

COUNCIL
Thursday 26 March 2020
CONFIRMED MINUTES

Present:

Lord Clement-Jones (Chair)	Talhah Atcha	Professor Colin Bailey
Professor Alison Blunt	Monica Chadha	Sarah Cowsls
Celia Gough	Professor Colin Grant	Stella Hall
Isabelle Jenkins	Dr Philippa Lloyd	Dr Darryn Mitussis
Bushra Nasir	Professor Mangala Patel	Dr Alix Pryde
Peter Thompson	Professor Wen Wang	David Willis

In attendance:

Megan Annetts	Dr Nadine Lewycky	Jonathan Morgan
Louise Parr-Morley		

Apologies:

Ade Adefulu	Melissa Tatton
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Welcome and apologies

2019.058 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting. The decision had been taken to hold the meeting via video conference to provide effective governance during the social-distancing measures introduced by government to combat the Covid-19 outbreak.

Minutes of the meetings held on 21 and 29 November 2020 (Paper QM2019/45)

2019.059 Council **confirmed** the confidential and non-confidential minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2019 and the confidential minutes of the meeting held on 29 November 2019.

Matters Arising (Paper QM2019/46)

2019.060 Council **noted** the matters arising from the meeting held on 21 November 2019. The following points were noted in the discussion:

Expenses policy

[a] The expenses policy had not been updated, as it had been possible to address many of the issues via improvements to the service. Further work would be undertaken to resolve specific issues for individuals working overseas for periods longer than one month.

Chair's update (Oral report)

2019.061 The Chair and members of Council congratulated the President and Principal for the award of his CBE.

President and Principal's Report (QM2019/47)

2019.062 Council **discussed** the President and Principal's Report, which focussed on the implications for the University of social-distancing measures introduced by government to combat the Covid-19 outbreak. The following points were noted in the discussion:

Education and student experience

- [a] Teaching had been moved online and arrangements were being made to move the great majority of assessments online as well. Feedback from students about online learning had been positive. Support arrangements had been put in place for students with questions about assessments and accessing online learning materials. Tuition fee and bursary payments were being handled in the normal way, including arrangements for self-funded and international students in financial difficulty to enter into payment plans.
- [b] Students who had been unable to travel home owing to the travel restrictions were being enabled to stay in student residences on the University campuses. Queen Mary had been the first UK university actively to permit international students to travel home after the US travel ban was announced with the guarantee of there being no detriment to their academic assessments. Students in halls of residence managed by the University had been released from their residence contracts from 23 March, which was earlier than other major providers of student accommodation in the sector. Up to 1,500 students and staff were currently living on the campuses.
- [c] Council asked what measures were being implemented to ensure that social distancing was being observed on the campuses. It had been necessary to close computer facilities, but certain food outlets remained open for small numbers. Dedicated residential areas had been set aside for individuals who were shielding or self-isolating.

Research and innovation

- [d] Facilities for clinical research involving patients undergoing treatment were being maintained, as were facilities for research involving animals. New research into Covid-19 had been initiated.

Supporting the national response to the Covid-19 outbreak

- [e] The University had donated some specialist equipment to the national Covid-19 testing centre in Milton Keynes, and certain consumables and items of personal protection equipment had been donated to the NHS. Students were being trained to volunteer with the NHS and steps were being taken to support their health and wellbeing in this high-pressured situation. All clinical staff at the University had been released to work for the NHS, and staff would be speaking with colleagues from Wuhan and the NHS to share expertise.

Student recruitment

- [f] There was significant uncertainty around student recruitment for entry in September 2020. A-level candidates would be graded on previous achievement, rather than final examinations, but would be given the option to sit a formal examination in September if they disagreed with their posited grade. There was also the possibility that some travel restrictions would remain in place within the UK and internationally beyond September. Scenarios involving multiple entry points to university were therefore being explored, with some students starting online in September 2020, and later starts in November 2020 and January 2021.
- [g] There was concern in government that the uncertainty over student recruitment would lead some universities to adopt unfair admissions policies. In order to protect applicants, the Office for Students had instructed all universities not to issue unconditional offers for the time being. Options to re-introduce student number controls for universities were also under consideration.
- [h] It was noted that Queen Mary had access to more diverse international student markets than some of its competitors, as well as strong partnerships through which it could explore solutions to the current challenges. The University had responded quickly to the emerging situation in China, for which it had received praise from its Chinese partners and the Chinese embassy in London.

Financial implications and scenario planning

- [i] *Minute 2019.062[i] is confidential.*
- [j] *Minute 2019.062[j] is confidential.*
- [k] Council expressed its gratitude to staff for their hard work in this unprecedented time and for the efforts of both students and staff with volunteering.

Other matters

- [l] Separately from the Covid-19 outbreak, there had been two diagnosed cases of TB on the Mile End Campus. The area in which the individuals works had been identified and was undergoing a deep clean in line with advice from Public Health England.

QMSU President's report (QM2019/48)

2019.063 Council **received** the QMSU President's report. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] QMSU would run 'Study Well' and 'Be Kind to Your Mind' campaigns to help students during the current social-distancing measures.
- [b] Council thanked Talhah Atcha for his hard work as QMSU President and wished him well as he joined the NHS earlier than originally anticipated due to the COVID-19 crisis. Megan Annetts, QMSU Vice-President (Barts and the London) would take over the powers and responsibilities of the

President until the end of the academic year and would sit on Council. Shamima Akter, QMSU President elect for 2020–21, would be in attendance at Council for the rest of the year.

Democracy review update (QM2019/48i)

2019.064 Council **noted** the update on the QMSU Democracy review.

Finance and Investment Committee minutes (QM2019/49)

2019.065 Council **noted** the minutes from the Financial and Investment Committee meeting held on 18 March 2020.

Current financial position (QM2019/50)

2019.066 Council **noted** the current financial position.

2020–21 budget and five year forecasts (QM2019/51)

2019.067 Council **approved** the 2020–21 budget and **noted** the financial forecasts. There had been significant changes to the external environment since the budget had been prepared. Although the final budget would look very different, the current budget provided a baseline for scenario planning.

Whitechapel campus (QM2019/52)

2019.068 *Minute 2019.068 is confidential.*

Audit Committee report (QM2019/53)

2019.069 Council **received** report of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting on 12 March 2020. The following points were noted in the discussion:

[a] *Minute 2019.069[a] is confidential.*

[b] Research grant income recognition would pose a challenge in the current year, as social distancing measures had caused research work to be postponed. Work on this was being overseen by Professor Andrew Livingston, Vice-Principal (Research) and Dr Sharon Ellis, Director of Research Services.

[c] Council **approved** the re-appointment of Deloitte as external auditors in relation to the audit of the 2019–20 accounts.

KEF update (QM2019/54)

2019.070 Council **noted** the preparations for the University's submission to the Knowledge Exchange Framework and thanked the Vice-Principal (Research) for his report.

QMSU Financial statements 2018–19 and latest financial position (QM2019/55)

2019.071 Council **noted** the QMSU financial statements 2018–19 and the latest financial position.

Annual report on student casework (QM2019/56)

2019.072 Council **noted** the annual report on student casework for 2018–19.

Use of the Common Seal (QM2019/57)

2019.073 Council **noted** the use of the Common Seal since the last meeting.

Agenda for the next meeting (QM2019/58)

2019.074 Council **noted** the draft agenda for the meeting on 21 May 2020.

Dates of Meetings 2019–20

- Thursday 21 May / Friday 22 May 2020 – Residential conference including Council meeting.
- Thursday 09 July 2020, 1600 hours, Colette Bowe Room, Mile End.