

COUNCIL
Thursday 16 May 2017

CONFIRMED NON-CONFIDENTIAL MINUTES

Present:

Sir Nicholas Montagu (Chairman)	Professor Paul Anderson	Kath Barrow
Miranda Black	Dr Veronique Bouchet	Monica Chadha
Lord Clement-Jones	Sarah Cowls	Professor Simon Gaskell
Celia Gough	Simon Linnett	Professor Bill Spence
Professor Steve Thornton	Professor Jane Wills	David Willis
John Yard (Vice-Chair)		

In attendance:

Laura Gibbs	Joanne Jones	Professor Rebecca Lingwood
Sian Marshall	Jonathan Morgan	Robert Sherratt
Rachel Soper		

Apologies:

Professor Richard Ashcroft	Dr Annette Doherty	Stella Hall
Bushra Nasir	Luke Savage	Professor Geraint Wiggins

Part 1: Preliminary Items

Minutes: 16 February 2017 (Paper QM2016/51)

2016.079 Council **confirmed** the confidential and non-confidential minutes of the meeting held on 16 February 2017.

Matters Arising (Paper QM2016/52)

2016.080 Council **noted** the matters arising from the meeting held on 16 February 2017.

Chairman's Opening Remarks (Oral Report)

2016.081 The Chairman:

- [a] Welcomed Lord Clement-Jones to his first meeting as a member of Council.
- [b] Welcomed Sian Marshall back from her maternity leave.
- [c] Said that a photographer would be present immediately before the start of the next meeting to take a group photograph of Council members.

Election of the next Chair of Council (Confidential paper QM2016/53)

2016.082 Council **elected** Lord Clement-Jones as Chair of Council with effect from 01 August 2017 for an initial term of four years, renewable for a further term ending on 30 April 2025.

President and Principal's Report (Confidential paper QM2016/54)

2016.083 Council **received** the President and Principal's Report.

2016.084 The President and Principal **said** that:

[a] *Minute 2016.084[a] is confidential.*

[b] QMUL had dropped ten places in the Guardian league table, albeit with some variation across subject areas. An analysis would be undertaken and included in the next report for Council. Queen Mary Senior Executive (QMSE) had been reflecting on the fact, for example, that the proportion of 'good' (First and Upper Second Class) degrees awarded by QMUL had not risen in line with national trends.

[c] *Minute 2016.084[c] is confidential.*

[d] The Higher Education and Research Bill had been passed before Parliament was dissolved ahead of the general election. Several government-sponsored amendments had been adopted, answering most of the issues raised by Universities UK.

[e] *Minute 2016.084[e] is confidential.*

[f] The achievement of the Athena SWAN Silver Award recognised the significant progress made by QMUL in promoting gender equality. This institution-wide award built on previous achievements in individual areas, such as in School of Medicine and Dentistry. It was likely that some research funding opportunities would be made contingent upon holding this award in future.

[g] *Minute 2016.084[g] is confidential.*

2016.085 The following points were noted in discussion:

[a] *Minute 2016.085[a] is confidential.*

[b] *Minute 2016.085[b] is confidential.*

[c] Maggie Leggett had been appointed as Director of Marketing and Communications, leaving a similar role at the University of Bristol.

QMSU President's Report (Paper QM2016/055a)

2016.086 Council **received** the QMSU President's Report. The following points were noted:

[a] QMSU was running a campaign to encourage students to register to vote

in the forthcoming general election.

- [b] QMSU was supporting 63 students to attend graduation, with help from the Events Team.
- [c] A relationship project was under way with Barts and The London Students' Association (BLSA). QMSU was keen to review more broadly how students not studying at the Mile End campus, for example those studying in Malta, are supported.
- [d] Sculptures designed by students on the theme of mental health had been installed in Library Square and complemented other mental health initiatives for the examination period, such as the 'Be Kind to Your Mind' campaign.
- [e] There were several sustainability initiatives under way, branded under 'Green Mary', such as 'Too Good to Go'; an app downloaded by more than 500 students since its launch aimed at reducing food waste.

QMSU Returning Officer's report (Paper QM2016/055b)

2016.087 Council **received** the returning officer's report for the elections for executive officers in QMSU in 2017–18. The QMSU President noted that the first all BME executive team had been elected.

Part 2: Performance review

Vice-Principal (Research) report (Presentation)

2016.088 Council **received** a presentation from the Vice-Principal (Research). The following points were noted:

- [a] The external environment for research grant and contract funding continued to be characterised by an increasing concentration of funds into large-scale collaborative programmes and initiatives with demonstrable economic and social benefits, such as the Global Challenges Research Fund and the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund. This approach was mainly benefiting the largest institutions, with Oxford, UCL and Cambridge significantly increasing their market share. QMUL had therefore done well to maintain its share of funding in this environment, with notable successes in securing European funding in SMD. The strategy for QMUL going forward would be to expand its research collaborations. Membership of the Turing Institute would offer significant research benefits and access to funding opportunities.
- [b] Other challenges included the Government's agenda of supporting growth outside the South East, and continuing uncertainty over access to EU funding, and research and innovation networks, following the UK's exit from the EU. QMUL's achievements in securing funding through the Industrial Strategy Challenge Fund highlighted the need to be agile and to be able to form partnerships quickly.
- [c] A high-level review of support for research activity within QMUL was under

way and due to report in six weeks' time. The review was taking account of the Uniforum benchmarking data that had become available.

[d] Schemes had been brought in to maximise opportunities for research overhead recovery. Grant applications that did not exceed minimum thresholds were challenged and further work was under way to ensure that the costs of doing research were fully represented. Overheads currently amounted to approximately £9m, with an additional £6m from charitable support through HEFCE, on research income of £100m. A follow-up internal audit report had confirmed that the required improvements in this area had been made. A new research grant management system had also been introduced recently to improve the monitoring of grant applications.

[e] QMUL was working across all its activities to foster partnerships with industry. The greater emphasis placed on research impact in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) had made a positive difference in this respect, with organisations such as IBM, Google and the BBC, that already collaborate with QMUL on degree apprenticeships, taking part in meetings with researchers from QMUL as part of this wider agenda.

Report on student engagement, retention and success (Presentation)

2016.089 Council **received** a presentation on student engagement, retention and success. The Vice-Principal (SELT) highlighted the following points:

[a] QMUL's non-continuation rates had been significantly above the HEFCE benchmark for the previous three years and ranked at, or near, the bottom of the Russell Group.

[b] Several factors influencing attainment had been identified. Positive factors included being female, having high entry qualifications, having attended a state-funded school and living at the parental home. Factors potentially contributing to poor attainment included membership of BME ethnic groups, low household income and entry through Clearing.

[c] Factors that appeared to have a positive effect on retention included being female, having high entry qualifications, and having attended a state-funded school; whereas low household income, entry through Clearing and living at the parental home appeared to increase the likelihood of a student dropping out.

[d] There was variation across schools with respect to the attainment of students from BME groups and more work was needed to explore any differences between ethnic groups. These groups as a whole were not over-represented in non-continuation statistics, but did report lower levels of student satisfaction in the NSS compared to other groups.

2016.089 The following points were noted in discussion:

[a] More information was needed to understand why students withdraw from their studies. Low attendance levels could signal potential issues, but norms were required to ensure a consistent response across schools.

- [b] QMUL was a member of a Russell Group consortium looking at measuring learning gain (the improvement between admission and graduation).
- [c] A major project introducing the Grade Point Average (GPA) at QMUL alongside traditional degree classifications was under way. Part of this project involved addressing any issues with QMUL's approach to marking and assessment.
- [d] The Chairman thanked the Vice-Principal for her presentation and for raising Council's awareness of these important issues.

Student casework report (QM2016/56)

2016.090 Council **received** a report on student casework for 2015-16. The following points were noted in discussion.

- [a] Information about student casework was one element of the evidence provided to Council to enable it to give assurances to HEFCE about the management of QMUL's academic affairs. A more detailed version of this report had been considered by Senate.
- [b] The report showed that processes were in place for responding effectively to student complaints and appeals, and that these were informed by best practice in the sector. Evidence for this included:
 - i. the recent internal audit report reviewed by Audit and Risk Committee;
 - ii. the increasing use of alternative methods of dispute resolution, such as mediation;
 - iii. the introduction of a final review stage, intended to reduce the number of cases referred by students to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator (OIA).
- [c] The report also provided evidence that general issues emerging from student complaints and appeals were being identified and addressed. Examples included:
 - i. Senate agreeing that every school and institute must ensure that enough staff are available to provide feedback to students when they receive their final results;
 - ii. measures to help staff respond to mental health issues presented by students.
- [d] It was difficult to benchmark performance against other institutions, but the number of cases appeared to be in line with the overall size of the student body and the trends were moving in the right direction.
- [e] Mechanisms for learning from complaints and appeals included routinely providing feedback to schools, institutes and Professional Services departments and putting additional support for this in place. The internal audit had provided useful recommendations about recording low-level complaints which would be taken forward over the next year.

[f] Diversity data had been collected for the last three years, the analysis of which had not identified any particular trends or issues of concern.

[g] Ghost writing services were acknowledged to be an increasingly serious issue for the higher education sector as a whole.

Finance and Investment Committee report (Confidential paper QM2016/57)

2016.091 Council **received** the report of the Finance and Investment Committee meeting held on 20 April 2017. The following points were noted:

[a] *Minute 2016.091[a] is confidential.*

[b] *Minute 2016.091[b] is confidential.*

[c] *Minute 2016.091[c] is confidential.*

[d] *Minute 2016.091[d] is confidential.*

[e] The refurbishment of the Queens' Building reception was complete, save for the replacement of some seating furniture and the installation of new display cases. The reception for the Festival of Communities would be taking place there on the following day.

Part 3: Strategic planning

2017–18 Budget (Confidential paper QM2016/58)

2016.092 *Minute 2016.092 is confidential.*

2016.093 *Minute 2016.093 is confidential.*

Part 5: Other Matters for Report

Senate Report (Paper QM2016/59)

2016.094 Council noted the report of the meeting of Senate on 9 March 2017.

Agenda for next meeting (Paper QM2015/60)

2016.095 Council **noted** the draft agenda for the next meeting on 10 July 2017.

Any other business

2016.096 The Academic Registrar and Council Secretary notified Council that the annual review meetings between the Chair and individual members would be taking place during Spring 2018.

Dates of Meetings 2015–16

- Monday 10 July 2017 at 1700 hours, Colette Bowe Room