy 2030 Update (CNL/122/23-24 Confidential)

The Chair invited the Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary and Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) to provide a brief introduction, before inviting Helen Cocks (Interim Leadership for Digital) to deliver a presentation.

93.1 that there was enormous potential for digital technologies to transform education, research and partnerships to meet the increasing needs of students;

93.2 the University's digital vision was to be the most accessible and connected University destination for any user;

93.4 the University had built its own platform to deliver digital products and services to users. This would enable the University to develop an ecosystem of shared micro-services that would cater to the specific needs of individual users and for the University to own the design of user experiences;

93.5 this platform provided the University with the ability to scale digital transformation across the entire student journey and incorporate more features within the MyExeter app to meet user needs and improve the student experience, drive efficiency and strengthen engagement;

93.6 it also presented enhanced opportunities for realising efficiencies by enabling enhanced re-use, scaling and flexibility. It was highlighted, for example, that the recent development of the study space feature enabled students to locate available study spaces and that the platform could be

reutilised for other processes requiring a booking function, including booking laboratory space, car parking spaces and hybrid work spaces;

93.7 the MyExeter app was a key step on the enhancement of the development of a digital student journey and provided a mechanism for students to be able to access key information and services in one place. Students would be provided with an account throughout their user journey, from the moment of application through to graduation and alumni;

93.8 there were currently 7 features on the app, including the student study space and timetabling function, which had been developed based on student insight and feedback.

93.9 the MyExeter app also enabled international student visa holders to utilise a microplatform on the app to confirm they were regularly attending and engaging with their course which had significantly enhanced the student experience;

Closed Minute – Confidential

93.14 that the University was looking to adopt best practice from other sectors and industries (including entertainment, banking and retail) to adopt design principles that would enhance the student journey. The importance of aspiring beyond being a sector-leader in relation to digital enhancement and innovation was affirmed, in recognition that the Higher Education sector had historically not been the most progressive in this space;

93.15 the importance of ensuring that digital enhancements did not sit at the periphery of the organisation and that a toolbox of capabilities could be developed into a fully integrated institution wide approach that could be cascaded across Professional Services, Faculties and Departments;

Closed Minute - Confidential

93.18 that the new exam and assessment system was aligned with the Digital Strategy. The latest virtual learning environment enhanced resilience for online exams by providing a more robust platform and mitigated potential risks surrounding academic integrity. It was recognised that even with an online platform there was a need to maintain an optimal balance between different forms of assessment including the use of online and in person exams, in light of challenges surrounding AI and significant costs associated with having exams in person;

93.19 in relation to the current usage of the My Exeter app it was indicated that it was anticipated that there would be a significant increase in student users in the next academic year once it had been widely communicated to students in welcome week and the iexeter app had been discontinued (which was c. 89% towards being fully phased out);

93.20 that a co-ordinated communications campaign with the Guild and Student's Union was planned for welcome week in AY 2024-25 and it was anticipated this would help drive wider awareness of the app. Both the President Exeter and Education Officer of the Guild of Students were strongly supportive and indicated that it was an exciting innovation which should be an integral aspect of the induction process for all students;

93.21 it was highlighted that whilst in AY 2023-24 the My Exeter app had only been communicated as a pilot there had still been a promising increase in use from 4,000 to 6,000 students;

93.22 that one of the reasons why the budget for delivery had been underspent in 2023/24 was due

to the focus on developing digital enhancements, improvements and new features for the MyExeter app at the same time as phasing out other apps and processes owned across the University.

AGREED: that in the next Digital Presentation to Council there would be an update on the outmoded and obsolete digital systems that had switched off to date and an overview of what systems would be phased out over the next 12-18 months.

94. Towards the Twenty-Second Century Library: A Strategy for the University of Exeter Library (CNL/123/23-24 Confidential and CNL/123a/23-24)

The Chair welcomed the Deputy Registrar to provide a brief introduction and hand over to James Antony-Edwards (University Librarian) to deliver a presentation on the Strategy for the University of Exeter Library

- 94.1 the library was an essential part of delivering the University's Strategy 2030 and would support education and research across the university by providing professional expertise in three key areas: i) providing access to the world's knowledge; ii) giving people the skills to use knowledge; iii) giving people spaces to access knowledge in;
- 94.2 the University had approximately 1 million printed books (with 4,108 new in 2022/23), 1.5 million ebooks and 88,000 journals (with less than 400 printed). The average student borrowed just over c. 17 books a year. The University had 1.1m open access downloads (which was approximately 8th in the UK) and 96% of content spend was now on digital resources;
- 94.3 the University's 2023 NSS score for Library resources was 89.9% (13th in the Russell Group);
- 94.4 the University's Library Strategy had been developed through engagement across the University and with external partners. The vision for the University Library was to be known globally for bringing learning and research together and for building community to create a sustainable, healthier and socially just future;
- 94.5 there was a sustained focus on ensuring simpler access to services, improved spaces and improving support for student employability and joined up skills offer across the library to enhance student employability;
- 94.6 the current library budget in 2022/23 was c. £9.5m. Across the Russell Group c. 45% was spent on staff, with c. 44% on content. By contrast, the University currently only spent c. 25% on staff and c. 69% on content, so it was recognised there was a need to develop a more balanced expenditure between pay and non-pay in alignment with sector peers;
- 94.7 that it was recognised that given the twenty-second century library would be primarily digital there was a significant culture change required around ways of working and digital skills development. All members of the SLT had been given an area to lead on within the Strategy and to consider key areas where there was a need to digitally upskill and transform the level of customer services irrespective of the right channel;

Closed Minute – Confidential

- 94.9 that in light of the recent British Library cyber security attack, a series of business continuity exercises were scheduled to be undertaken to determine how the University would respond in the event of an IT cyber security attack, fire and flood;

94.10 AI was anticipated to bring further digital transformation, but was currently primarily driven by the approach being adopted by large suppliers. It was understood that Elsevier products and services were developing use of AI across their content. There would also be increased opportunities to utilise AI to provide additional data on learner analytics;

94.11 there were further opportunities to enhance the communications and branding surrounding the distinctive elements of the University's collections to highlight the unique aspects that made the institution sector leading. There were also opportunities to enhance the University's global reputation by making leading research available via open access systems and promoting the world-leading research undertaken at the University to the most influential scholars;

94.12 it was also highlighted it would be beneficial to raise student awareness of the University museum and making more of the collection as a key element of the University student experience.