

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held at 12:45 on 18 OCTOBER 2016, at MedRus 1, Penbryn.

Present: Sir Emyr Jones Parry, Chancellor (Chair); Mrs Elizabeth France, Pro-Chancellor; Ms Gwerfyl Pierce Jones, Pro-Chancellor; Dr Timothy Brain, Treasurer; Prof John Grattan, Acting Vice-Chancellor; Ms Rebecca Davies, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Chief Operating Officer); Dr Rhodri Llwyd Morgan, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Welsh Language and Culture, and External Engagement) (except for minute 15); Prof Chris Thomas, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research); Ms Anne Davies; Mrs Janet Davies; Mr Keith Evans; the Rt Hon Elfyn Llwyd; Mr Ian MacEachern; Dr Emyr Roberts; Dr Hazel Davey; Prof Neil Glasser (except for minute 15); Dr Jenny Mathers; Ms Jackie Sayce; Mr Rhun Dafydd, UMCA President; and Ms Lauren Marks, Aberystwyth University Students' Union President.

In attendance: Mrs Kim Broom, Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office; Mrs Esther Prytherch, Head of Communications (from minute 10); Mr Geraint Pugh, University Secretary; Mr Daniel Benham, Director of Finance (for minute 9); and Mrs Lucy Hodson, Director of Planning (for minutes 10 to 12).

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr George Ashworth; Mr Richard John; and Dr Glyn Rowlands, Pro-Chancellor.

1. PERSONAL MATTERS RAISED BY THE CHAIR

1. Welcome

Dr Hazel Davey, Ms Lauren Marks and Mr Rhun Dafydd were welcomed to their first meeting as members of the Council.

2. Condolences

Sympathies were expressed following the death of Prof Mike Foley, Professor at the International Politics department.

3. Quorum

1. In accordance with Ordinance 15, the quorum for meetings of Council is one half of the actual members of the governing body rounded up to the next whole number, provided that independent members are in a majority.
2. Given the number of apologies received, the independent members were not in a majority and the meeting was therefore not quorate. In accordance with Standing Order 9.1, the business transacted at the meeting would be advisory until such time as a quorum was available.

2. CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

No conflicts of interest were declared in relation to the business to be transacted during the meeting.

3. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

RECEIVED

Minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2016 (COU1617-003).

ADVISED

That the minutes be confirmed as a correct record.

4. MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

RECEIVED

A log setting out the progress made in taking forward decisions and actions agreed at the most recent Council meeting (COU1617-004).

NOTED

The update provided in the decisions log.

5. CORRESPONDENCE

The University Secretary had received representations from some Law and Criminology academics in relation to the Council's consideration of revisions to Ordinance 23, which would involve renaming the academic unit. These representations would be considered further in relation to the appropriate agenda item.

6. HEALTH AND SAFETY MOMENT

NOTED

During Council's earlier away day, members had a briefing on the Prevent agenda. Copies of the presentation, and the institution's Prevent risk assessment and action plan would be circulated to members (**ACTION:** University Secretary).

7. ACTING VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

RECEIVED

Report by the Acting Vice-Chancellor (COU1617-005).

NOTED

1. The 'Diamond Review' of Higher Education Funding and Student Finance Arrangements in Wales had been published on 27 September 2016, with the recommendation that means-tested maintenance grants are introduced in place of the current tuition fee subsidy for Wales-domiciled students. The savings generated would provide a 'Diamond Dividend' for the sector, although the amount of funding available would vary according to the number of students qualifying for support in future.
2. The Westminster Government was progressing with the introduction of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) in England. Welsh HEIs can participate, although they will not be able to increase the fees charged to Home / EU undergraduates like their English counterparts. While Aberystwyth University (AU) had already met the requirements of TEF Stage One as a result of the successful Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) visit during April 2016, whether the institution should apply to participate in TEF Stage Two was being considered by the University Executive. A recommendation would be brought forward in this respect in due course (**ACTION:** Acting Vice-Chancellor).

8. STUDENTS' CHARTER

RECEIVED

Report by the University Secretary (COU1617-009).

NOTED

1. HEFCW requires that Universities and Students' Unions jointly agree a Student Charter, which is reviewed annually. AU's current Student Charter was first approved by Council in December 2014, for the year 2014–15. The Student Charter was further reviewed for the 2015–16 academic year, but no revisions were considered necessary.
2. For the 2016–17 academic year, the Students' Union had proposed a series of amendments to the order and wording of the Student Charter. These were considered by the Academic Board at its meeting on 21 September 2016 where members recommended that they be endorsed by Senate and approved by Council, subject to a couple of minor amendments which were reflected in the current iteration of the report.

ADVISED

5. That the proposed revisions to the Student' Charter be formally approved, subject to Senate being content with the proposals at its meeting on 19 October 2016, and (**ACTION:** University Secretary):
 1. Replace the first and third bullets under 'The University will:' with the following as a new first bullet: "Invest in first-class facilities and resources in order to sustain an active learning environment"; and
 2. Reword the third bullet under 'Students will:' to read "Read and become familiar with the information made available to students, including University email and AberLearn".

9. DIRECTOR OF FINANCE'S REPORT

RECEIVED

Report by the Director of Finance (COU1617-006).

NOTED

1. While overall total income for the 2015–16 academic year was unfavourable to budget, ongoing incremental savings would result in an improved bottom line result against budget being reported in the financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2016. However, the transition to Financial Reporting Standard (FRS) 102 means that a much larger deficit will be reported as part of the University's statutory results owing to the requirement now to report actuarial values which do not affect cash flow, including pension liabilities and the monetary equivalent of untaken annual leave. All UK HEIs are required to transition to FRS 102 during the current reporting cycle.
2. During its meeting on 17 October 2016, the Finance and Strategy Committee (FSC) had considered the financial performance of the Arts Centre and the University's farms, and had requested that further work be undertaken by the University Executive to develop or progress agreed strategies in relation to these significant cost centres.
3. As part of work on the quarterly VAT return, the Finance Department had identified that VAT had not been properly applied to invoices issued to a third party provider. A suitable provision will therefore be allocated in the financial statements for 2015–16. The University is currently engaging with HMRC with a view to resolving the matter. Applicable process will be reviewed in detail as part of the first audit of the VAT account.
4. While the report had been drafted in a way where it appeared as if the University had already agreed fundraising targets for its key capital developments, it was confirmed

that Council would be asked to consider such matters as appropriate in relation to each capital project.

10. DIRECTOR OF PLANNING'S REPORT

RECEIVED

Report by the Director of Planning (COU1617-007).

NOTED

1. Broadly the same number of full time Home / EU undergraduates had been recruited for September 2016 entry as in the previous year, however the actual number of enrolments would not be formally recorded until the annual sector census date of 01 November. While the result of the referendum on the UK's membership of the European Union (EU) had led to lower conversion rates from EU students, conversions by Home were smaller as a result of other institutions participating aggressively in the clearing process at the last minute.
2. The Welsh Government had confirmed on 11 October 2016 that EU nationals who intend to begin studying from September 2017 will continue to receive the loans and grants currently on offer until they finish their course. This development was welcomed by members and would provide certainty to such students during a period after the UK is expected to terminate its membership of the EU.
3. There had been an improvement in the University's external indicators over the summer, especially in the National Student Survey where the institution's overall score had increased from 83 to 92 per cent. This success was attributed to the Tell Us Now campaign and the Student Success Plan.

11. REPORT ON THE ACADEMIC PORTFOLIO

RECEIVED

Report by the Director of Planning (COU1617-008).

NOTED

1. The University, via the Sponsor Group on Marketing and Recruitment, had commissioned the marketing consultants, The Knowledge Partnership (TKP), to undertake a portfolio review exercise on each of the five main Institutes of the University. Reports had since been received in relation to two Institutes, with reviews of the remaining three Institutes being progressed.
2. The report presented to Council outlined a new preliminary process which was being developed to ensure that the recommendations of the TKP reports could be taken forward as appropriate with minimal delay, feeding into the existing processes which come under the purview of the Academic Development and Planning Committee (ADPC). In line with the requirements of the Academic Quality handbook, key internal stakeholders would be consulted as part of the decision making process.
3. The preliminary process would primarily involve a desktop exercise to review consequential implications of any significant changes to the University's academic portfolio. It was felt that this would provide the required assurances to the University before a proposal is allowed to continue into the main ADPC-led portfolio review process.

12. RISK APPETITE STATEMENT AND MATRIX

RECEIVED

Report by the Director of Planning (COU1617-010).

NOTED

1. In line with the University's Risk Management Policy, Council is invited to review the Risk Appetite Statement and Matrix at its first full meeting of each academic year.
2. As part of this process, the University Executive had reviewed these documents and were proposing minor amendments to the Risk Appetite Statement and the Risk Matrix.

ADVISED

3. To approve the proposed revisions to the Risk Appetite Statement (**ACTION:** Director of Planning)

13. COUNCIL'S AWAY DAY

NOTED

1. Council had held a successful away day on the afternoon of 17 October and the morning of 18 October 2016. A summary of the matters discussed is included as an appendix to these minutes.
2. The away day served as an opportunity for Council members to have an in-depth conversation about institutional strategy in an informal setting, with a particular focus on the delivery of institutional sustainability and ensuring progress across a range of areas.

ADVISED

3. That the orientations agreed during the Away Day be confirmed by means of the following resolution, to be shared with both internal and external stakeholders (**ACTION:** University Executive Group):

Council welcomed the very positive result of the National Student Survey (NSS) and congratulated the Executive and staff of the University on this superb outcome, bringing Aberystwyth University to the fourth ranked conventional university in Britain and the first in Wales for overall student satisfaction.

Council recognised that all universities in the United Kingdom operate in an extremely challenging environment. Demography, the decreasing financial benefit in salary terms of a university education, the number of students now choosing to reside at home, and the consequence of Brexit represent adverse trends. In Wales, the financial gap with comparable universities in England and other advantages enjoyed by students studying there, disadvantage the sector.

Nonetheless, Council is convinced that the improvements at Aberystwyth University are real and that the University is firmly on the path to a sustainable, competitive future. Aberystwyth University offers exceptional benefits and Council is determined that these advantages should be communicated more effectively to bring out the particular advantages of studying at Aberystwyth University and of pursuing each individual course.

In a changing and demanding market, Council was encouraged by the steps taken to identify the core successful subject offerings. It expects further analysis of the reasons

for their success, and the steps which must be taken by Institutes and Departments to bring other subjects to the same standard. The aim is clear: to offer subjects which are most likely to recruit students, and where the University will be providing excellent teaching, drawing upon the skills of its staff, and the advice and support of alumni and other key stakeholders. Council expects the full cooperation of all Institutes, Departments, and staff in analysing the subjects currently offered, and looks forward to further reports on the decisions taken by the Academic Development and Planning Committee.

Council welcomed the enhanced recruitment strategy containing numerous discrete elements, all of which will be worked up in the closest cooperation between the Executive, Institutes, Departments, staff and students. Council considered that the new website is a substantial improvement, and looks forward to a strengthened marketing and communications strategy, and its subsequent delivery, to bring together the particular benefits of studying at Aberystwyth University. Council further welcomes the tailored entries for all individual programmes.

Council noted that the NSS has acquired particular importance, and that this has stimulated the substantial improvement in Aberystwyth University's overall ranking. Council expects continued efforts, not only to improve the overall satisfaction rate, but also to deliver improvements in the individual elements of the survey across all departments. Council is confident that Institutes and Departments will focus on this important task with the cooperation of the students in order to deliver an even better score.

Council noted the particular importance that teaching assumes with the proposed Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF). Council welcomed the rating given to teaching at Aberystwyth University in the NSS. Council considered that teaching excellence is particularly important to delivering the exceptional education at Aberystwyth University, and invites the Vice-Chancellor to consider how the contribution of staff can be particularly recognised.

Council, in reviewing the budget for 2016–17, noted that the recruitment for the year largely met the provisions of that budget. However, Council emphasised that every effort was needed to maximise income for the University and to reduce the costs of running the institution where possible, including identifying synergies between Professional Service departments so that they better support teaching, scholarship and research.

In expressing confidence about the University's sustainability, the Council welcomed progress made on the Recovery Plan and the Student Success Plan, and expected sustained effort to their implementation. Council stresses the importance of focusing on recruitment, reputation and sustainability. Together, they are a development of the University's 2012–17 Strategic Plan, and in concrete terms are the basis for a successful future for Aberystwyth University.

14. ORDINANCES

RECEIVED

1. Report by the University Secretary (COU1617-011); and
2. Briefing note from Law and Criminology academics (COU1617-23).

NOTED

3. Over the summer, a number of organisational changes had been agreed and implemented in relation to two academic institutes. In order to ensure that the University's Ordinances reflect the latest structure, the Charter Committee was asked

to consider the consequential revisions to Ordinance 23 by correspondence during September 2016.

4. Having considered the proposed revisions, Charter Committee recommended that they be endorsed by Senate and approved by Council. However, one of the Senate members of the Charter Committee elected to abstain, noting that the academic governing body had not had an opportunity to discuss and endorse the organisational changes, in accordance with its primary responsibilities.
5. A number of Law and Criminology academics had submitted a briefing note to be considered by Council in relation to the renaming of the Law and Criminology department as the Aberystwyth Law School. This briefing note expressed concerns about the process – specifically that Council was being asked to approve the renaming without Senate first having considered the matter.

ADVISED

6. To await the outcome of Senate's consideration of the proposed revisions to Ordinance 23 during its meeting on 19 October 2016, and invite the Chair of Council to use his discretion appropriately with respect to how to progress the governing body approval process in light of Senate's recommendations (**ACTION:** University Secretary).

15. FORMAL APPROVAL OF DECISIONS

RESOLVED

Given the presence of a quorum, that the business already conducted in an advisory capacity be formally approved, namely minutes: 3; 8.5; 12.3; 13.3; and 14.6.

16. HEALTH AND SAFETY

RECEIVED

Report by the Health, Safety and Environment department (COU1617-012).

NOTED

The report provided an overview of health and safety incidents during the period January to August 2016, and presented the range of relevant Key Performance Indicators which had been adopted by the Health, Safety and Environment Committee to monitor compliance.

17. SUMMARY CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

RECEIVED

Report by Director of Planning (COU1617-021).

NOTED

The report provided a summary of the significant risks from the Corporate Risk Register.

18. APPOINTMENT OF VICE-CHANCELLOR

RECEIVED

Report by the University Secretary (COU1617-013).

NOTED

The process to recruit the University's next Vice-Chancellor was progressing in line with the timetable agreed by the Selection Committee established by Council to lead the recruitment process.

19. ABERYSTWYTH UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' UNION PRESIDENT'S REPORT

RECEIVED

Report by the Students' Union President (COU1617-014).

NOTED

The report provided an update on developments at the Students' Union since the last meeting of the University's Council.

20. DECISIONS TAKEN BETWEEN MEETINGS

RECEIVED

Report by the University Secretary (COU1617-015).

NOTED

1. The report detailed the instances since the last Council meeting where the Chair had used the Executive Powers provided for by Standing Order 6.11.
2. The matters approved by means of Executive Action by the Chair were:
 1. the appointment of Prof Jo Crotty and Prof Tim Woods as Directors of IMLIS and ILLCA respectively;
 2. the University's submission to the HEFCW consultation on the draft Financial Management Code;
 3. revisions to the University's proposed Fee and Access Plan for 2017–18;
 4. a collaboration agreement with AIEC Ltd with respect to the procurement of a contractor for the building work to be undertaken for the seed biobank at Gogerddan;
 5. a number of organisational changes at the University, primarily in relation to ILLCA and IEGPD;
 6. a proposed lease agreement between the University and AIEC Ltd, subject to approval by the Charity Commission;
 7. the appointment of Prof Judy Broady-Preston as Director of IPD; and
 8. revisions to the Welsh Language Strategy Committee's terms of reference.

21. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

RECEIVED

A composite report covering the following reports (COU1617-016):

1. Audit and Risk Committee (07 October 2016); and
2. University Executive Group (21 June and 26 July 2016).

NOTED

3. The reports received from the committees.

APPENDIX – SUMMARY OF MATTERS DISCUSSED DURING THE AWAY DAY

The following topics were discussed by Aberystwyth University's Council during the away day held on 17 and 18 October 2016.

A. TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE AND COMPETITIVE UNIVERSITY

Member received a series of inter-related presentations.

The following were noted:

1. The sector as a whole remains in a state of flux, which is exacerbated by the continued uncertainty over the timing of Brexit and the likely effect on universities. While the potential financial impact of Brexit is being modelled, the UK Government has yet to set out the settlement it hopes to achieve.
2. The narrowing gap between earnings of graduates and non-graduates is weakening the argument in favour of a university education. Coupled with a changing demography which means fewer individuals will come of university age over the coming years, recruitment cycles are set to become increasingly competitive if universities are to achieve the growth in student numbers that they require to sustain their current operations.
3. In order to remain competitive and sustainable for the future, the University must reduce costs while at the same time increasing income. In this context, members discussed the progress being made against the recovery plan, and identified additional elements which are being progressed as a matter of priority.
4. To date, the University has been maintaining its cost base in real pounds terms, with efficiencies achieved to date only addressing inflationary pressures. Consequently, further efficiencies continue to be required.
5. The University must ensure that its offer is attractive to students. 'The Knowledge Partnership' have been commissioned to review the academic portfolio and have already submitted their reports with respect to two institutes. Discussions are now required within Institutes on how the observations made in these reports can be taken forward as part of the portfolio review process. Some of the required decisions may prove difficult but necessary, particularly where the University is currently offering a weak-performing programme within a market where there is weak demand from prospective students.
6. The 'Student Success Plan' is now in its second year. A number of strands have already achieved their objectives and have been wound up, while others have only recently been established. As part of the overall 'Student Success Plan', the 'Tell Us Now' element ensures that students feel valued and can see an immediate response to the matters they raise.
7. The funding gap between universities in England and Wales will continue to grow due to the former's ability to increase the £9,000 tuition fees in line with inflation as a result of their achieving Stage One of the new 'Teaching Excellence Framework' (TEF). Aberystwyth University has already achieved Stage One, but in common with Welsh universities cannot increase tuition fees as a result. The University is currently considering whether to participate in Stage Two of the TEF.
8. Recruitment is now being taken forward by two distinct teams. The first is being led by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Chief Operating Officer) and is focussed on 2017 entry. The second, concentrating on developing a longer-term strategy, being led by the Director of Finance.

9. Key Performance Indicators have been agreed for each Professional Service department for the 2016–17 academic year. These will ensure that these departments better align to enable teaching, scholarship and research. A new Professional Service directorate is also being defined, reporting to the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Chief Operating Officer), to enable synergies to be maximised.
10. A rolling Research Excellence Framework (REF) system has been introduced which provides a record of research activity for every member of staff since Jan 2014. The information now available enables the University to identify the contribution of members of staff who are employed to research and / or teach, and to better assess contributions to the REF. To ensure that individuals better perform to their strengths, a process will be followed allocate them to teaching or teaching and scholarship contracts.

B. ABERYSTWYTH INNOVATION AND ENTERPRISE CAMPUS

Members received a presentation summarising the strategic imperatives behind the creation of the Aberystwyth Innovation and Enterprise Campus, and the progress made to date in realising the project.

C. PREVENT

Members received a presentation setting out the 'Prevent Duty' and the responsibilities of the University – and as a consequence, the Council – as a Relevant Higher Education Body as defined in the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015.

D. GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS UPDATE

The results of the online questionnaire of Council members undertaken during late September / early October were distributed. In accordance with the recommendation in the most recent Governance Effectiveness Review, this will become an annual questionnaire.

Members were thanked for their continued hard work on behalf of the University – work which is often undertaken in an unpaid capacity. During the ensuing discussion, the following were noted:

1. The questionnaire had again identified the need to review the size and composition of the governing body. This was currently being progressed by the Charter Committee, and a recommendation would be brought forward in due course.
2. Attendance levels for Council meetings are published in the end of year financial statements. All members were encouraged to attend as many meetings as possible.
3. The timing of the questionnaire would be reviewed for future years, to ensure that student members have had enough experience of Council's work in advance of completing their responses.

E. DEVELOPMENT AND ALUMNI RELATIONS

Member received a short presentation, during which the following were noted:

1. The University has a significant database of alumni and the Development and Alumni Relations Office is now working with academic departments to facilitate the use of this data and make better use of alumni who are looking to assist the University.
2. Work is progressing to relaunch the University's legacy club – the 1872 Club – by summer 2017.
3. Fundraising opportunities in relation to Pantycelyn and the Old College are being explored.