

## THE COUNCIL

### Minutes

This paper details the confirmed Minutes of the last meeting of the Council held on 28 September 2021 via Microsoft Teams.

The Council **approved** these Minutes as a correct record at its meeting held on 23 November 2021.

Dave Hall  
University Secretary

Sue Thomas  
Working Secretary to the Council  
Email: [Sue.Thomas@open.ac.uk](mailto:Sue.Thomas@open.ac.uk)  
Tel: +44 (0)1908 655083

Attachment:

C-2021-05-M          Minutes of the Meeting of the Council held on 28 September 2021 via  
Microsoft Teams

## THE COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Council held on 28 September 2021 via Microsoft Teams.

Present: Malcolm Sweeting, Tim Blackman, Robert McCracken, Sarah Jones, John D'Arcy, Carol Howells, Rukhsana Malik, Rob Parker, Eileen Scanlon, Danielle Smith, Catherine Halliwell, Sas Amoah, Mary Curnock Cook, Andrew Dickinson, Ceri Doyle, Paul Gray, Paul Greenwood, Rachel Lock, Lopa Patel,

In attendance: Dave Hall (University Secretary), Rex Knight (Interim Assistant Director, Governance), Paul Traynor (Chief Financial Officer), Sue Thomas (Senior Manager, Governance), Fary Cachelin, Executive Dean, WELS and Caragh Molloy, Group People Director for minute 4.

Apologies: John Brooks, Tevin Tobun

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### 1 WELCOME AND CHAIRS REMARKS

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed Sas Amoah, representative of non-academic staff of the University from 1 August 2021 and Rex Knight, Interim Assistant Director, Governance.
- 1.2 The Chair thanked all who had been involved in and contributed to the Strategy and deep dive sessions. It had been a thought-provoking event and a significant opportunity for the Council to shape the University's strategy and feel a strong sense of connection, ownership and pride. There was strong support for the University to be ambitious but focus on its core strengths.
- 1.3 Work would continue ahead of the meeting of the Council to complete the drafting revisions to the Strategy and reflect upon the comments from members about the need to generate excitement and energy in the Strategy and ensure the focus was outwardly focussed.

### 2 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

- 2.1 The Vice-Chancellor reported that:
  - a) the University launched on FutureLearn the first module in a package of free Safeguarding Leadership Training courses, funded and approved by the Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO), aimed at those working in the international development sector.
  - b) a hub of free resources, Jumpstart University, had been produced quickly through successful collaborations with other institutions and launched on Open Learn to support students starting university
  - c) the University had launched Open Futures Bursaries, funded by alumni, specifically for students who identified as being from a Black, Asian or other minority ethnic background to help them fulfil their potential.
  - d) a £1 million grant had been awarded to the Open University in Scotland to support small to medium-sized businesses with skills training to boost productivity and growth in response to Covid-19. The OU programme is part of the Scottish Funding

Council's Flexible Workforce Development Fund to help businesses to continue to upskill and reskill existing workforces.

- e) Other successes included:
- i) students on the OU in Wales' BSc Honours Nursing degree programme who won the Skills at Work award at the Inspire! Adult Learning Awards 2021,
  - ii) Dr Gemma Briggs of the School of Psychology and Counselling in FASS won an O<sup>2</sup>RB Excellence in Impact Award 2021 for her research on the dangers of hands-free phone use.
  - iii) James Holmes and Peter Fawdon, STEM had been awarded Aurora Science Research Fellowships funded by the UK Space Agency to support their work studying atmospheric conditions on Mars.
  - iv) Professor June Barrow-Green had been awarded the Wilkins-Bernal-Medawar Medal by the Royal Society for her research in 19th and 20th century mathematics,
  - v) an asteroid situated more than 126 million miles from Earth had been named 'Openuni' in celebration of the University's 50th anniversary
  - vi) eleven academics had been promoted to professor in the recent round of promotions across a wide range of academic fields
- f) the University was focusing its efforts on the implementation of the interim measures as part of the new associate lecturers (AL) contract. The technical solutions for the interim measures agreed for implementation in October 2021 had progressed to plan and the GoNoGo decision for approving the required systems freeze and progression to the cutover stage of the plan was confirmed on 21 September 2021 with technical criteria being met. Assessment of business readiness had identified some key risks and actions were being put in place to mitigate against them including the establishment of a dedicated AL Contract Support Team to triage and respond to queries. The project remained amber/red due to a lack of contingency time and uncertainty over the volumes of queries.
- g) there had been year-on-year growth in overall student numbers for the October presentation (21J) driven by increasing continuing student numbers however new student intake had declined compared to 20J. The impact of the pandemic had been difficult to predict however the growth in new students was still within the range modelled.
- h) the University and College Union (UCU) was currently balloting members on industrial action in relation to pay issues and pensions. The outcome would be known on 4 November 2021 and the UCU would be holding a special conference to consider the result and further action on 8 November 2021. It was difficult to predict whether staff at the University would support strike action, but it was acknowledged that pensions and pay were key concerns for staff.

2.2 The Council **noted** the report.

### **3 FEES STRATEGY**

**C-2021-05-01**

3.1 The University Secretary explained that the paper provided the context and rationale for the recommended increase in fees. The fees proposed aimed to achieve a balance between the desire for openness and accessibility and the need for the University to remain sustainable.

- 3.2 The Council sought further clarification on:
- a) the funding by the University of the difference between fees charged and grants available for students in Scotland
  - b) the effects of potential reductions in payments thresholds for loans and the reduction in the fees cap.
- 3.3 The Vice-Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer responded that:
- a) funding for different aspects varied across the Four Nations and the University operated several complex cross subsidies within its financial strategy to take account of these which were reviewed annually. This reflected the complexity of operating across all Four Nations and a closer examination of this could be presented to a future meeting of the Council  
**Action:** Chief Financial Officer
  - b) the University's financial strategy incorporated sufficient flexibility to respond to changes though it was acknowledged that these were difficult to predict. Financial risks were identified on the University's Risk Register.
- 3.4 The Council approved an increase of 1.9% in all undergraduate and taught postgraduate fees for the 2022/23 academic year, in line with the RPIX forecast, including an increase to the residential school meals and accommodation charge by the same rate

**4 ORGANISATIONAL CHANGES** **C-2021-05-02**

Minutes 4.1 to 4.4 are recorded as Confidential Minutes (C-2021-05-CM)

**5 DECLASSIFICATION OF COUNCIL PAPERS**

Paper C-2021-05-01 Fees Strategy	To be declassified to Internal Use Only
Paper C-2021-05-02 Organisational Changes	To remain as Highly Confidential

**6 DATE OF NEXT MEETING**

The next meetings of the Council will be held on:

23 November 2021 Milton Keynes  
1 March 2022 Online  
10 May 2022 National Office – Cardiff  
5 July 2022 Online

All arrangements are subject to change pending Governments' advice

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University Secretary

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