

COUNCIL
Thursday 29 November 2018

CONFIRMED MINUTES

Present:

Lord Clement-Jones (Chair)	Professor Colin Bailey	Monica Chadha
Sarah Cows	Celia Gough	Stella Hall
Isabelle Jenkins	Ahmed Mahbub	Dr Darryn Mitussis
Bushra Nasir	Professor Mangala Patel	Luke Savage
Peter Thompson	Professor Wen Wang	David Willis

In attendance:

Professor Matthew Hilton [for minute 2018.037 only]	Joanne Jones	Dr Nadine Lewycky
Tom Longbottom	Professor Stephanie Marshall	Jonathan Morgan

Apologies:

Kath Barrow	Dr Véronique Bouchet	Professor Alison Blunt
Professor Bill Spence	Professor Steve Thornton	

Welcome

2018.019 The Chair welcomed Professor Stephanie Marshall, who would be giving a presentation on the Going for Gold Strategy.

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2018 (Paper QM2018/14)

2018.020 Council **confirmed** the confidential and non-confidential minutes of the meeting held on 11 October 2018 subject to the following amendments:

[a] David Willis to be added to the list of attendees.

[b] Minute 2018.009 to read:

Following consideration of the documents, the Finance and Investment Committee recommendation and the OfS principles (as detailed in the private placement document dated 9 October 2018), and taking into account Council members' duties and obligations as charity trustees pursuant to the Charities Act 2011 and the university's constitutional documents and considering the best interests of the university, Council approved the following:

[c] Minute 2018.009[c] to read:
the private placement transaction;

Matters Arising (Paper QM2018/15)

2018.021 Council **noted** the matters arising from the meeting held on 11 October 2018.

Chair's update

2018.022 The Chair said that he had been impressed by a joint initiative between the Geffrye Museum and the Institute of the Home. Professor Alison Blunt, elected academic member of Council (Cross-faculty), was co-Director of the Institute with Sonia Solicari, Director of the Geffrye Museum.

President and Principal's Report (QM2018/16)

2018.023 Council **received** the President and Principal's Report. The President and Principal said:

Pensions

[a] UUK and the UCU had supported the JEP recommendations. The USS Trustee would be considering a new 2018 valuation which, subject to the backing of employers, would be sent to scheme members for consultation in December or January. The sector had agreed to accept greater risk.

[b] Clause 76.4 meanwhile would remain in place, including the first increase to employer and employee contributions in April 2019. It was unlikely that any recommendations from a new valuation could be implemented before October 2019, when the second increase under Clause 76.4 was due to take effect.

Pay

[c] The UCU had recently balloted its members with a recommendation to reject the pay award. The ballot failed to meet the 50% threshold at most universities, including Queen Mary. UCU was planning to re-ballot members in the new year using the aggregate turn out across the sector.

Updates to Senior Personnel

[d] Professor Adrian Smith, Dean of Research in HSS, had been appointed as Deputy Vice-Principal (Research Excellence) until 2020 to lead on the preparations for REF 2021. Interviews were being held imminently for a Vice-Principal (Research) to succeed Professor Bill Spence, who would be stepping down in January.

Fees and sector finance

[e] *Minute 2018.023[e] is confidential.*

Student recruitment

[f] It was early in the recruitment cycle, but no concerns had been raised by the figures. Recommendations were being implemented for improving efficiency and effectiveness, especially in relation to communications with applicants and application turnaround times. Staffing increases in Admissions had resulted in more offers being made at this point in the cycle compared to the previous year.

Albert Island

[g] *Minute 2018.023[g] is confidential.*

Life Sciences

[h] *Minute 2018.023[h] is confidential.*

Global Engagement Strategy

[i] The Global Engagement Strategy had been launched under the leadership of Colin Grant, Vice-Principal (International). The strategy would seek to build on Queen Mary's excellent global footprint.

Action: [g] President and Principal

2018.024 The following points were noted in discussion:

[a] Recent practice had been for Council members to sit on the recruitment panels for senior appointments. Council members would be invited to participate in the current Vice-Principal recruitment processes.

Action: [a] President and Principal

President's Report [QMSU] (QM2018/17)

2018.025 Council **received** the QMSU President's report. It was noted in discussion that:

[a] There had been good engagement with Islamophobia Awareness Month in November.

[b] There had been over 260 applications for 11 student intern positions on the Going for Gold (GfG) project. The student interns were being paid the living wage and commuter students were staying on campus. The project would look to expand opportunities to employ more student interns.

[c] QMSU Services Limited were recruiting to a number of positions on its board. Recruitment through an external agency would start in the new year in order to fill the vacancies quickly. QMSU would send the advertisement to the Council Secretariat to share with Council members and their networks.

Action: [c] QMSU, Council Secretariat

Financial Statements 2017–18 (QM2018/18)

2018.026 Council **considered** the Audited Financial Statements for the year end 31 July 2018. The following points were noted in the discussion:

[a] The Financial Statements had been reviewed by the Finance and Investment Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee. The external auditors had highlighted a few areas which were discussed and agreed in the Committees following appropriate challenge. These included a debt from a Chinese partner and an intercompany debt owed by the Malta subsidiary. No provision had been made for either of these in the accounts.

[b] The external auditors had commended the Finance team for the quality of the audit and said that it compared favourably to other universities.

[c] The Audit and Risk Committee had requested that the narrative on risk

management be re-ordered and the section had been re-drafted accordingly. A wider risk appetite had been defined for education and the student experience compared to other areas, reflecting the fact that the university wished to encourage innovation in learning and teaching. It was suggested that it would be helpful to distinguish between 'innovation and creativity' and 'risk'.

- [d] Council **approved** the Audited Financial Statements for year end 31 July 2018 on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee.

Management commentary on final year results (QM2018/19)

- 2018.027 Council **considered** the management commentary to the Financial Statements and **approved** for submission to the Office for Students the reconciliation to the Financial Forecasts submitted in September 2018 as part of the Annual Accountability Return.

Letter of representation (QM2018/20)

- 2018.028 Council **considered** the Letter of Representation. The following points were noted:

- [a] The Letter had been amended since review by the Audit and Risk Committee and the Finance and Investment Committee to include a specific reference to the intercompany debt owed by the Malta subsidiary. The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee confirmed that the Committee had sought and received assurances from the President and Principal, the Finance Director and the Registrar and Secretary on behalf of QMSE that there were no further disclosures to be made.
- [b] Council **approved** the Letter of Representation for submission to the Office for Students on the recommendation of the Audit and Risk Committee.

Audit Committee's annual report for 2017–18 (QM2018/21)

- 2018.029 Council **considered** the Audit and Risk Committee annual report for 2017–18. The following points were noted:

- [a] The Chair of the Audit and Risk Committee said that the Committee had been content with the overall picture disclosed by the external audit and that there had been fewer high-priority recommendations than in previous years.
- [b] No issues had been highlighted in the legal compliance report other than those related to health and safety, which would be addressed under a separate item.
- [c] The Committee had set internal measures for tracking Value for Money against which progress was being made. A different approach to external reporting on Value for Money may emerge in future, reflecting the Office for Students' greater focus on student outcomes.
- [d] The internal audit programme for 2019–20 would be aligned with the new strategy to ensure that strategic priorities were being delivered. Assurance mapping against the strategy might uncover a need for a different approach to audit in future. Added value in areas not strictly related to finance would be

needed from the auditors.

[e] *Minute 2018.029[e] is confidential.*

[f] *Minute 2018.029[f] is confidential.*

[g] Council **approved** the Audit and Risk Committee annual report for 2017–18 for submission to the Office for Students, subject to an amendment on the reporting of missing equipment.

Internal auditor's annual report for 2017–18 (QM2018/22)

2018.030 Council **considered** and **approved** the internal auditor's annual report for 2017–18 for submission to the Office for Students.

External auditor's report and management response for 2017–18 (QM2018/23)

2018.031 Council **considered** and **approved** the external auditor's report and management response for 2017–18 for submission to the Office for Students.

Accountability Return 2017–18 (QM2018/24)

Academic Assurance Report (QM2018/25)

2018.032 Council **considered** the Academic Assurance report from Senate for 2017–18 and **approved** the declarations to be included in the Annual Accountability Return to the Office for Students. The following points were noted:

[a] The Academic Assurance Report was based on the HEFCE template and focused on threshold standards. Going forward, the Office for Students would focus more on how universities were achieving an excellent educational experience for students.

[b] Data relating to Prevent would be submitted to the Office for Students in place of the narrative report that had been requested in previous years. The Office for Students had requested the data on all welfare cases handled by the university within the past year, not only those related to the Prevent duty, which would be used to give assurance that institutions have effective process already in place to deal with cases should they arise.

[c] The Audit and Risk Committee had noted that the university's work on the Prevent duty had continued to improve in the last year and that the structures were well embedded. There were ongoing risks in relation to the need to balance the university's duties on Prevent with freedom of expression. Over the past 12 months there had been no reported Prevent-related welfare cases.

Current Financial Position

2018.033 *Minute 2018.033 is confidential.*

Finance and Investment Committee minutes (QM2018/26)

2018.034 Council **received** the minutes of the Finance and Investment Committee meeting held on 13 November 2018. Council noted that the Committee had supported the release of £1.365m to bring the SBM and teaching building to RIBA stage 3 and had not given blanket approval to the spend of £62.4m on the building.

Business case for the new SBM and Teaching building (QM2018/27)

2018.035 *Minute 2018.035 is confidential.*

TEF metrics and student surveys (QM2018/28)

2018.036 Council **received** a paper on Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) metrics and student surveys. The following points were noted:

- [a] The Going for Gold project would be formally launched on 12 December 2018. Co-creating the educational experience with students stood at the heart of the project. This would help to address two NSS metrics being introduced in the next TEF in relation to the student voice and the learning environment. The project was looking at exemplars from previous TEF exercises to inform the direction of travel going forward.
- [b] A panel discussion on Going for Gold during Student Week in January was planned. Course representatives were being trained to represent the needs of students within their schools and institutes. Council was pleased to hear that the students were highly engaged with the project and were proud of being at Queen Mary.
- [c] There was significant room for improvement in assessment and feedback, although there was great variation in practice across the university. Over-assessment had caused problems with giving timely feedback. A planned move to semester-based assessment would help to alleviate some of these issues, but there was currently resistance in some Schools and discussions were underway to address their concerns.
- [d] In many areas, modules were being put together without adequate consideration of the impact across the programme. This could result in assessment deadlines being bunched together, for example. A marking scheme had been presented to Senate but did not yet have enough support to be approved. A time limit on providing feedback to students was also being considered.
- [e] One member noted that the amount of time available to staff to engage with students had been impacted by growth in student numbers and that formative feedback to students was successful at institutions where the class sizes had been kept small. Queen Mary had been in 11th place in the Guardian league table for its staff–student ratio, showing that it performed well in this area, although some disciplines had a worse ratio. It was noted that the issue needed to be placed in a wider context of good practice in innovative teaching for larger class sizes in the sector.

Update on Equality and Diversity

2018.037 Council **received** an oral report on Equality and Diversity from the Vice-Principal

and Executive Dean (Humanities and Social Sciences). The following points were noted:

- [a] The university's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion report had been published in the summer and set out a new approach to equality and diversity, including objectives and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which would feed into the Equality and Diversity Strategy and the new university strategy.
- [b] The Equality and Diversity Steering Group, co-chaired by the Vice-Principal and Executive Dean (HSS) and the Registrar and Secretary, had been made a formal sub-group of QMSE. The steering group was in direct contact with faculty Equality and Diversity Committees, led by a senior member of staff and including students among their members.
- [c] An institutional academic lead with 50% buy out had been appointed. The academic lead chaired more informal meetings for raising broader equality and diversity issues and reported directly to the steering group.
- [d] More diverse role models were needed in the equality and diversity structure. Representation at the higher levels of the grading structure was low, and work was being done to identify and prepare people to become role models.
- [e] Students would be given the opportunity to contribute to the development of Equality and Diversity initiatives.
- [f] Council would be provided with an update on actions and KPIs in the new year.

Action: [f] Vice-Principal and Executive Dean (HSS)

Health, Safety and Fire annual report 2017–18 (QM2018/29)

2018.038 Council **considered** the Health, Safety and Fire annual report. The following points were noted in discussion:

- [a] Council agreed that the detail in the report was impressive, but would benefit from having a summary on the most relevant areas from a governance perspective, categorised by level of severity.
- [b] It was noted that stress was mentioned only once in the report and should, along with staff wellbeing, feature more prominently in future reports.
- [c] The university was responsible for the health and safety of all of its students, including those studying on programmes based overseas. The university worked with partners in those countries to ensure the safety of students and address any issues.
- [d] It was suggested that data relating to assaults and other incidents dealt with by security staff could be included in similar reports in future.

Action: [d] QMSE and the Director of Student and Academic Services

Interim update on compliance management (QM2018/30)

2018.039 *Minute 2018.039 is confidential.*

Revised Charter (QM2018/31)

2018.040 Council **considered** and **approved** the Revised Charter as a basis for discussion with the Privy Council.

Review of Financial Regulations, Scheme of Delegation of Financial Authority and Travel and Expenses Policy (QM2018/32)

2018.041 Council **considered** and **approved** the revised Financial Regulations, the Scheme of Delegation of Financial Authority and the Travel and Expenses Policy, each of which had been considered and commented upon by the Finance and Investment Committee and the Audit and Risk Committee.

Audit and Risk Committee report (QM2018/33)

2018.042 Council **received** the report of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 14 November 2018.

Governance Committee report (QM2018/34)

2018.043 Council **received** the report of the Governance Committee meeting held on 11 October 2018.

Remuneration Committee Executive Summary (QM2018/35)

2018.044 Council **considered** the Executive Summary of the Remuneration Committee meetings held on 12 October and 22 October 2018. Council noted that the revised membership and transparency of the Committee was at the forefront of the sector, while more work could be done on improving benchmarking.

Remuneration Committee Annual Report (QM2018/36)

2018.045 Council **considered** the Remuneration Committee annual report for 2017–18.

Senate report (QM2018/37)

2018.046 Council **received** the report of the meeting of Senate held on 1 November 2018.

***Agenda for the next meeting (QM2018/38)**

2018.047 Council **received** the draft agenda for the meeting on 28 March 2019.

Dates of Meetings 2018–19

- Thursday 28 March 2019, 1600 hours
- Thursday 9 and Friday 10 March 2019 – annual conference plus Council meeting
- Thursday 11 July 2019, 1600 hours