![Queen Mary University of London logo]

AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE
Wednesday 16 March 2022

DRAFT UNCONFIRMED MINUTES

Present:

Peter Thompson (Chair)	Simona Fionda	Celia Gough
James Hedges	Dr Alix Pryde	

In attendance:

Dr Ghazwa Alwani-Starr	James Aston [External audit]	Professor Colin Bailey
Dr Rachel Bence [minute 2021.039]	Jan Juillerat [Advance HE]	Karen Kröger
Dr Nadine Lewycky	Charles Medley [Internal audit]	Jonathan Morgan
Dr Catherine Murray	Neil Thomas [Internal audit]	Janice Trounson

Apologies:

None

Welcome

2021.035   The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Minutes of the meeting held on 09 November 2021 [ARC2021/31]

2021.036   The Committee **confirmed** the confidential and non-confidential minutes of 09 November 2021 and **noted** the executive summary.

Matters arising [ARC2021/19]

2021.037   The Committee **noted** the matters arising from the meeting held on 09 November 2021.

Strategic Risk Register [ARC2021/33]

2021.038   *Minute 2021.038 is confidential*.

Bi–annual cyber security report [ARC2021/34]

2021.039   The Committee **noted** the bi-annual cyber security report. The following points were noted in the discussion:

[a] We had no cloud-based data centres at the moment but plans were in train to move the second data centre into the cloud in September. We currently had cyber essentials and were considering changing to ISO 27001 certification.

[b] An understanding of the importance of cyber security and compliance with mandatory training was improving among staff. Unmanaged or locally-managed devices in Schools were being replaced while being mindful of the need for some Schools to access specialist software. Challenges remained in Schools with their own networks and IT domains.

[c] We were undertaking a service review of our virtual learning environment (VLE) QM Plus that was hosted through a third-party provider. Four service incidents since September 2021 had been resolved by the third-party provider scaling up resources.

[d] The Committee said that it was encouraged by the programme of work and the progress that had been achieved in recent years. The Committee asked for an overarching risk assessment showing a clear picture of the size of the risk and risk target. We used JISC's framework to evaluate cyber security readiness which would be shared with the Committee. The residual risk rating for information compliance had reduced on the Strategic Risk Register.

[e] Across the sector, preparedness for cyber attacks was varied. We were ahead of the sector in rolling out multi-factor authentication. The turnover of students every three years posed a risk. Identity and access management would reduce the number of access points for a cyber attack.

[f] We were documenting our processes to reduce risks associated with the absence of key staff members. Our engagement of the information security consultancy Waterstons brought the team to full capacity and mitigated against the current challenges in the recruitment market.

Actions: [d] Chief Information Officer

Planned internal audit reports [ARC2021/35]

2021.040   The Committee **considered** the planned internal audit reports. The following points were noted in the discussion:

Student retention
[a] The Committee asked how we were identifying students who did not progress for reasons other than academic achievement. The Learning Engagement Analytics (LEA) tool provided early indicators to help advisors identify students who were disengaged. Advisors were critical in intervening with students planning to leave for non-academic reasons. Mandatory training for advisors would improve consistency across Schools.

Staff payments and IR35 processes
[b] Gaps had been identified in staff understanding of IR35. Reducing the number and level of hard controls and providing additional guidance and training would improve efficiencies, although it is important at the same time to maintain the correct application of IR35 requirements.

UUK code of practice for student housing

[c] The review of the university's processes for ensuring compliance with the Universities UK (UUK) Code of Practice for the Management of Student Housing showed that there was a sound system in place but improvements in some areas of documentation to support compliance were needed. The testing did not identify any significant departures from the Code.

Update on internal audit recommendations [ARC2021/36]

2021.041   The Committee **noted** the update on progress against the internal audit plan. The following points were noted in the discussion:

[a] There had been a slight increase in the number of overdue management actions but still less than other universities of a similar size. Overall, implementation had been progressing well.

[b] The Committee was encouraged by the increase in proportion of green/amber reports in the last few years and the prompt action on recommendations.

[c] The Committee asked if the forthcoming report on donors and sponsors would cover sanctions and restrictions. The review would assess the rigorousness of the processes and their implementation but would not make value judgements on decisions.

Whistle blowing cases since the last meeting [ARC2021/37]

2021.042   *Minute 2021.042 is confidential*.

Fraud/financial irregularities occurring since the last meeting [Oral report]

2021.043   *Minute 2021.043 is confidential*.

Care Quality Commission

2021.044   The Committee **considered** a fixed penalty notice from the Care Quality Commission. The following points were noted in the discussion:

[a] The Antenatal Screening Service (ANS) based at the Wolfson Institute for Population Health Studies had provided laboratory-based screening services for around 40 English NHS trusts. This was the only part of our operations that fell under the regulation of the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The decision to discontinue the service would not impact on the availability of screening services more generally, but could have been made earlier. A fixed penalty notice was issued for the breach of not having a registered manager. Penalties at this level were not unusual.

*Revised regulatory guidance for reportable events to the OfS [ARC2021/38]

2021.045   The Committee **noted** the revised guidance from the Office for Students on reportable events. The following points were noted:

[a] The Office for Students (OfS) had taken steps to clarify its guidance to improve reporting practices in the sector. A materiality test had been

16/03/2022 ARC draft unconfirmed minutes

introduced to help providers identify reportable events. While there was no requirement to report retrospectively, we had made the decision to report the Institute of Technology as it would be a new campus and open this September.

*Draft agenda for the next meeting [ARC2021/39]

2021.046   [a] The Committee **noted** the draft agenda for the next meeting on 15 June 2022.

             [b] The Committee asked for a deep dive on careers and employability to be added to the agenda.

Action: [b] Chief Governance Officer and University Secretary

Review of internal and external auditor appointments [ARC2021/41]

2021.047   *Minute 2021.047 is confidential*.

Tender for the provision of internal audit services – recommendation to appoint

2021.048   *Minute 2021.048 is confidential*.

Dates of meetings in 2021–22:

➢ Thursday 23 June 2022 at 1500 hours, Robert Tong Room, Mile End.