

C O U N C I L

Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 15 March 2021

Present: Vice-Chancellor, Principal of Brasenose¹, Warden of New College, Ms Becker, Ms Boyt, Professor Sir Rory Collins, Professor Coulson, Sir Chris Deverell, Fra' John Eidinow², Professor Essler, Professor Hamerow, Mr Harman, Professor Hobbs³, Professor Johnson, Mr Kroll, , Professor Nobre, Mr Ovenden, Professor Sánchez-Ancochea, Professor Trefethen⁴, Head of the Humanities Division (Professor O'Brien), Head of the MPLS Division (Professor Howison), Head of the Medical Sciences Division (Professor Screaton)⁵, Head of the Social Sciences Division (Professor Dame Sarah Whatmore), Senior Proctor (Professor Horobin), Junior Proctor (Professor Johnston), Assessor (Professor Swift).

Student Member Representatives and representative of the Early Career Research Staff: Nikita Ma (President of Oxford SU), Tucker Drew (Oxford SU VP Access and Academic Affairs) and Lauren Bolz (Oxford SU VP Graduates); Dr Gwilym Rowlands (Chair, Oxford Research Staff Society).

Apologies: Professor Lahiri.

Officers in attendance: the Registrar, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Development and External Affairs)⁶, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Innovation)⁷, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources), Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research), the Director of Finance, the Director of Legal Services and General Counsel⁸, the Director of Public Affairs, the interim Head of Governance and Covid Planning⁹, the Executive Officer (Policy and Governance) in the Vice-Chancellor's Office, the Assistant Registrar (Governance), Dr Berry.

In attendance: (Stephen Purbrick, Head of Financial Planning and Analysis, Kirsten Gillingham, incoming interim Director of Finance (for item 4); Harriet Waters, Head of Environmental Sustainability, Tom Yearly, Deputy Head of Sustainability, Joanne Murraybrown, Sustainability Strategy Project Manager (for item 6); Professor Sir Keith Burnett, Chair of the Review of the Department for Continuing Education (for item 8); Julian Duxfield, Director of HR (for items 10-12).

Order of business: item 8 was taken after item 4.

Declarations of interest: Council members were reminded to declare any interest that could give rise to a conflict in relation to any item on the agenda.

Introductory matters: the Vice-Chancellor thanked those for whom this was their last meeting of Council: Dr Gwilym Rowlands, Council's first representative of the early career research staff; the outgoing Proctors and Assessor, whose time in office had been dominated by the pandemic and who had attended all their Council meetings as members online; and Lindsay Pearson, Director of Finance, who was demitting office on 31 March and who had contributed greatly as a key member of the senior team.

I. ORDINARY BUSINESS

(A) Unreserved

¹ For items 1-14.

² For items 1-21(a).

³ For items 1-10.

⁴ For items 1-15 and 24.

⁵ For items 1-4.

⁶ For items 1-20.

⁷ For items 1-8.

⁸ For items 1-21.

⁹ For items 1-15.

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1. **Meeting held on 8 February 2021** (C(21)vii-xvii)(a) *Unreserved minutes*

The minutes were approved¹⁰.

(b) *Matters arising from the unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 8 February 2021 not otherwise on the agenda*

There were none.

CONFIDENTIAL 2. **The Vice-Chancellor's unreserved business (above the line)****

The Vice-Chancellor reported on the following items.

- The appointment processes for the Chief Financial Officer and for the Head of the Social Sciences Division. Professor Margaret Stevens had been appointed interim head of the Social Sciences Division from 1 August 2021.
- The impact on research funding of the cuts to national ODA budget. The University, with the Russell Group, was pushing back on the cuts which would impact heavily on colleagues and on research projects benefiting the developing world.
- Details of the Turing Programme, which was to replace the Erasmus Scheme, had been announced. It would provide for overseas study and work placements throughout the world, and was intended to support Global Britain, levelling up, and provide value for money for taxpayers.

CONFIDENTIAL 3. **Covid-19****

Council **noted** oral updates on the return of students, testing and Business Continuity Planning.

RESTRICTED 4. **Finance White Paper** (C(21)21)**

Council discussed the consultation process on the White Paper and **agreed** a revised timeline. A decision on whether to proceed with the new system would be made by Council in time for the budget process for the 2022/23 financial year.

5. **Reports from the meeting of Finance Committee held on 22 February 2021**CONFIDENTIAL (a) *Begbroke Science Park – Phase 1: Intelligent Client Function Review of the OUD Initial Response* (C(21)22)**

Council **took the actions** set out in the report.

CONFIDENTIAL (b) *Oxford Internet Institute and Schwarzman Centre* (C(21)23)**¹¹

Council **took the actions** set out in the report.

CONFIDENTIAL (c) *Osney Power Station* (C(21)24)**

Council **took the actions** set out in the report.

6. **Environmental Sustainability Strategy and Full Business Case** (C(21)25)

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning and Resources) reminded Council that the development of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy followed on from the Vice-Chancellor's Oration in October 2019 in which she called for the University to do more to tackle the environmental impact of its own operation. The draft Strategy had been the subject of wide consultation in the University and was now brought back to Council with widespread support. He explained that the Strategy had: two

¹⁰ One correction was made to those present.

¹¹ The Head of the Humanities Division and Bodley's Librarian declared conflicts of interests.

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targets: net zero carbon and a net gain in biodiversity, both by 2035; four enablers – governance, reporting, funding and offsetting; and ten policies.

The Vice-Chancellor drew Council's attention to the individual approvals that it was being asked to give as set out below.

In the discussion in the chat, Council members commented on the approval of the strategy being an important milestone. The representatives of both the students and the early career research staff expressed their support.

Council:

- (i) **approved** the Environmental Sustainability Strategy and the Environmental Sustainability Strategy: Full Business Case;
- (ii) **approved** (on the recommendation of GPC and PRAC) the establishment of a new Environmental Sustainability Subcommittee of PRAC under Council Regulations 15 of 2002;
- (iii) **approved** (on the recommendation of PRAC) the establishment of the Oxford Sustainability Fund with the following four sources of income:
 - a. Existing sources of funding
 - b. Recovering savings carbon reduction measures
 - c. A sustainability charge on business flights
 - d. Hypothecating part of the unregulated student fee income; and
- (iv) **approved** (on the recommendation of Finance Committee) the allocation of £50m from the Strategic Capital account for upfront capital investment in carbon reduction measures (to be repaid by 2035 from the sources of income listed under iii above) subject to specific business case approvals in due course.

CONFIDENTIAL 7. **Annual report from the Chair of the Education Committee****

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) reported on the following matters.

- *Three educational priorities*, not all in the Strategic Plan
 - Good progress was being made on *undergraduate access*, with the University being ahead of its socio-economic targets. There was however a continuing gap in the offer rate for UK Asian students.
 - There was also good progress on *postgraduate access* in terms of UNIQ+, Black Academic Futures scholarships, and piloting an access friendly admissions process. But funding issues remained a significant obstacle, and fees could be expected to rise as a result of the loss of the graduate application fee.
 - *Student wellbeing and mental health* was not included as an educational priority in the Strategic Plan, but had been brought to the fore by the pandemic. The Mental Health Task Force had established systems across the collegiate University that would make a permanent improvement in provision. Problems remained in terms of how to provide for increased demand and a lack of timely NHS support when needed.
- *Covid-19*. This had dominated the year. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) outlined the main consequential changes in teaching and assessment, admissions, and outreach. There was currently a consultation on the future format of admissions interviews, with mixed views as to whether they were better online or in person.
- *Forward Look*. Looking ahead, the priorities were
 - *To address racial inequality*, one important aspect of which was the launch of the Race Equality Task Force with a focus on, for students, admissions and funding, curriculum and attainment, student services, and especially promoting an inclusive culture.
 - *The development of a new digital education strategy*. There had been rapid transformation of digital education provision this year as a result of the pandemic. The next question was what of that should be retained in the long term, and how to transition away from the other material. For the longer term, the question was how to integrate digital and non-digital

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teaching. This ought to be the final digital education strategy; for the future, digital education should be an integral part of the education strategy.

He concluded with the following points:

- Teaching, assessment and student support had adapted well to Covid.
- Investment both before and during the pandemic had been crucial, for example on Canvas VLE, Centre for Teaching and Learning, PGR extensions funding, enhanced welfare funding.
- There was a huge opportunity to build on these achievements, but funding challenges remained, in particular further IT investment and graduate funding.

In discussion, in person and on the Teams chat, the following were among the points raised.

- The Vice-Chancellor and other members of Council thanked the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) for his presentation and his work over this difficult year.
- The offer gap for UK Asian student was 4%. Part time teaching at the graduate level was now part of the mainstream, not just the preserve of Continuing Education. This opened up a significant avenue for the University. The University had not adopted part-time undergraduate education.
- The Bodleian Libraries were able to help support the review of digital education.
- Principal issues facing graduate students included access, how to secure the best graduate students, how to support graduate students whose work had been particularly badly affected by the pandemic, such those who needed to carry out overseas field work.
- The student representatives thanked the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education) for his work on the Race Equality Task Force and looked forward to continuing to work with the University on racial equality.

CONFIDENTIAL 8. **Report of the Council Review of the Department for Continuing Education (C(21)26)****

Council **took the actions** set out in the report.

CONFIDENTIAL 9. **Update on the USS Pensions Valuation (C(21)27)****

Council **noted** the USS Trustee report and next steps.

CONFIDENTIAL 10. **Report of the meeting of the Personnel Committee held on 28 January 2021 and the meeting of PRAC held on 16 February 2021 (C(21)28)****

(a) *Recognition of Distinction: Update on the actual budget for the 2020 exercise and proposed budget for the 2021 exercise¹²*

Council **took the action** set out in the report.

CONFIDENTIAL 11. **Report of the meeting of Personnel Committee held on 26 November 2020 (C(21)29)****

(a) *Equal Pay Audit 2019/20*

Council **noted** the conclusions and recommendations of the equal pay audit as summarised in section (a).

CONFIDENTIAL 12. **Report of the meeting of the Personnel Committee held on 4 March 2021**

(a) *The University's Gender Pay Gap Report (C(21)30)***

The University's Director of Human Resources introduced this item, highlighting the following points.

- The University was legally required to report on its gender pay gap on an annual basis. If approved by Council, the narrative and data would be published on the government website and the University website.

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- The mean pay gap had reduced significantly from 24.5% to 20.1% lower since 2017. The median pay gap remained the same at 13.7% lower.
- The report showed the percentage of female and percentage of male relevant employees in each pay quartile.
- The key issue is that women generally account for a higher percentage of the staff in grades at the lower end of the structure and men account for a higher percentage of staff in senior grades.
- The median bonus pay gap remained at 0%. Bonus pay included:
 - Clinical Excellence Awards;
 - one-off payments made under the University's Reward and Recognition Scheme; and
 - the OUP bonus scheme.

Following discussion, Council **approved** the draft narrative on the University's gender pay gap report.

(b) *2021/22 national pay negotiations for non-clinical staff (C(21)31)*

Council **took the action** set out in the report.

RESTRICTED 13. **Update on Oxford's planning for the Research Excellence Framework 2021 (C(21)32)****

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) introduced this item. The Vice-Chancellor noted that the REF 2021 had involved an enormous amount of work, led by a large team of people. Completing the process on time, in such difficult circumstances, was a major achievement. Thanks were due to the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) and all those involved.

Council **noted**:

- (i) the additional measures put in place by the Funding Bodies to support universities in the current lockdown;
- (ii) the update on preparations for the REF submission;
- (iii) future business for REF Project Board.

14. **College Contributions Committee: COVID-19 Emergency Scheme (C(21)33)***

The paper was taken as read and Council **approved**:

- (i) a proposal to dedicate a further year of CCS7 funds (2021-22) to those colleges with particularly pressing challenges due to the impact of COVID-19; and
- (ii) the proposed extension to the partial suspension of Council Regulations 1 of 2020 to allow the endowment portion of the Scheme 7 fund to be used for these purposes.

CONFIDENTIAL 15. **Annual report of the Head of the Humanities Division****

The Head of the Humanities Division highlighted the following aspects of the division's work.

- The Division had maintained its global position in the world rankings.
- It was committed to and engaged in the equality, diversity and access agenda, for example through the Race Action Plan, Masters Scholarships for BAME students, Opportunity Oxford.
- Having maximised its research grant income, the Division was heavily reliant on philanthropy to underpin its core functions. A number of high profile posts had recently been endowed, including the Schwarz-Taylor Chair of German, Chinese Language Instructorship, Leventis Associate Professor in Eastern Christianity, Hillary Rodham Clinton Chair of Women's History, Stavros Niarchos Chair of Byzantine and Modern Greek, Associate Professor of Byzantine Archaeology, Jesus Chair of Celtic.
- Notable new appointments included:
 - Professor Sheilagh Ogilvie, Chichele Professor of Economics
 - Professor John Tasioulas, Director of the Institute for Ethics in AI
 - Professor Brenda E Stevenson, Hillary Rodham Clinton Chair of Women's History
 - Professor Mark Wynn, Nolloth Professor of the Philosophy of the Christian Religion
 - Professor David Willis, Jesus Chair of Celtic (in Linguistics)

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- Along with the rest of the University, the pandemic had touched every aspect within the Humanities Division including:
 - new initiatives such as the ten-minute book club
 - senior members of the Division serving on government committees
 - consideration of ethical issues, such as test and trace and Covid passports
 - work on the history and culture of pandemics and learning to live with them
- In terms of external research funding for Humanities, Oxford was significantly ahead of most other UK HEIs and marginally ahead of Cambridge.
- Post Brexit and Covid, the Division faced a number of challenges and opportunities:
 - EU Horizon and Marie Curie Funding continued, allowing the Division to undertake activities that it would otherwise be unable to do.
 - The demise of the Erasmus scheme was unfortunate and its replacement, the Turing Scheme, did not appear to offer the same benefits.
 - There was a need to consolidate recent expansion in areas such as history of science and technology, environmental humanities, creative and heritage industries, popular music, psychology, music and linguistics, Central Asian Studies, black British history, Chinese art.
 - Whilst there had been significant fundraising successes for graduate scholarships, this had been offset by reductions in UKRI scholarship funding.
 - It was recognised that the declining student demand in some areas, notably Modern Languages and now including English literature, was unlikely to be reversed, meaning that the Division needed to reposition its offering.
- Notable projects within the Division included:
 - The Tide Project, led by Professor Nandini Das, a 5-year ERC-funded project that aims to investigate how mobility in the great age of travel and discovery shaped English perceptions of human identity based on cultural identification and difference.
 - 2020 had marked the 100th anniversary of PPE. The Division had commissioned a report into the history of PPE and held a panel discussion, hosted by the Vice-Chancellor, to discuss the degree featuring some of PPE's most prominent and successful alumni. This anniversary had prompted the Division to start thinking about possible new undergraduate degrees and to open a dialogue with the other Divisions to progress this thinking.
- An update on the Schwarzman Centre for the Humanities.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Head of Division for the extraordinary amount of work undertaken to get to this stage of what would be a spectacular building.

Items for approval or report without discussion ('below the line').

16. The Vice-Chancellor's unreserved business (below the line) (C(21)34)

Without discussion, Council **noted**:

- (i) the OfS publications; and
- (ii) the UUK Press Statements.

17. Reports of the meetings of Education Committee held on 4 December 2020 and on 19 February 2021

*(a) Proposal to increase the student number cap for Champion Hall (C(21)35)**

Without discussion, Council **approved** an increase in the student number cap for Champion Hall from 17 FTE to 22 FTE from 2021-22.

(b) Review of compliance with consumer law (C(21)36)

Without discussion, Council **noted** the review report at Annex A.

18. Unreserved report of the meeting of the General Purposes Committee held on 22 February 2021 (C(21)37)

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(a) Professor of Poetry: review

Without discussion, Council **approved** the establishment of the Professor of Poetry Review Group, with the membership and terms of reference as proposed in section (d).

(b) Environmental Sustainability Strategy: proposed changes to Council Regulations 15 of 2002

Without discussion, Council **approved** the amendments to Council Regulations 15 of 2002 as follows (as set out in Annex A):

- (i) to amend Part 5: Planning and Resource Allocation Committee, by the addition of overall responsibility for environmental sustainability at the University; and
- (ii) to add the terms of reference for the Environmental Sustainability Subcommittee of the Planning and Resource Allocation Committee as a new Part 38.

If approved, GPC will make the necessary changes to the regulations on behalf of Council.

*(c) Proposed changes to the size and composition of the Finance Committee of Oxford University Press**

Without discussion, Council **approved** the revised composition of the Finance Committee of Oxford University Press, as set out in Annex B.

If approved, GPC will make the necessary changes to the regulations on behalf of Council.

CONFIDENTIAL 19. **Performance of the Oxford Endowment Fund (C(21)38)**

Without discussion, Council **noted** the information.

20. **Any other unreserved business**

This item was taken above the line, before item 16.

Dr Gwilym Rowlands, who was standing down as Council's first representative of the early career research staff, thanked the Vice-Chancellor and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research) for the opportunity to attend Council. Researchers were a diverse group and were keen to be represented at all levels in the University's governance. A process for identifying a successor to Dr Rowlands as the early career representative on Council was now in place.

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