

COUNCIL
Thursday 08 October 2020

CONFIRMED MINUTES

Present:

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

In attendance:

Sheila Gupta	Professor Matthew Hilton [for minutes 2020.001-006]	Rebecca Jones [for minutes 2020.001-006]
Dr Maggie Leggett	Dr Nadine Lewycky	Professor Stephanie Marshall
Jonathan Morgan	Louise Parr-Morley	Mat Robathan

Apologies:

None

Welcome and apologies

2020.001 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies. 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 meeting held on 27 August 2020 (QM2020/01)

2020.002 Council **confirmed** the minutes of the meeting held on 27 August 2020.

Matters arising (QM2020/02)

2020.003 Council **noted** the matters arising from the meeting held on 27 August 2020. The following points were noted in the discussion:

Covid-19

[a] The link to Queen Mary's Covid-19 policy and measures would give Council members the same access as staff and students.

Chair's update (Oral update)

2020.004 The Chair said that:

- [a] He was deeply sorry about the resignation of Monica Chadha. She had made a huge contribution during her time as a member of Council, Audit and Risk Committee and Vice-Chair.
- [b] Remuneration Committee had been justified in expecting more due diligence in relation to the appointment of a new senior member of staff which had been accepted by management. A new due diligence report would be commissioned and the process for preparing papers would be reviewed. The Committee would hear from the President and Principal on process and accountability on 23rd October and report back to Council. The Chair thanked Celia Gough for stepping in as Interim Chair of the Committee. Council members were invited to get in touch with the Chair of Council to discuss any of the issues raised. There could well be issues relating to the effectiveness of Remuneration Committee and its terms of reference and if so Governance Committee and Council would be involved as appropriate.
- [c] As the issue had involved reputational risk, Audit and Risk Committee had commissioned a deep dive into the management of reputational risks across Queen Mary.
- [d] In response to a question from Council, the Chair said the due diligence report would be led by a member of Queen Mary who had not been previously involved. The timescale would depend on the outcome at the meeting on 23rd October.
- [e] The process for electing a Vice-Chair would be covered under a separate item.

President and Principal's report (QM2020/03)

2020.005 Council **noted** the President and Principal's report. The following points were noted in the discussion:

Dr Catherine Silverstone

- [a] The President and Principal said that Dr Catherine Silverstone, Head of the School of English and Drama, had died at the weekend. An institution-wide message had been sent out and support was being provided to staff and students. An event to celebrate her life would be held when it was safe to do so. The President and Principal would be writing to her partner and parents.

Pension Schemes

- [b] The overall contribution rates for employers and employees could increase to between 40.8% and 68%. The *pari passu* clause would put significant financial constraints on the university. The university maintained the position that the benefits side needed to be considered for the scheme to be viable.

Senior staff update

- [c] A new Chief Financial Officer had been recruited and a start date was being negotiated. Louise Lester had joined as Director of Human Resources. Dr Greg Slabaugh had joined as Director of the Digital Environment Research Institute from Huawei.

Other matters

- [d] Queen Mary had been named as runner up for University of the Year in the Sunday Times behind the University of Oxford.
- [e] In response to a question from Council, the President and Principal said that there were clear plans in the enabling plans for the next 12–18 months to remain on track to achieve the 2030 Strategy.

Return to campus (QM2020/09)

2020.006 Council **considered** the paper on return to campus. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] The President and Principal said that the university had been assessing options for the educational offering for the 2020–21 academic year since the lockdown began. A number of scenarios were explored, including all teaching online; blended learning; and all teaching on campus. Blended learning aligned well with the Strategy and would allow students to follow the course entirely online if necessary while those students who could travel would have face to face activities to enhance their education.
- [b] Parts of the university had remained open during lockdown, including student residences and animal research facilities, while research related to Covid-19 had continued. Other research facilities were reopened from the beginning of June. In response to demand from staff to increase capacity, the University was looking at introducing additional mitigations, such as 24 hour opening of certain research facilities.
- [c] Management structures to deal with the pandemic were in the process of being wound down with the exception of an emergency group to respond to potential outbreaks. Senior managers were in discussion with Public Health England and the boroughs of Tower Hamlets and Islington regarding the response to positive cases at Dawson Hall, Charterhouse Square, and Floyer House, Whitechapel and the appropriate response. In response to requests from students, the overall number of current positive cases was being published on the website. Senior managers had participated in a table top exercise with Tower Hamlets focused on the community and would conduct another exercise in the current week. Recent visitors from the Cabinet Office had been impressed with the mitigations at Mile End.
- [d] There had been positive feedback to the weekly communications sent to staff and students. The Senior Executive Team (SET) had final approval of communications, but Heads of Schools and Institutes and Professional Services Directors were also involved to ensure that messaging was joined up.

- [e] The feedback from students to the online experience had been excellent. We had invested heavily by bringing in external experts to train our staff and work on our most popular modules. Student engagement in online lectures had increased.
- [f] The QMSU President said that students' expectations of blended learning, in terms of the face to face offer on campus, did not match what was being offered in all cases. From their perspective there had been conflicting messages from the centre and schools, and student representatives were engaging with Faculties and the university to address this.
- [g] QMSU was working with the residences team to support students who were self-isolating. There had been initial confusion about what constituted a 'household' in Dawson and Floyer. There had also been issues with the behaviour of some students and how these incidents should be dealt with.
- [h] The elected staff member for Humanities and Social Sciences said that there was a gap between the communications to staff and students and their expectations. Staff who had prepared online teaching felt unappreciated and steps should be taken to improve staff engagement. He suggested that the relationship between the university and the trade unions could be improved and that decision making bodies should include union representation.
- [i] Council said that it was important that staff perceived that they felt valued for their work. It was understandable that schools and institutes wanted to develop relationships directly with students but it was crucial that the content of messaging was consistent.
- [j] The Vice-Principal (Education) said that the Education 3.1 group had worked to create messaging that would address the needs of staff and students. The messages published on the student experience and Covid webpages had always made clear that education would be online with wrap around face to face activity and this position had not changed.
- [k] Fortnightly meetings on blended learning had been held with Heads and Directors of Education in schools and institutes. Programme Directors had been asked to explore face to face learning in their disciplines with the help of external consultants. Staff were being asked to nominate colleagues for excellence awards and the Principal's Prizes.
- [l] The Director of Marketing and Communications said that a review of the communications showed a high degree of consistency, but that it was difficult in a large organisation to ensure that all communication would be the same. There would be variation in schools and institutes as to what face to face teaching would look like, but it was clear that all students would receive some at various points in the semester. Stories about blended learning were being collected to share with students.
- [m] The Vice-Principal (Humanities and Social Sciences) said that the messaging necessarily reflected disciplinary differences. Heads of Schools in the Faculty shared messages with each other for consistency and to learn from one another. It was difficult to strike the right balance of face to face

and online learning for students with different needs.

- [n] The QMSU Vice-President (Barts and the London) said that some students were worried about having only online teaching while others were concerned about coming onto campus. He was working with the School of Medicine and Dentistry to ensure that the face to face teaching that was delivered would be in the right areas.
- [o] The Vice-Principal (Science and Engineering) said that there had been clear messaging from the university, faculties and schools and institutes, and that the work carried out by colleagues since March had been appreciated. He had received positive feedback from students about the online learning. Participation in classes had increased because of the high quality and interactive nature of the online provision.
- [p] Since 30th September, weekly meetings were being held with QMSU, Estates, Security, Communications, the Director of Health and Safety, the Director of Student and Academic Services and the Vice-Principal (Policy and Strategic Partnerships). It provided a forum for students to raise concerns and work towards solutions.
- [q] The Director of Health and Safety said that there was a large network of safety coordinators who were responsible for Health and Safety in their local areas. The Faculty Health and Safety Management Group meetings were chaired by the Vice-Principals or Faculty Operating Officers and included representatives from the trade unions. We were constantly checking that appropriate health and safety measures were in place and that we were up to date with the latest government guidance.
- [r] Council said that the next 6 months would be challenging especially as staff had not had a break over the summer. Online resources for mental health first aiders had been made available. Managers had been advised to exercise duty of care and had been offered wellbeing workshops to support staff.
- [s] The Vice-Principal (People, Culture and Inclusion) said that individuals were required to complete a risk assessment before returning to work. A different challenge was posed by those staff classed as vulnerable but who wanted to return to work. Employees were encouraged to speak openly with their managers about returning. The parents and carers network was also providing vital support. A sub-group of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group was examining the impact of Covid on the vulnerable and BAME communities.
- [t] The Vice-Principal (International) said that student recruitment had been a huge collaborative effort. The focus had turned recently to recruitment for the January start for postgraduate taught courses. We had already received 3,000 applications.
- [u] There had been reluctance from some staff initially to return but those who had been on campus and seen the mitigations had been reassured. The President and Principal invited Council members to visit campus.

[v] The Chair said that he would consider how to convey Council's thanks to staff and students for all their hard work. The university had been extraordinarily resilient in its response to the crisis and he commended the Senior Executive Team for its leadership.

Action: [v] Chair of Council

Gateway paper 4 (QM2020/04)

2020.007 *Minute 2020.007 is confidential.*

QMSU President's report (QM2020/05)

2020.008 Council **noted** the QMSU President's report. The following points were noted in the discussion:

Tuition fees

[a] There were reports about possible student protests against tuition fees across the sector. The President and Principal said that delivering high-quality online education was costly. It was a misconception to assume that online delivery was cheaper than face to face. The QMSU President said that the Students' Union was not currently supporting any campaigns against fees. More transparent communication to students about how tuition fees were spent would be helpful.

Student events

[b] QMSU had delivered 49 events during Welcome Week and the first week of term. The QMSU President thanked QMSU staff and Executive Officers for their hard work in making this a success. Further social events were being planned to take place throughout the semester.

EDI update (QM2020/07)

2020.009 Council **noted** the update on Equality, Diversity and Inclusion. The Vice-Principal (People, Culture and Inclusion) said that:

[a] The five objectives of the new People, Culture and Inclusion enabling plan articulated how we intended to deliver on our ambition to be the most inclusive university of its kind anywhere.

[b] Progress would be monitored through the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Steering Group (EDISG). Each School and Institute would be invited to present to the EDISG the work they are doing to implement the objectives in their local areas. Significant progress had been made on improving data quality and ensuring we had the right data to inform our actions.

The following points were noted in the discussion:

[c] Council asked for an explanation of the innovative approach to positive action. The current equal merit provision meant that an equally qualified candidate from an underrepresented background would be appointed. However, this was often applied at the interview stage and we had decided to apply it at the point of shortlisting. This approach was also being applied

to internal leadership roles to change the profile of middle and senior leadership.

[d] Council asked for some examples of actions to increase diversity at the middle and senior levels. A leadership development framework had been created to provide clarity about expectations for leadership including inclusive leadership. We were being more proactive about encouraging people to put themselves forward for leadership roles.

[e] Council asked about the relationship between widening participation and EDI in developing the academic pipeline. We had run a virtual teachers and advisors conference on inclusion. Through our outreach work we were preparing students for an education at Queen Mary, supporting them throughout their studies with a buddy system, and preparing them to enter employment through QMentoring.

Strategy KPI update (QM2020/08)

2020.010 *Minute 2020.010 is confidential.*

Finance and Investment Committee minutes (QM2020/10)

2020.011 Council **noted** the minutes of the Finance and Investment Committee held on 22 September 2020. The following points were noted in the discussion:

[a] Council asked if the partner institution associated with the large debt had been identified. The Interim Finance Director said that she would report back at the next meeting.

[b] The Treasurer said that the accounting process had made it appear that there had been a big jump in the amount of debt but that this was misleading.

Action: [a] Interim Finance Director

Audit and Risk Committee report (QM2020/11)

2020.012 Council **noted** the Audit and Risk Committee report from the meeting held on 01 October 2020. The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee said that:

[a] The Committee had commissioned a deep dive on reputational risk and would report back to Council.

[b] The Committee had received the annual report from the internal auditors and there were no areas of concern to report to Council.

***Draft agenda for the next meeting (QM2020/12)**

2020.013 [a] Council **noted** the agenda for the next meeting on Thursday 19 November 2020.

[b] Council would receive the report from the Remuneration Committee meetings in October and the annual report at its next meeting.

Processes to renew the appointments of the President and Principal and Chair of Council (Oral report)

2020.014 Council **noted** the oral report from the Chief Governance Officer and University Secretary on the process to review the appointments of the President and Principal and Chair of Council. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] Governance Committee had met this afternoon and agreed to three key processes. The Chief Governance Officer and University Secretary would write to Council members with the process for electing a Vice-Chair of Council. External members would be asked to self-nominate by 26th October. The nominations would be discussed by a panel including the Chair, Bushra Nasir, as the external member from Governance Committee, and the Chief Governance Officer and University Secretary. A recommendation would be made to Council for approval.
- [b] The first term of office for the Chair of Council would end in September 2021. The panel would be led by the Vice-Chair and a 360 assessment would be commissioned from an external supplier. The process, which required Council approval, would conclude by January 2021.
- [c] The first term of office for the President and Principal would end in September 2022. As it would take a year to make an appointment, a decision on renewing the term of the President and Principal would be needed by the second half of the current academic year. The panel would be led by the Chair of Council and comprise a cross-section of Council members. There would be a 360 appraisal and engagement with external stakeholders.

Dates of Meetings 2020–21

- Thursday 19 November 2020 at 1600 hours in the Colette Bowe Room, Mile End.
- Thursday 25 March 2021 at 1600 hours in the Colette Bowe Room, Mile End.
- Thursday 20 May / Friday 21 May 2021 – residential conference including Council meeting.
- Thursday 08 July 2021 at 1600 hours in the Colette Bowe Room, Mile End.