

COUNCIL
Thursday 31 March 2022

CONFIRMED MINUTES

Present:

Tim Clement-Jones (Chair)	Professor Colin Bailey	Gil Baldwin [from m. 043]
Ken Batty [to m. 047]	Professor Alison Blunt	Sarah Cowls
Celia Gough	Professor Colin Grant	Stella Hall
Professor Yang Hao	Isabelle Jenkins	Dr Philippa Lloyd [to m. 043]
Maryanne Matthews	Professor Mangala Patel	Dr Alix Pryde
Melissa Tatton	Peter Thompson	

In attendance:

Karen Kröger	Jan Juillerat (Advance HE)	Dr Maggie Leggett
Louise Lester [mm. 052–3]	Dr Nadine Lewycky	Professor Stephanie Marshall
Jonathan Morgan	Priti Patel [m. 043]	

Apologies:

Professor Kavita Datta

Welcome and apologies

2021.038 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies.

Minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2021 (Paper QM2021/33)

2021.039 Council **confirmed** the confidential and non-confidential minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2021.

Chair's update including decisions taken by circulation since the last meeting (QM2021/34)

2021.040 The Chair:

[a] Congratulated Professor Kavita Datta on her election as Fellow of the Academy of Social Sciences and Adi Sawalha on his re-election as President of the Queen Mary Students' Union.

[b] Said that our application for individual university title had been approved and that we were petitioning the Privy Council for a Supplemental Charter to put the change formally into effect.

[c] Asked the University Secretary to clarify the status of proposals to change the name of Barts and The London School of Medicine and Dentistry and the

governance process involved in making such a change, as several Council members had received communications about this from students, staff and alumni. The University Secretary said that the naming of large academic units is set out in the University Ordinances, which require approval by Council after consulting with Senate. It is also established practice for SET to engage with staff and students ahead of making a recommendation to Senate and Council. The Interim Vice-Principal (Health) wrote to staff and students towards the end of the last calendar year indicating that there would be opportunities to engage on the issue, but SET had not yet developed firm proposals or determined a timetable for stakeholder engagement to take place. The Chair added that the University has no desire to conflict with the Barts 900th anniversary celebrations. Council asked for an update on the timetable for stakeholder engagement and to be kept informed more generally on progress.

Actions: [c] Chief Governance Officer and University Secretary

President and Principal's Report (QM2021/35)

2021.041 Council **discussed** the President and Principal's Report. The following points were noted in the discussion:

Industrial action

[a] At the time of writing, we had faced 10 days of industrial action. To protect our students' education, we had asked staff on returning to work to prioritise the making-up of all education activities. This could include stopping non-teaching activities, such as research, so that education activities could be made up within a reasonable timescale. In cases where staff refused to make up education activities, 100% of pay would be withheld on the basis that the University does not accept partial performance. A further 15 days of industrial action were scheduled in the lead up to Easter: five days in relation to the on-going national dispute; and a further 10 days in relation to our local policy of deducting 100% of pay where students do not prioritise the making-up of education activities.

UCU letter

[b] Council members had received a letter from the Chair of the local UCU branch. In response to claims that the USS pension scheme had recovered its deficit, it was noted that the monitoring on financial sustainability, based on the newly introduced reforms, showed that the scheme did not in fact have the necessary level of assets and payments for future pensions. The increase in the asset value in the USS pension scheme did not impact on its affordability, and if more risk was accepted around the valuation, there would be fewer levers left to pull to maintain the scheme.

[c] Official figures provided to the University by UCU centrally did not support the claim that an increased UCU membership locally had voted for industrial action. There had been no change to the voting pattern on industrial action with the introduction of the policy to withhold full pay for partial performance.

[d] The local policy on pay deductions would help the University to fulfil its obligations to students as defined by the Competition and Markets Authority, the Office for Students and the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education, and was also the approach

recommended to the sector by the Universities and Colleges Employers Association.

- [e] In response to the claim that management had not met with UCU representatives, Council was told that three members of the Senior Executive Team met on a regular basis with all campus trade union representatives through the Joint Consultative Forum, chaired by the Vice-Principal (People, Culture and Inclusion).
- [f] A contingency group comprising staff and student representatives from each faculty was meeting weekly to oversee the arrangements to make up missed teaching. Heads of Schools were responsible for ensuring that activities were made up locally and for communicating the revised arrangements to students. The faculties had each confirmed, based on assurances from Heads of Schools, that all missed education had been made up or was scheduled to be made up.
- [g] Council asked whether other universities experiencing strike action had similar policies on deducting pay for action short of strike. Some universities had adopted a similar approach, while others were reserving the right to deduct full pay. Council also asked whether there were alternatives to the policy that would support student outcomes. The President and Principal said that the current stance had been adopted because previous approaches, which placed greater trust in individual academics, had proved unsuccessful at protecting the interests of students. There was concern that, without the University adopting a rigorous stance on making up missed education, graduates may leave the University unprepared for the employment market, and without the professional recognition they need in the case of our accredited courses.
- [h] Council asked if there was an opportunity to withdraw the policy and avoid further industrial action. The President and Principal said that the policy was necessary to ensure that missed education was made up and that no pay deductions would be made for action short of strike where missed education had been made up or was scheduled to be made up. As most staff taking part in strike action did so on only a few days, there was time to make up the missed education ahead of the assessment period.
- [i] Council commented that it was difficult to put into context comments from the local UCU branch about low levels of staff morale and trust in the executive without current staff survey data.
- [j] Council asked how communications were being managed to minimise the impact of the industrial action on the University's reputation. The President and Principal said that the policy on pay deductions demonstrated the importance the University gives to its students. There was no evidence of the University's national or international reputation being negatively affected; indeed, feedback from external stakeholders indicated that our reputation on education and research was improving. Weekly update meetings were being held with the QMSU sabbatical officers to help understand and address student perceptions.

QMSU President's report (QM2021/36)

2021.042 Council **received** the QMSU President's report. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] The spring elections for next year's officer and trustee positions had been held with over 105 candidates putting themselves forward. Engagement had been adversely impacted by the strikes on campus and public transport.
- [b] The process of collecting student feedback to inform the new QMSU strategic plan was underway. A focus of the work was connecting with students who do not normally engage with the Students' Union.
- [c] QMSU had worked with the university and IT services to allow students to change how their names would appear on email and other key services. Degree certificates would continue to show the legal name, but students could use their chosen name at Graduation.

Update on Access and Participation Plan (QM2021/37)

2021.043 Council **received** an update on the Access and Participation Plan. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] With the appointment of a new Director for Fair Access this year, there was a shift in emphasis towards improving success and progression as well as continuing improvements in widening access.
- [b] We were progressing towards our target to reduce the non-continuation gap between disabled and non-disabled students. Access had improved during the pandemic through the increased use of online learning. New tools to improve digital accessibility to our student wellbeing services would launch later this year.
- [c] We were on target to eliminate the non-continuation gap between black students and the whole student population. We had increased the diversity of our wellbeing services, with more wellbeing advisors from under-represented groups.
- [d] We were on target to reduce the progression gap into highly skilled employment between Bangladeshi students and the whole student population. Shorter work placements were being offered to improve accessibility. The University won the EY student project of the year for its consultancy work.
- [e] Council asked about the measures used for identifying and defining our student cohorts. The Office for Students had moved from using POLAR to TUNDRA data, which were both area-based data sets. Free school meals provided better data at the level of the individual and we were in dialogue with the OfS about using it in our reporting. Other data types included the Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) and the multiple equality measure (MEM), which was used by UCAS.

[f] Data on student outcomes was being collated in a new reporting system and would feed into annual programme reviews. Early analysis showed significant variation across the University. Faculty level data would be shared with Council in due course. We did not currently monitor data on students of Gypsy and Roma heritage, but would add this to the analysis in future.

[g] Our strategy for engaging geographical areas with historically low rates of higher education participation was being supported by more rigorous data collection. We were targeting such 'cold spots' in Manchester, Birmingham and our local area.

Action: [f] Director of Marketing and Communications

Strategic KPIs (QM2021/38) and Strategic Risk Register – Part A (QM2021/39)

2021.044 *Minute 2021.044 is confidential.*

Finance and Investment Committee minutes (QM2021/40)

2021.045 *Minute 2021.045 is confidential.*

Current financial position (QM2021/41)

2021.046 *Minute 2021.046 is confidential.*

Budget 2022–23 and financial forecasts (QM2021/42)

2021.047 *Minute 2021.047 is confidential.*

Pension regulation changes (QM2021/43)

2021.048 Council **noted** the changes to the Pension Regulator's powers and possible new reportable events.

Audit and Risk Committee minutes (QM2021/44)

2021.049 Council **received** the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 16 March 2022. The following points were noted in the discussion:

[a] The Committee had considered the latest iteration of the Strategic Risk Register. The out of tolerance risks had not changed significantly since the last review. The Committee would test the university's resilience to key environmental risks going forward.

[b] The Committee had received a presentation on cyber security readiness. The volume of attacks was a concern across the sector, but our level of preparedness had improved in recent years. In general, internal audit reports had improved and recommendations were being implemented more quickly, showing that the underlying structures were becoming more resilient and efficient.

- [c] The Committee had considered a recommendation from the sub-group to re-appoint KPMG as the internal auditors. The recommendation to Council would be considered under a separate item.

Strategic Risk Register – Part B (QM2021/45)

2021.050 *Minute 2021.050 is confidential.*

Recommendation to appoint internal auditors (QM2021/46)

2021.051 *Minute 2021.051 is confidential.*

Remuneration Committee report (QM2021/47)

2021.052 Council **received** the Remuneration Committee report. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] Council asked how performance and grade influenced the bonus structure. The University had moved to harmonise bonus levels across all grades and a calibration process was in place to ensure fairness across different parts of the University.

Compliance with Ordinance B staffing matters (QM2021/48)

2021.053 *Minute 2021.053 is confidential.*

Senate report (QM2021/49)

2021.054 Council **noted** the report of the Senate meeting held on 17 March 2022.

Annual report on student casework (QM2021/50)

2021.055 Council **received** the annual report on student casework. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] The number of appeals had returned to previous levels following a decline which correlated to the regulatory amendments introduced to mitigate the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic.
- [b] The number of academic misconduct cases had increased with the change in approach to assessment during the pandemic.
- [c] Some of the most serious cases coming forward related to the introduction of policies where issues had previously not been reported.

Agenda for the next meeting (QM2021/51)

2021.056 Council **noted** the agenda for the meeting on 19 May 2022.

Dates of Meetings 2021–22

- Thursday 19 May / Friday 20 May 2022 – Residential conference including Council meeting.

- Thursday 07 July 2022, 1600 hours, Colette Bowe Room, Mile End.