UNIVERSITY OF YORK

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 1 March 2013

Present: The Chair of Council
The Vice-Chancellor
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Pro-Chancellor (Mrs L Wild)
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor C Mellors)

Mr R Armitage Ms D Jagger
Mr M Burton Mr W McCarthy
Professor B Fulton Professor P Sells
Mr M Galloway Professor L Stewart
Mr B Greenwood Ms J Unwin
Ms J Unwin Mr K Zu (GSA)

In attendance: The Registrar and Secretary
The Director of Finance
Governance Officer, Dr P Evans
Pro-Vice-Chancellor/Estates (for M12-13/29)
Pro-Vice-Chancellor/T&L (for M12-13/30)
Deputy Director of Corporate Planning and
Business Analyst (for M12-13/32)
Directors of External Relations and Development
(for M12-13/33)

Apologies for absence were received from the Treasurer (Mr D Dickson), the Pro-
Chancellor (Mr D Tecwyn), Mrs M Loffill, Mrs J McAleese and Mr K Taylor (SU).

12-13/25 Presentation: Department of Health Sciences

Council received a presentation on the Department of Health Science from Professor Hilary Graham (Head of Department), Professor Simon Gilbody (Professor of Psychological Medicine and Health Services Research) and Alison Foster-Lill (Programme Leader for Pre-Registration Nursing).

12-13/26 Declaration of Conflicts of Interest

Members were invited to declare any potential conflicts of interest relating to the business of the meeting. None were declared.
12-13/27  Dean of Hull York Medical School

The Vice-Chancellor reported that Professor Tony Kendrick (Dean of the Hull York Medical School) had accepted a Chair appointment at another institution and Professor Trevor Sheldon (Health Sciences, former Deputy Vice-Chancellor) had been appointed as interim Dean.

12-13/28  Minutes

The unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 23 November 2012 were approved (C.12-13/25) and Council noted the action schedule based on the minutes (C.12-13/26).

Further to M12-13/9 (Annual Report), it was noted that a report on outline plans for new expenditure would be brought to the July meeting together with the budget and financial forecasts.

Further to M12-13/10 (Construction of New College), the Director of Finance reported that the City of York Council Planning Committee had granted planning permission for the new college and due diligence discussions were ongoing with Aviva regarding the associated financial arrangements.

Further to M12-13/13 (Committee Review), it was noted that a report on the proposed merger of the Policy & Resources and Finance Committees would be brought to the next meeting in June.

12-13/29  Biomedicine and Natural Sciences Building

[FOI EXEMPT/COMMERCIAL/IN CONFIDENCE]

12-13/30  Executive Report: Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching & Learning

Council received the annual Executive Report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching & Learning and Information (C.12-13/28).

Attending the meeting to present his report, Professor Robinson drew particular attention to the following:

- effect of enhanced library facilities and opening hours on student satisfaction levels;
- new academic programmes approved in the last year;
- collaborative and partnership activities;
- performance on external quality indicators, including QAA review and National Student Survey (NSS) outcomes;
• Biomedical and Natural Sciences development (M12-13/29 above also refers);
• current consultation on the shape of the academic year and semesterisation;
• development of a strategic project for a new shared teaching building on Heslington West.

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) The relatively weaker performance in the assessment and feedback element of the NSS (33rd nationally) was being addressed by a number of actions, including dissemination of best practice across departments and amendments to assessment policies where necessary. The efficacy of such measures would be evaluated in the annual programme review reports considered by Teaching Committee and also via the current year’s NSS outcome. It was noted that this area also had HR implications in terms of academic workload modelling.

(b) Although assessment and feedback remained an area for further work, it was noted that the University’s performance in the most recent NSS had improved in all dimensions, including a high score for ‘teaching on my course’ (=8th nationally). It was acknowledged that tight clustering generated year-on-year shifts in performance across institutions and departments.

(c) An academic member of Council reported the sort of measures taken at departmental level to improve feedback to students, including the timetabling of additional contact sessions specifically for provision of feedback. Resource availability and cohort size were also noted as influencing factors. Close engagement with the student body was seen as a key factor.

(d) Combined programmes provided the means to access interdisciplinary study, which might be extended as a consequence of further development of the modular scheme and the shape and structure of the academic year (especially as regards common assessment periods).

(e) The University was keeping a watching brief through its Distance Learning Forum on the international development of so-called ‘MOOCs’ (massive open online courses). It was noted that there remained considerable uncertainty about their business models and educational effectiveness, and that substantial investment would be required to enter this area of specialist activity.
Council thanked the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for his report.

12-13/31  
Executive Report: Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Students

Council received the annual Executive Report from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor [as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Students] (C.12-13/29).

Dr Grenville highlighted the following aspects of her report:

- speculation about possible changes in student behaviour patterns arising from the new fee regime;
- value of a residential campus in a small city with a limited hinterland for local student recruitment;
- developing life skills such as independence, motivation, resilience and problem-solving, and the implications of this for approaches to student support and welfare;
- colleges as communities and associated efforts to attract upper-year students back to living on campus;
- statistics on declared disabilities;
- information regarding employability.

During discussion Council noted the following points:

(a) With regard to the percentage of first degree entrants from widening participation (WP) target populations, and adjusting for potentially distorting factors (e.g. profile of the large Health Sciences cohort), the University achieved its benchmark in respect of students from NS-SEC classes 4-7. The WP Strategy included a mixture of approaches, including provision of bursaries and aspiration-raising work in schools. With regard to the current application round, there was no evidence of a decline in applications from WP target groups, although it was suggested that this situation might change in future years (especially in light of financial pressures on students). Managing the transition from school to university study was also a key area of focus linked to WP initiatives and student retention.

(b) The current application round for undergraduate entry in 2013 had closed, with the University’s performance ahead of the sector average (8.3% increase from home applicants, 4.3% increase from overseas applicants). Given the variations across departments, the situation was closely monitored to ensure applications were ultimately converted to entrants in...
accordance with the targets set via the annual planning process with academic departments.

(c) With strong emphasis nationally on the “student interest”, efforts were made to define this as being linked to the interest of the wider University. This included helping students to understand how spending priorities were assessed and the implications of investing in some areas over others.

(d) Considerable investment had been made to re-focus the Careers Service on providing a service to all students in support of the employability strategy. This had included bringing more large graduate recruiters on to campus, developing professional networks of supportive alumni, extending the York Award and introducing a more extensive programme of paid internships. The outcome of such investment could be measured in the annual statistics relating to graduate destinations six months after graduating (as provided to the previous Council meeting, M12-13/20 refers).

(e) With regard to the correlation between WP initiatives and employability (especially issues relating to cultural capital), it was reported that efforts were made to target mentoring opportunities specifically at WP target groups.

(f) In terms of maintaining international diversity across colleges, it was agreed that this presented a greater challenge in respect of overseas postgraduates as, unlike home postgraduates, they received an accommodation guarantee which led to a degree of clustering in the graduate college (Wentworth). A number of solutions were currently being considered which were mindful of the pros and cons of mixing undergraduates and postgraduates in the same college.

(g) In response to comments from the GSA President on the new You@York portal for pre-arrival students and participation in college sports, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor agreed to raise with relevant colleagues the extent to which the interests of the postgraduate community might be given more specific consideration.

Council thanked the Deputy-Vice-Chancellor for her report.

12-13/32 Key Performance Indicators
Council considered its annual report on institutional key performance indicators (C.12-13/30).

Attending the meeting to present the report, the Deputy Director of Corporate Planning (John Busby) and the Business Analyst (Bill Mackintosh) summarised the headline performance in each area and drew attention to the new KPIs introduced in response to the comments made the previous year. Council also noted the introduction by HEFCE of a new statutory reporting requirement for a sustainability assessment based on targets in eight KPIs, which had implications for future presentation of such performance data.

The Deputy Director also tabled the following updates/additions to the KPIs in the report:

- T4 (undergraduate completion): 90.8% in 2011/12
- T6 (% entrants from WP groups): 20.6% in 2012/13

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) In response to the suggestion that KPIs were not informative if they did not include targets, it was noted that the identification of targets was not possible in some areas, while in others targets could be misleading without adjusting for subject mix (in order to compare like with like). It was nevertheless agreed that the new indicators required by HEFCE as part of an annual sustainability assessment might usefully be those for which targets could be established.

(b) The Vice-Chancellor suggested that the framework for further development of KPIs should be the four key objectives of the University Plan, with 1-2 indicators agreed for each. Some of the targets were provided in the supporting University Development Plan.

(c) It was agreed that in future reports, the graphical presentation of the data needed to be increased in size to ease legibility.

(d) The reported decline in energy use per square metre (indicator Est2) arose from a combination of factors including the commissioning of new buildings as well as energy use campaigns targeted at staff and students.

(e) With regard to the figures relating to undergraduate completion (indicator T4), it was further reported that in
2011/12 the overall withdrawal rate (which included failure to progress on academic grounds, withdrawal for medical and personal reasons and leave of absence) was 4%, which was above the HEFCE-defined benchmark. It was suggested that some of the annual variances in this area were so slight as to be insignificant, which might usefully be indicated on certain graphs by inclusion of error bars.

(f) With regard to the marked rise in reported CPD income (indicator BC1), it was noted that a proportion of the increase related to improved data capture. In terms of fully exploiting the new Heslington East facilities for the business and community agenda, it was reported that the Director of Estates had been asked to review current car parking arrangements to ensure they did not continue to have an adverse effect on such activities.

Following discussion of the report, it was decided that a response to the new HEFCE statutory reporting requirement should be considered by the SMG and Policy and Resources Committee before a proposed new set of KPIs linked with this requirement was brought to Council for consideration at its next meeting.

12-13/33 Development and Alumni Report

Further to M11-12/34 (March 2012), Council received an update on development/alumni activities from the Directors of External Relations and Development (C.12-13/31, to be re-labelled as FOI exempt).

Attending the meeting to present the report, the Directors drew Council’s particular attention to the following:

- the principal objectives of the Development & Alumni Relations Office (DARO);
- strategy based on recommendations arising from a consultancy report in 2008;
- development of new fundraising campaigns and methods of alumni engagement;
- future opportunities and challenges;
- availability of further data at financial year-end.

In response to comments and queries from Council members, the following points were noted:

(a) The forecast for cash received in the current year was ca. £2.5m.
(b) The University’s 50th anniversary celebrations and associated fundraising would act as a launch-pad for a series of on-going activities and campaigns, including the Life and Environmental Sciences capital fundraising programme. The anniversary also provided extensive PR opportunities beyond the donor community.

(c) As not all academic departments were established in 1963, there would be a timeline of further 50th anniversary celebrations at departmental level which might provide additional targeted fundraising opportunities in those subject areas.

(d) Much of the efficacy of fundraising activity depended on back-office systems such as databases and customer relationship management software.

(e) As part of External Relations, DARO was able to take advantage of developments elsewhere in the directorate (e.g. in relation to online marketing tools).

(f) With regard to reputation building, the Director of External Relations confirmed that work was continuing to develop and intensify a more professional approach to marketing, especially in the context of student recruitment by academic departments. The new fee regime had sharpened the focus in this area and enhanced the ways in which the University presented its achievements and those of its graduates.

(g) The establishment of Professional Networks among alumni had helped to secure more active engagement and make progress towards a self-perpetuating arrangement in which participants felt themselves to be members of an exclusive club based on their shared background. It was noted that there were now 85 alumni groups around the world. Support for early-career employment was a key factor in securing willingness to contribute later in life.

(h) Alumni networks were important in spreading influence in key policy-making arenas, which was particularly important for the University as a relatively young institution.

(i) There were a number of opportunities for lower level giving, especially the Annual Fund and other initiatives focused on student hardship support. Part of the strategy in this area was to clarify the nature of the new fee regime and also to
emphasise the benefits of the educational opportunities provided by the University.

Following the above discussion, the Chair encouraged all members to take an active interest in fundraising and where possible to engage their own contact networks. Thanks were offered to those members who had already made a valuable contribution in this area.

12-13/34 Recruitment of the next Vice-Chancellor

Further to M12-13/12, the Chair reported that a short-list of candidates for the role of Vice-Chancellor had been agreed and interviews would be held in March. It was the intention to bring a recommendation, in accordance with the relevant University Statutes, from the Joint Committee to Council for formal approval before Easter.

12-13/35 Compliance with Pensions Legislation

Further to M12-13/5, Council received for information a report on the selection of an outsourced auto-enrolment pension provider (C.12-13/32).

12-13/36 Sustainability Strategy

Further to M12-13/7, Council received for information a digest of the Sustainability Strategy (C.12-13/33).

12-13/37 Annual Health and Safety Report

Council received for information the annual report on Health and Safety (C.12-13/34).

12-13/38 Financial Performance Data

Council received for information financial performance data for the period ended 31 December 2012 (C.12-13/35).

12-13/39 HEFCE Risk Assessment

Council received for information HEFCE’s annual assessment of institutional risk (C.12-13/36).

12-13/40 Business from Committees
Business from the following committee meetings was noted and/or approved (C.12-13/37):

(a) Health, Safety and Welfare Committee: 27 November 2012 and 19 February 2013
(b) HYMS Joint Board: 19 December 2012
(c) Nominations Committee: 8 February 2013
(d) Audit Committee: 15 February 2013
(e) Policy and Resources Committee: 15 February 2013
(f) Treasury Group

12-13/41 Unreserved Business from Senate

Council noted the following unreserved business from the meeting of the Senate held on 29 January 2013:

(a) Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (C.12-13/38);
(b) Annual report from Special Cases Committee (C.12-12/39);

12-13/42 Use of Seal

Council approved the use of the Common Seal of the University (details available in the Registrar’s office).

12-13/43 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was noted as Friday 21 June 2013.