



Update on Council and Committee effectiveness

Outcome requested:	Governance Committee is asked to consider : [a] an update on additional arrangements that were put in place to address governance challenges in 2019/20; [b] an update on the implementation of recommendations from the review of Council effectiveness by Advance HE.
Executive Summary:	The Coronavirus pandemic, national industrial action over the USS pension scheme and campaigns led by the Students' Union over access to the furlough scheme and student engagement have required Council to adapt its approach in order to maintain good governance and remain appropriately engaged on the right issues. The paper considers additional arrangements that were put in place as a priority over the recommendations from the review of Council effectiveness by Advance HE.
QMUL Strategy:	Good governance underpins all aspects of the strategy.
Internal/External regulatory/statutory reference points:	CUC Higher Education Code of Governance QMUL Charter and Ordinances
Strategic Risks:	Strategy delivery
Equality Impact Assessment:	There are no equality or diversity issues raised by this paper
Subject to prior and onward consideration by:	Council will receive updates through the Governance Committee reports.
Confidential paper under FOIA/DPA	No
Timing:	Regular update
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Update on Council and committee effectiveness

1. The main challenges in relation to Council effectiveness during 2019/20 have been the need to maintain good governance during the Coronavirus pandemic and the need to keep Council engaged on fast-moving issues such as the national industrial action over the USS pension scheme and campaigns led by the Students' Union over access to the furlough scheme and student engagement.
2. The following additional actions were taken to address these challenges.
 - [a] As the UK went into lockdown, Council agreed to move to online meetings in line with guidance from the Charity Commission. The Charter does not provide for this, but the Supplemental Charter previously agreed by Council will allow for this when it comes into effect. The secretariat trialled two software solutions, adopting Zoom on the basis that it posed fewer accessibility issues for members and provided appropriate functionality for secure meetings.
 - [b] We increased the frequency of meetings to provide more timely updates on potential risks to the sustainability of the University:
 - six additional meetings of Council, including two conference calls to consider responses to consultations on the USS pension scheme and the CUC Higher Education Code of Governance (12 in total);
 - two additional meetings of Finance and Investment Committee (six in total);
 - three additional meetings of Audit and Risk Committee, including a conference call to approve the annual TRAC return (seven in total);
 - one additional meeting of Remuneration Committee (five in total).
 - [c] The executive introduced a gateway process through which to assess the financial position of the university at key stages throughout the pandemic. This provided Council, Finance and Investment Committee and Audit and Risk Committee with timely updates on the financial and recruitment position and the opportunity to seek assurance on controls and mitigations.
 - [d] Internal communications to staff and students in relation to the industrial action, the University's response to the Coronavirus pandemic and the furlough issue were shared routinely with Council members and co-opted members of committees. We need to reflect on whether communications are best shared at the time, or as part of the weekly mailing to Council members.
 - [e] In discussion with Audit and Risk Committee and KPMG, the planned internal audits for 2019/20 were reviewed to enable desk-based work to be prioritised and fieldwork to be postponed to September and October. The Committee has adopted a two-phased planning approach for 2020/21 so that there is the flexibility to respond to the emerging situation over the coming year.
 - [f] In discussion with Audit and Risk Committee and Deloitte, the external audit process and schedule has been adapted to enable a more desk-based approach and an appropriate focus on going concern considerations.
 - [g] The executive created an operational risk register dedicated to the pandemic response and shared this with Audit and Risk Committee alongside updates on specific issues, such as health and safety on our campuses.

Update on recommendations from the external review of Council effectiveness

3. A spreadsheet showing progress with the implementation of the Advance HE recommendations is appended to this paper. While a number of recommendations have been paused due to the coronavirus pandemic, progress has been made on the following key recommendations.

6. Audit and Risk Committee has considered deep dives on student experience and IT resilience and security which were prompted by the risk tolerance levels.

10. There have been more members of the Senior Executive Team presenting to Council on their areas of responsibility. KPIs have been developed during the year.

23. A new suite of KPIs has been developed and performance measures included in the various enabling plans.

26 and 31. Integrated reporting for the front of the accounts is in progress and will be shared with Audit and Risk Committee in October for approval.

4. Further work will be focused in the following areas.

15. Formal training and support has been paused during the pandemic but this will be re-prioritised with the recruitment of new members.

20. The process for selecting the second QMSU representative to Council was not amended before Talhah Atcha left office in March 2020. This will be picked up by the MoA Review Panel.

22. The IT enabling plan has been approved by Finance and Investment Committee. Work is ongoing on the Estates enabling plan. The People, Culture and Inclusion enabling plan has been shared with Council in draft.

Theme	Ref	Recommendation	Person responsible	Start date	Original completion date	Duration	2019 Status	2019 Progress	2020 status	New expected completion date	2020 Progress	Outcome
The Board	1	Formalise and enhance induction. For example, go back to older members to review gaps, more comprehensive induction for new members, and consideration given to the timing of induction and the need for a follow-up, rather than concentrated at initial arrival.	Council secretariat	May-19	Sep-19	Ongoing throughout the year	On track	A new training plan, including a revised induction, is being developed in the summer and will be circulated to Council members in October.	On track	Aug-21	There have been no new members this year, but with the upcoming recruitment this will be re-prioritised.	
	2	Consider the introduction of a light touch annual governance effectiveness questionnaire for Council members.	Council secretariat	Nov-19	Jan-19	Once a year annually	On track	A short mid-year pulse survey will be run in late 2019/early 2020 on Convene.	On track	Jun-21	Due to the lockdown, it was agreed with the Committees that effectiveness reviews would be delayed until next year. This will be picked up in 2020-21.	
Equality, diversity, inclusion and skills	3	Update the skills matrix and adopt a regular assessment of skills and expertise. The updated matrix should be analysed to determine whether there are any collective skills gaps for the governing body which they would benefit from receiving support on.	Council secretariat	May-19	Jul-19	Once a year annually	Completed					A new skills matrix was completed by current Council members.
	4	The Skills Matrix should also include Higher Education policy; higher education quality and standards; HR; Regulatory expertise.	Council secretariat	May-19	Jun-19		Completed					
Sub-committees	5	Given the new strategy has been agreed, the risk appetite statement should be revisited.	SET	May-19	Jun-19		Completed					ARC discussed the risk appetite statement which is now embedded in the strategic risk register.
	6	The new strategy and revised risk appetite statement should more obviously drive the business of the Audit committee going forward.	SET	Oct-19	Oct-19	Ongoing	On track	ARC will use the risks flagged as out of tolerance on the risk register to identify topics for deep dives at future meetings starting in October.	On track	Ongoing	ARC considered deep dives on student experience and IT resilience and security which were prompted by the risk tolerance levels.	
	7	The Students' Union President should be added as a member of the Finance committee.	Council secretariat	May-19	Jun-19		Completed	Finance and Investment Committee approved the changes to its terms of reference at its meeting in June.				The QMSU President will be a full member of FIC from 2019-20.
	8	The merits of a Task and Finish Group in relation to high risk items relating to the new strategy to be evaluated, particularly in relation to estates. But being careful to respect the boundary between management and governance.	Council secretariat	May-19	Jul-19		Completed					Governance Committee agreed that Task and Finish groups which included Council members risked blurring the lines between governance and management. The expertise of Council members would be harnessed in other ways.
Governance processes and secretariat	9	More time for formative discussion on 'big ticket' items should be inserted into the Council agenda going forward.	Council secretariat	May-19	Oct-19	Ongoing	Completed					The sub-headings of agendas have been removed so that more strategic items can be given priority at the top of the agenda. Council will take fewer presentations for information and papers to note.
	10	Council papers (and the cover sheet) need to be more obviously linked to the new strategy and KPIs.	Council secretariat	May-19	Oct-19	Ongoing	On track	The Council Secretariat will work with papers authors to ensure that they aligned to the new strategy.	On track	Ongoing	There have been more members of the Senior Executive presenting on their areas of responsibility. KPIs have been developed throughout the year.	
	11	Council meeting agenda items should be timed to help manage the flow of the meeting.	Council secretariat	May-19	Oct-19	Ongoing	Completed	Following discussion with the Chair of Council it was agreed that the timing of items should remain at the discretion of the Chair.				The agenda will be re-ordered so that the most substantive items for discussion will appear near the top. The purpose of items (e.g. to note, to approve, etc) will be indicated on the agenda.
	12	Council meetings should consider introducing one strategic deep dive each meeting.	Council secretariat/SET	May-19	Oct-19	Ongoing	On track	Governance Committee agreed that Council should receive a deep dive at each meeting. Topics will be discussed and proposed by SET.	On track	Ongoing	Council received a deep dive presentation on EDI and a meeting was dedicated to presentations on the different parts of the pandemic response.	

Roles and responsibilities of the Council	13	The role and responsibilities for all Council members needs to be clearly explained as part of the induction process.	Council secretariat	May-19	Oct-19	Annual	On track	The Governance Administrator is preparing a revised induction programme to be ready for September. Revised role descriptions will be circulated to members annually before the start of the year.	On track	Sep-20	The role description and handbook were distributed to Council members at the start of 2020-21.	
	14	It is crucial that the new strategy (and significant decisions from Council) are clearly communicated to staff across the university.	Director of Marketing and Communications			Ongoing	In progress	The Director of Marketing and Communications has been notified of this recommendation.	In progress	Ongoing	The impact of coronavirus has delayed some of the strategic communications activity planned around Strategy 2030 for 2019/20. We continue to reference regularly Strategy 2030 and its relevant aspects in communications with staff. We have updated all staff recruitment material to ensure Strategy 2030, including our visions, mission and values, is clear for all applicants to read and understand. We have developed the values and behaviour framework as a communications product for all staff to engage with, which is part of a broader piece of work to ensure the Strategy is a core part of the appraisal and reward processes.	
	15	Improve the support and training for all Council members to ensure there is a clarity about their role.	Council secretariat	May-19	Sep-19	Ongoing	On track	The Governance Administrator has been tasked with developing a training programme to roll out in September.	In progress	Aug-21	Training and support has been paused during the pandemic, but with the recruitment of new members this will be re-prioritised.	
	16	Consideration as to how the Council can be better briefed on the student experience data it receives, which could be augmented with more regular presentations and briefings on student experience to Council.	Director of Strategic Planning	May-19	Oct-19	Ongoing	On track	The new institutional KPIs include 4 measures: satisfaction; attainment gap; progression; career outcomes. These will be reported when the latest data becomes available. Further work is taking place on the education and student enabling plan to develop further indicators that will be reviewed relating to student experience.	On track	Ongoing	ARC received this as a deep dive. As part of enhancing the KPIs, we are now looking at lead indicators.	
	17	Invite a cross section of students to join Council for a 30 minute networking and coffee session, immediately before or after some meetings.	Council secretariat	May-19	Oct-19	Ongoing	On track	Opportunities for networking with students will be developed.	In progress	Aug-21	Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, this has not been progressed. This will be picked up as permitted by social distancing guidelines.	
	18	As well as aggregate level student experience measures (vs other universities), equal emphasis should be placed on comparing student experience performance within the university to allow Council members to understand the relative strengths and weaknesses inside the university.	SET/Director of Strategic Planning	May-19	Oct-19	Ongoing	In progress	All of the dashboard reporting allows for comparison between Schools, faculties and programmes. However, it is not meaningful to compare two non-analogous subjects, as student satisfaction and continuation rates tend to reflect the national trend. It is more meaningful to compare Schools with similar subject areas or to track performance over time.	On track	Ongoing	The deep dives on the NSS and student experience went down to school level.	
	19	Introduce twice yearly formal meetings between the Chair and the student members to reflect the unique term of office and contribution that student members can make to Council.	Chair and Vice-Chair of Council	May-19	Sep-19		Completed					The Chair and Vice-Chair of Council have confirmed that they are happy with this arrangement.

	20	Review the process for selecting the second student member to attend Council alongside the SU President.	Council secretariat	May-19	Sep-19	Ongoing	In progress	The Assistant Registrar (Governance) has discussed Council's previous decision with the current QMSU President. It has emerged that a Student Council decision had been made that the second SU rep would always be from BLSA. This issue will be raised at the Student Council meeting on 21 January.	In progress	Jan-21	This policy was not considered by the Student Council before Talhah left office last year. This will be picked up by the MoA panel.	
	21	Reporting from Senate to Council should be reviewed to deliver shorter, more focused high level reports on academic quality for the attention of lay members.	Deputy Academic Registrar	Oct-19	Nov-19	Annual	On track	The annual assurance report will be refocussed from 2019-20 to provide Council members with information on academic quality matters with specific reference to those that have been identified through Going for Gold and the Education Strategy. The report will aim to provide Council members with a summary of issues that are specific to Queen Mary, set in the context of national expectations and the requirements of the Office for Students.	On track	Nov-20	This year's report will focus on the academic quality matters that are specific to Queen Mary in the context of the Office for Students requirements.	
Effective strategic development	22	Articulate and provide assurance to Council of the capacity and capability to deliver the strategy beyond the financial capital. Start with the people strategy and move on to estates, infrastructure and social capital.	SET			Ongoing	In progress	Council will cover this as part of the enabling plans.	In progress	Ongoing	The timescale for agreeing the People, Culture and Inclusion enabling plan has been extended but will be coming to Council in due course. The IT enabling plan was approved by FIC and work on the Estates enabling plan is ongoing.	
Performance oversight, benchmarking and reporting	23	Identify a suite of key success factors which integrate various strategic ambitions across the university, integrate the thinking about performance and strategy to support a better narrative about value.	Director of Strategic Planning	May-19	Oct-19	Ongoing	On track	We are introducing a new suite of KPIs and the SET leads have been actioned to come up with more granular implementation and performance measures in their enabling plans.	On track	Ongoing	A new suite of KPIs has been introduced and performance measures are included in the various enabling plans.	
	24	Ensure that the new KPIs are brought to every meeting of Council.	Council secretariat/ Director of Strategic Planning	Oct-19		Ongoing	On track	The Strategy KPIs have been included in the annual schedule of business and on the agenda for the next Council meeting.	In progress	Ongoing	From March 2020, Council business has focused on the university's response to the Coronavirus pandemic. Council is due to consider the KPIs at its meeting on 08 October 2020 .	
	25	Ensure that staff are engaged and mobilised and understand their role in delivery the KPIs and CSFs with clear milestones and timelines and provide assurance of this to Council.	SET	May-19		Ongoing	In progress	Delegated leadership is addressed in the People, Culture and Inclusion enabling plan.	In progress	Ongoing	Delegated leadership is addressed in the People, Culture and Inclusion enabling plan.	
	26	Reporting and monitoring of performance would benefit from an approach which includes indicators related to projections, interdependencies and non-financial measures, and the provision of a wide range of internal and external comparative information.	Director of Strategic Planning	May-19	Oct-19	Ongoing	On track	A new suite of institutional KPIs is being develop which include financial and non-financial measures, baseline information and scope for including targets/projections. The Enabling Plans will each include a range of indicators which will show whether implementation of the plan is proceeding as expected and whether the measures being taken are having the desired impact. The development of management information (including internal and external comparisons) is an institutional priority and we are investing in systems and people to deliver improved data and reporting.	On track	Ongoing	This is being taken forward through discussions in ARC on integrated reporting.	

Strategic risk and opportunities	27	Review and improve the university's approach to strategy risk, so that what is considered by Council is at a higher, more strategic level, is holistic and with a longer-term view which includes scenario modelling.	SET/Director of Strategic Planning	May-19	Jun-19		Completed					The new approach to strategic risk was discussed by Audit and Risk Committee in June as part of the revised strategic risk register.
	28	Review the QMUL articulation of risk appetite and after the review of risks implement an updated risk register.	SET/Director of Strategic Planning	May-19	Jun-19		Completed					Audit and Risk Committee discussed the revised risk register which included risk appetite at its meeting in June.
Communication	29	Identify ways to brief Council more regularly about matters of strategic importance with either an internal or external emphasis. Persevere with trying virtual opportunities to meeting and/or communicate.	Council secretariat	May-19	Sep-19	On-going	Completed					The Council Secretariat will offer alternative meeting methods where appropriate.
	30	Review the internal communications for all staff to engage better with the new strategy and to improve key indicators in the next staff survey.	Director of Marketing and Communications	May-19		On-going	In progress	The recommendation has been shared with the Director of Marketing and Communications.	In progress	On going	In the coming months, Communications will be supporting the production and communication of all Strategy 2030 Enabling Plans. At the same time, Communications will be reviewing our strategic approach to internal communications, which will include ensuring Strategy 2030 is appropriately embedded in all communications activities, and establishing evaluation measures to track effectiveness.	
	31	Consider producing an integrated report or strategic report to accompany the Financial Statements, to tell a more holistic story to external stakeholders about the value that QMUL creates.	Head of the Principal's Office and the Director of Finance and Resources	Sep-19	Nov-19	Annual	On track	The Financial Statements 2019/20 will be accompanied by a narrative on the holistic value created by Queen Mary.	On track	Nov-20	A new narrative for the front of the accounts is being developed for submission to the OfS.	