



Senate

Paper Title	Executive summaries of Council meetings held on 07 October and 18 November 2021
Outcome requested	Senate is asked to note the executive summaries of the Council meetings held on 07 October and 18 November 2021
Points for Senate members to note and further information	N/A
Questions for Senate to consider	N/A
Regulatory/statutory reference points	N/A
Strategy and risk	N/A
Reporting/consideration route for the paper	Senate 17 March 2022
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COUNCIL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Non-confidential confirmed minutes and papers of Council are available at:
<https://arcs.qmul.ac.uk/governance/council/council-meeting-papers/>.
Alternatively, contact the Assistant Secretary to Council: Dr Nadine Lewycky,
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Meeting date: 07 October 2021

Main Items Discussed

1. President and Principal's report

Council received an update on the following key issues:

Covid 19 response – Covid 19 roadmap

The majority of Covid mitigations were removed from the institutional risk register on 19 July when the national restrictions were eased. A number of safety measures on campus remained in place, which were reviewed and endorsed by the Health and Safety Executive. An outbreak control plan had been developed to cope with any significant increases in the number of cases among our community.

September 2021: student experience and education offer

Residences were fully booked, and the majority of students had arrived on to campus. 500 students from amber list countries and 250 students from red list countries were being supported.

An innovative educational offer based around mixed-mode education had been co-created between staff and students. To support the delivery of mixed-mode education, more than 100 lecture and seminar rooms had been equipped with AV equipment. Seven new teaching spaces had been created in the Queens' Building.

USS pension scheme

The Universities and Colleges Union (UCU) was balloting for strike action in relation to pay and pensions. The USS Joint Negotiating Committee (JNC) had voted in favour of a package of proposed changes put forward by Universities UK (UUK). Queen Mary supported the proposals put forward in the UUK consultation along with 90% of member institutions.

Policy environment

The Office for Students was focused on the amount of face-to-face teaching offered across the sector. Through UUK and the Russell Group, we made representations in relation to the Comprehensive Spending Review focused on the economic contribution of universities, the need to protect the UK's research base, and the significant contributions of universities throughout the pandemic.

National Student Survey and league tables

This year's outcome of the National Student Survey (NSS) was heavily influenced by the pandemic. Our overall position rose within the sector from 99th to 55th while our overall satisfaction score fell from 80% to 75%. Work to optimise the student experience would continue.

Our position in the *Guardian League Table* rose 17 places to 51st in the country. Our ranking in the *Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide* rose one place to 40th nationally. Our position in the *QS World Rankings* fell three places to 117. The results would be analysed by our League Tables Working Group.

2. Environmental sustainability

Council received a deep dive presentation on our environmental sustainability performance against our commitments within our Environmental Sustainability Policy (October 2020) and Environmental Sustainability Action Plan (2020-2023). Corporate partnerships and collaboration with other universities and the local council would be key to achieving our targets. Sustainability activities had been planned including the university's first ever Sustainability Week. A 28.5% reduction in our carbon footprint in 2019/20 from the previous year, a result of campus closures during the pandemic and recent investment to improve our energy efficiency. Travel represented the largest element of our carbon footprint and the travel policy would be reviewed.

Case studies were presented on embedding sustainability in the curriculum by Professor Kate Heppell, Professor of Physical Geography, and Dr Elena Baglioni, Senior Lecturer in Global Supply Chain Management.

3. Strategic risk register and institutional Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)

Council received the institutional Strategic Risk Register and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs), which included a summary of the KPIs that remained out of tolerance, mitigating actions, and an overview of the key external risks.

Meeting date: 18 November 2021

Main Items Discussed

1. President and Principal's report

Council received an update on the following key issues:

UCU industrial action

At Queen Mary, UCU did not meet the required 50% threshold to achieve a mandate for strike action or action short of a strike. Although we were not among the universities facing immediate action, UCU was considering its options including a re-ballot. The sector faced a prolonged period of industrial action likely to further damage its already poor reputation with government and the public. There was little prospect of an immediate end to either dispute on pay or pensions. Staff members were being consulted on proposed changes to the USS pension scheme. Information sessions with an independent pension's expert were being offered.

Covid 19 response

The number of live cases in our community was being monitored closely. There had been no identifiable clusters either in residences or in-person teaching throughout the pandemic. We remained close to the government's position on Covid measures. There were strong indications that the government was contemplating a move to Plan B which would impact on our ability to offer face-to-face teaching. National statistics on hospitalisations led to a re-think but the situation would move quickly.

Life Sciences at Whitechapel

On November 2nd the purchase of Plot C at Whitechapel was completed with the Department for Health and Social Care. This was a crucial step forward in our vision for the development of Life Sciences, providing an opportunity to develop a state-of-the-art Life Sciences teaching and research facility. We would work with NHS Property Services to secure the necessary planning permissions.

Policy environment

The government's response to the Augur Review was expected before Christmas, possibly as part of a larger White paper addressing quality of provision and admissions. It appeared unlikely that the government would implement in full the recommendation to cut tuition fees to £7,500. The Treasury remained concerned about the cost of the student loan book.

We expected a launch of a major consultation in relation to the Teaching Excellence Framework. The consultation would be informed by the Pearce Review which recommended that the subject level TEF should not proceed.

We awaited final confirmation of the UK government's association to Horizon Europe. The government's position was to become an associated country and funds had been earmarked for this purpose.

Research strategy

Since the summer we had been focusing on accelerating the research element of the 2030 Strategy and identifying the next two University Research Institutes (URI) to launch within the next year. Our first URI, the Digital Environment Research Institute was beginning to show tangible benefits.

2. Office for Students accountability return

Council **considered** and **approved** the Office for Students accountability return for 2020–21. This included the Audit Committee annual report; the external auditor letter of representation; the annual reports of the internal and external auditors; and the audited financial statements and commentary.

3. Academic accountability

Council **considered** the annual assurance report from Senate for 2020–21. The report detailed the formal governance arrangements for managing academic standards and quality during the 2020–21 academic year.

4. Remuneration annual report

Council **considered** and **approved** the Remuneration annual report for 2021. The report was on senior staff remuneration at Queen Mary and was written to comply with the Committee of University Chairs' Higher Education Remuneration Code and the Office for Students' Accounts Direction.

5. Civic and Community engagement

Council received a deep dive presentation on our civic and community engagement. Our work with the local community was supported by the Centre for Public Engagement (CPE) which delivered training and shared best practice. The CPE was awarded the first ever platinum watermark for excellence in public engagement by the National Coordinating Centre for Public Engagement. The first Knowledge Exchange Framework showed that we were in the top 10% in our cluster for public engagement. Case studies were presented on collaborative projects with local community groups.