

COUNCIL
Thursday 21 May 2020
CONFIRMED MINUTES

Present:

Lord Clement-Jones (Chair)	Ade Adefulu	Megan Annetts
Professor Alison Blunt	Professor Colin Bailey	Monica Chadha
Sarah Cows	Celia Gough	Professor Colin Grant
Stella Hall	Isabelle Jenkins	Dr Darryn Mitussis
Bushra Nasir	Professor Mangala Patel	Dr Alix Pryde
Luke Savage	Melissa Tatton	Peter Thompson
Professor Wen Wang	David Willis	

In attendance:

Shamima Akhter	Sheila Gupta	Professor Matthew Hilton
Dr Maggie Leggett	Dr Nadine Lewycky	Professor Andrew Livingston
Professor Stephanie Marshall	Jonathan Morgan	Louise Parr-Morley
Annika Ramos	Professor Steve Thornton	

Apologies:

None

Welcome and apologies

2019.077 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 on 26 March 2020 and 30 April 2020 (QM2019/56)

2019.078 Council **confirmed** the confidential and non-confidential minutes of the meeting on 26 March 2020 and the non-confidential minutes of the meeting on 30 April 2020.

Matters arising (QM2019/60)

2019.079 Council **noted** the matters arising from the meeting on 30 April 2020.

[a] The Interim Finance Director said that the model would be produced for the next Council meeting. The report would compare core income with core payroll and benchmark externally.

Actions: [a] Interim Finance Director

Chair's update (Oral report)

2019.080 The Chair said that:

- [a] He had been in regular contact with the President and Principal and the Senior Executive Team over the past few weeks.
- [b] The one-to-one meetings with Council members had been enlightening and would produce some interesting insights into our governance alongside the PhD research being conducted by Alison Wheatley.

QMSU President's report, including (QM2019/61)

- **Sport impact report**

2019.081 Council **noted** the QMSU President's report and draft of the sport impact report. Council commended the fantastic amount of activity undertaken by the Students' Union.

QMSU issues

2019.082 Council **noted** letters from the QMSU Executive Officers in relation to student engagement and furloughing of QMSU staff. Council member Melissa Tatton left the meeting for the entirety of this item owing to a conflict of interest. The following points were noted in the discussion:

Student Engagement

- [a] The QMSU Acting President said that there was a long-standing issue with the university not giving enough importance to student opinion in decision making. A joint letter from the Chair and the President and Principal had been circulated prior to the meeting providing examples from the previous two years of initiatives that were prompted and shaped by students. The QMSU Executive Officers were concerned that many other decisions had been made contrary to what students wanted.
- [b] Council members asked why the concerns had not been raised sooner through formal mechanisms, such as the Memorandum of Agreement Review Panel, or through informal mechanisms, such as the regular meetings between QMSU Executive Officers and the Chair and Vice-Chair of Council. The QMSU Acting President said that students did not always feel comfortable in bringing forward issues. The Vice-Chair confirmed that she and the Chair were committed to regular and open dialogue with the QMSU and invited the Acting President to provide feedback and input on what more Council could do to facilitate effective communication.

Furloughing

- [c] Council discussed QMSU's claim that student workers were being financially disadvantaged by the university's decision not to facilitate its application to the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme (CJRS). QMSU had a financial commitment from the university already to pay its student workers their normal wages, as if its commercial outlets were still open. QMSU believed that it could claim more through the CJRS and pass this on to student workers.
- [d] Council noted that the CJRS had been established to enable employers

who were severely affected by Coronavirus to continue paying employees the majority of their wages. Council concluded that it could not in good conscience support QMSU's claim for emergency government funding to pay student workers more than they would normally earn. To do so would also contravene HMRC and Department for Education guidelines.

- [e] The President and Principal confirmed that students facing financial difficulties could submit a claim through the university's Financial Assistance Fund.

Coronavirus impact and response: overview of risks, mitigations and governance (QM2019/62)

2019.083 Council **noted** a report on the risks, mitigations and governance arrangements for managing the Coronavirus crisis. The following points were noted in the discussion:

[a] *Minute 2019.083[a] is confidential.*

[b] *Minute 2019.083[b] is confidential.*

[c] *Minute 2019.083[c] is confidential.*

- [d] The UK's global reputation had been impacted by the government's management of the Coronavirus crisis. The quality and attractiveness of the university's educational offering would therefore be more crucial than ever.

Coronavirus impact and response: education and student recruitment (QM2019/63)

2019.084 Council **noted** the report on education and student recruitment. The following points were noted in the discussion:

[a] The Vice-Principal (Education) said that the philosophy of co-creation remained at the heart of the educational provision. The 'Education 3.0' group had been established initially to ensure that mitigating actions for education that was already underway were all in line with sector guidance from the QAA, OIA and OfS. Planning for education in 2020–21 was now being carried forward by the 'Education 3.1', group supported by nine working groups.

[b] The Queen Mary Academy had been working with the E-learning Unit to create a bespoke programme on online education for academics in each School and Institute. Schools were also receiving support for their communications to returning and prospective students.

[c] At the suggestion of QMSU, Student–Staff Liaison Committees had continued to meet virtually and on a more regular basis. The meetings would continue after assessments were completed in order to gather feedback and inform the way forward.

[d] The Chair said that the remarks in QMSU's letter questioning the genuineness of co-creation had been disappointing. The QMSU Vice-

President (Education) said that some decisions were being made before students were consulted, such as proposals to extend the teaching day. The Vice-Principal (Education) said that these discussions were still ongoing at the 'Education 3.1' group, which included student representation, the aim being to develop ways to deliver education inclusively to students across different time zones from September. Council suggested that the University could produce a definition of co-creation in education and the student experience that could be shared with QMSU and the student body generally to create a shared understanding and manage expectations.

- [e] The Vice-Principal (Science and Engineering) said that Queen Mary had been one of the first UK universities to respond to the impact of Coronavirus through its transnational education activities in China. Experiences and solutions from this were being shared across the university.
- [f] The Vice-Principal (Humanities and Social Sciences) said that the faculties were working collegially to streamline the curriculum for next year. Plans for educational delivery next year would be unique to each School and Institute as some, such as the Centre for Commercial Law Studies, were already experienced in offering blended learning. There had been a strong emphasis on getting communications from Schools and Institutes to students right.

Coronavirus impact and response: research and innovation (QM2019/64)

2019.085 Council **noted** the report on research and innovation. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] The government had committed to increase research and development spending as a percentage of GDP to 2.4%, in line with the OECD average, with two-thirds being spent in industry and the remainder in universities.
- [b] Queen Mary was generally successful at winning response mode funding, but was not involved in the newly-established large national research institutes, except for the Turing Institute. A challenge going forward would be to increase Queen Mary's participation in these large-scale initiatives.
- [c] In line with government guidance, all laboratories at Queen Mary had been closed during the Coronavirus outbreak, except for those directly involved in research and testing on Covid-19. A plan was in place for a phased re-opening of research facilities from the beginning of June. A university-wide risk assessment had been prepared and was out for consultation with the trade unions.
- [d] Council asked about plans for developing research collaborations with industrial and commercial partners. The Vice-Principal (Research) said that it would be important to incentivise staff to pursue these relationships. Work would also be undertaken at an institutional level to target and deepen relationships with existing partners, so that the university would be better prepared when national funding initiatives are announced in future.
- [e] Council asked about the role of research that was not directly funded by

research grants. The Vice-Principal (Research) said that external funding was not always a pre-requisite for world-class research, but resources were an input to research, adding that it was research outputs that should be celebrated.

Coronavirus impact and response: engagement with national initiatives (QM2019/65)

2019.086 Council **noted** a report on the university's external engagement during the Coronavirus crisis. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] The Vice-Principal (Policy and Strategic Partnerships) said that Queen Mary was positioning itself as a civic university. Council members with links to businesses and other institutions would be approached to help form connections in support of this.
- [b] The Vice-Principal (Health) said that all faculties had been involved in the national response to the Coronavirus crisis. This included providing equipment and expertise to the NHS to support testing and undertaking public health research projects. The university's partners in Wuhan, China had shared clinical advice and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) which was sent to the NHS and care homes. Staff and students were volunteering, with final-year medical students being supported to qualify early in order to work in the NHS.
- [c] Council asked about the resilience of data security arrangements for patient data used in research. It was noted that Queen Mary adhered strictly to NHS requirements on the use of patient identifiable data, which included dedicated systems to ensure that data are kept secure.

Coronavirus impact and response: our people (QM2019/66)

2019.087 Council **noted** a report on the university's actions to manage business continuity effectively in response to the Coronavirus crisis.

- [a] The Vice-Principal (People, Culture and Inclusion) said that the governance arrangements put in place in March were working well. The Senior Executive Team remained the university's key decision-making body, supported by Gold, Silver and Bronze groups that were empowered to take and co-ordinate decisions at a local level.
- [b] The current focus was on planning a phased return to the campuses, starting with the re-opening of additional laboratories and research facilities in June. Decisions about which laboratories would open, and when, would be made by Heads of Schools and Principal Investigators.
- [c] The Chief Governance Officer and University Secretary said that Council was being kept regularly updated on the communications being sent to staff and students. More frequent meetings were being held with key groups, such as the Professional Services Leadership Team and the Heads of Schools, in order to reach shared positions and gather feedback.

Use of the Common Seal (QM2019/67)

2019.088 Council **noted** the approach to the use of the Common Seal while access to campus was restricted.

Agenda for the next meeting (Oral report)

2019.089 The Chief Governance Officer and University Secretary invited Council members to provide feedback and to identify topics for inclusion on the agenda for the next meeting.

Dates of Meetings 2019–20

- Monday 15 June, 1000 hours, via video conference.
- Thursday 09 July 2020, 1600 hours, via video conference.