UNIVERSITY OF YORK

COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting held on 26 February 2016

Present: The Chair of Council
The Vice-Chancellor
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor
The Treasurer
Pro-Chancellor (Mrs J McAleese)
Pro-Chancellor (Mr D Tecwyn)
Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor D Smith)

Professor A Field
Mr M Galloway
Mr R Hide
Dr R Ibrahim (GSA)
Mrs D Jagger
Mr B Leatham (SU)

Mrs M Loffill
Professor Q Summerfield
Mrs C Thomson
Ms J Unwin
Mrs S Wadsworth

In attendance: The Registrar and Secretary, Dr D Duncan
The Director of Finance, Mr J Lindley
Governance Officer, Dr P Evans
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning & Students), Professor J Robinson (for M15-16/39)
The Business Intelligence Development Manager, Mr A Knock (for M15-16/40)
Business Analyst, Mr W Mackintosh (for M15-16/40)
The Director of Health, Safety and Security, Mr D Fowler (for M15-16/41)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr C Cecil, Mr J Lister and Dr B Szczepek Reed.

15-16/29 Presentation on Research in the History of Art Department

Council received a presentation from Professors Liz Prettejohn and Tim Ayers on the research profile of the Department of History of Art.
15-16/30 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.

15-16/31 Minutes

The unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 13 November 2015 were approved (C.15-16/30). Council also noted the action-schedule based on the minutes (C.15-16/31), in particular the items that were to be considered at the current meeting.

15-16/32 Emergency Decisions Group

Further to M15-16/10 (Emergency Decisions Group), it was reported that the constituency and terms of reference for the new group (now called the Urgent Decisions Group) was still under consideration by the Finance and Policy Committee.

15-16/33 Council Effectiveness Review

Further to M15-16/12 (Council Effectiveness Review), it was reported that the review group and had held its first meeting and would report back to Council in the Summer Term.

15-16/34 Institute for Effective Education

Further to M15-16/13 (Institute for Effective Education), it was reported that the integration of the Institute into the Education Department was largely complete, with only one employee issued with a notice of redundancy (C.15-16/32). Council offered its congratulations to the Dean of Social Sciences for his work to achieve this satisfactory outcome.

In response to a query about the lessons learned from the initiative to establish a self-sustaining research institute founded by a benefaction, the Vice-Chancellor commented that in future greater assurance would be sought in respect of the recovery of recurrent costs and appropriate diversification of funding sources.

15-16/35 Executive Report from the Vice-Chancellor

Council received an Executive Report from the Vice-Chancellor (C.15-16/33) covering the following aspects of implementation of the University Strategy:
• research reviews in six departments and broader review of the Department of Electronics;
• mapping and review of research centres;
• further development of the Graduate Research School (in particular administrative processes for academic progression);
• Senate approval of institutional research expectations;
• launch of major new research projects in digital creativity and agri-food;
• roll-out of the York pedagogy (M15-16/39 below also refers);
• piloting of an academic workload model;
• appointment of a new Director of Employability and Careers to lead on delivery of the Employability Strategy;
• establishment of a Colleges Board;
• ranking of the University in the THE International Outlook league table (93rd in the world);
• further developmental work on the new departmental resource allocation model (based on a taxation model for recovery of central services costs);
• changes to the process for attribution of fee income to academic departments;
• review of the first year of operation of the new faculty structure;
• Senate approval for the creation of an International Committee;
• various profile-raising activities (including overseas visits, keynote addresses and meetings with governments ministers);
• establishment of a Corporate Relations Strategy Group;
• recent benefaction fund-raising (especially from alumnus Dr Tony Wild, after whom the next new college would be named).

In addition to the University Strategy, the Vice-Chancellor also reported on the broader external context for higher education, including the government’s comprehensive spending review (especially the introduction of an apprenticeship levy) and the forthcoming referendum on UK membership of the EU.

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) The work on administrative systems in the new Graduate Research School (GRS) was intended to harmonise practices across departments in respect of student progression, granting of submission extensions etc. As regards future support arrangements for postgraduate taught students, this was
currently being reviewed by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Teaching, Learning & Students), including reference to current PGT recruitment issues. It was agreed that at an appropriate point (to be decided by the Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research) Council should receive a report on progress to date in establishing the GRS.

(b) As regards the University’s stance on the EU referendum, it was noted that the institution would not adopt a campaigning position on either side of the debate, but would rather identify and report the institutional implications of any changes to current arrangements. Given the current lack of clarity about such implications (e.g. in respect of research funding) and the likely timescales in the event of ‘Brexit’, it was acknowledged that detailed planning was not currently an appropriate use of management resource. The key risks would however be captured on the corporate risk register, with mitigating actions where appropriate.

(c) It was noted that one of the first jobs of the newly established International Committee would be to review the current Internationalisation Strategy. It was agreed that the updated strategy should be presented to Council for information in due course.

(d) Preliminary work had begun to assess the University’s ability to contribute to the government’s recent call for further development of degree apprenticeships delivered in collaboration with employers. It was noted that diverse models of delivery were possible, in some cases dependent on the nature and requirements of large local employers. It was also suggested that, in a high fees environment, the prospect of earning while studying might provide an attractive option for many prospective students, while also addressing the reported skills shortage in certain sectors of the UK economy. Noting the potential change in strategic direction represented by degree apprenticeships, it was agreed that the University Executive Board (UEB) should continue its thorough appraisal of options and risks in this evolving area of government policy.

(e) As regards the naming of future colleges, the SU President commented on issues of gender equality in the selection of suitable names. The Vice-Chancellor agreed that such matters needed to be taken into account, as well as the important linkage to future fundraising opportunities (which might, for example, require new buildings to be given a temporary,
neutral name until such time as an appropriate benefaction became available).

15-16/36 Financial Performance/Funding of Piazza Building
[FOI exempt/commercially confidential]

15-16/37 Equality and Diversity

Council considered proposed new arrangements for the management and oversight of equality and diversity matters (C.15-16/34).

Presenting the report, the Registrar highlighted the following aspects:

- dignity and respect for all as a core University value;
- requirements of the Equality Act/Duty (2010);
- contribution of departmental Equality Champions;
- wide range of existing networks and forums (e.g. in respect of race, disability, gender, sexual orientation);
- external accreditation schemes (Athena Swan, Race Equality Charter Mark);
- policy and guidance provided by the Equality & Diversity Office (EDO);
- awareness-raising events, campaigns, lectures (often in collaboration with partners, including SU/GSA).

Council also noted the plans for future development, including a higher level of senior management engagement (e.g. the Vice-Chancellor assuming the chair of the re-named Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor/Research assuming the chair of Athena Swan Steering Group), increased resource in the EDO and a review of the current Equality and Diversity Strategy.

During discussion the following points were noted:

(a) Current EDO staff resources (1 x 0.8FTE and 1 x 0.6FTE) were insufficient to service internal and external requirements, especially the bureaucratic complexity of Athena Swan applications (now extended from promotion of women in science to equality for all genders across all disciplines). When the current staff members retired under the voluntary scheme scheme, the replacement posts would be full-time.
(b) As regards the constituency of the re-named Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Committee, it was suggested that in addition to the membership position for a Council member, it would be useful if the Committee could also co-opt other external members as appropriate.

(c) Noting that the addition of ‘Inclusion’ to the Committee’s title could potentially cause confusion with widening participation activities and issues of social class/inclusion, it was agreed that this might be considered as part of the strategy review, with acknowledgement that there was considerable interconnection between the different ‘protected characteristics’ (intersectionality).

(d) Given the growing emphasis on equality matters in wider society generally and in higher education specifically, with linkage to questions of free speech, ‘safe spaces’, ‘no platform’ debates, so-called ‘trigger warnings’ etc, it was agreed it was timely to undertake a review of the University’s strategy for equality and diversity. The SU President reported in this context that the recent SU elections had seen vitriolic attacks on candidates via social media, often in relation to their race, gender and/or sexuality. The Vice-Chancellor also acknowledged the President’s warning of the likely reaction in some sections of the student population to his assuming the Chair of the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee as a white male.

(e) In response to a query on freedom of speech, the Vice-Chancellor reported that on one occasion recently the University had invoked an internal regulation defining ‘special meetings’ in order to guarantee appropriate security arrangements for an event featuring a controversial and provocative external speaker, with the outcome that the student society that had invited the speaker cancelled the event. This had been widely misreported as the University banning the speaker in question. In consideration of such matters, the University would have due regard to the legal requirement of the Education Act (No.2) 1986 to ensure that “freedom of speech within the law is secured”. This legal requirement also had relevance to implementation of the ‘Prevent’ agenda (M15-16/41 below refers). Noting the unfortunate recent developments on North American university campuses, Council endorsed the University’s general approach to safeguarding freedom of speech, while also acknowledging that it was an inter-generational issue of intense interest to students.
(f) Noting the growing significance of Athena Swan accreditation to academic departments’ reputation and achievement (e.g. inclusion in REF assessments of ‘research environment’), it was agreed that professional and appropriately qualified advisors were necessary to achieving successful submissions to the adjudicating Equality Challenge Unit. This was particularly important given the likelihood that other such ‘charter marks’ were likely to follow (e.g. in respect of race or sexual orientation).

Following the above discussion, Council formally approved the renaming of its Equality & Diversity sub-committee and the appointment of the Vice-Chancellor as the new Chair.

15-16/38 Vice-Chancellor Job Title

Council approved the Vice-Chancellor’s new job title as ‘Vice-Chancellor and President’, noting that this would facilitate engagement with overseas organisations for whom the title ‘Vice-Chancellor’ did not necessarily convey the meaning of head of the institution.

15-16/39 Executive Report: Pro-Vice-Chancellor/Teaching Learning & Students

Council received the annual Executive Report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Teaching, Learning & Students (C.15-16/36).

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

- national context and the proposed new Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF);
- new Learning & Teaching Strategy;
- implementation of the York pedagogy;
- student opinion surveys, including the National Student Survey (NSS);
- colleges/student support;
- widening participation (WP) initiatives;
- Information Strategy projects and developments in IT Services.

During discussion the following points were noted:
(a) Noting the University’s position within the Russell Group (RG) for percentage of students from low participation neighbourhoods (6.4% of total, 8th position), Council supported the strengthening of existing initiatives being pursued in a bid to achieve the challenging OFFA target of 8%. The Vice-Chancellor also commented on the strong government emphasis on improving WP, which had also been reinforced in the recent Green Paper. Council agreed that this was a complex area, with strong linkage to other considerations and strategies (e.g. in respect of entry tariff, academic standards, employability, pedagogy etc.). The limits of HE’s intervention in this area were also acknowledged in the context of contemporary research on social mobility.

(b) The two postgraduate student opinion surveys (PTES and PRES) ran in alternate years, and the University’s performance was generally ahead of its RG competitors.

(c) On the question of the possible impact on higher fees on student expectations, it was noted that student satisfaction had in fact risen nationally among the first cohort to have paid the higher fees throughout their studies.

(d) The action plans developed by departments that had performed less well in the NSS were closely monitored by the Academic Support Office. This improvement process was further reinforced through the new institutional performance management structure which enabled Deans to agree targets relating to the NSS with individual Heads of Department.

(e) The Pro-Vice-Chancellor clarified the central features of the York pedagogy, with its focus on the design of programmes around student learning. It was noted that definition of clear learning outcomes was an essential component, with the steps towards achieving these outcomes carefully mapped out (the ‘learning ladder’). The skills and knowledge acquired in this manner could also be promoted in marketing to prospective students and then, at the successful conclusion of the programme, to prospective employers. An academic member of Council confirmed that the new framework provided an effective structure for the management and quality assurance of the student learning experience. As a note of caution, however, a lay member of Council commented on the importance of the language used in implementing the pedagogy, especially in the context of risks around commodification and marketisation of
scholarly activity and the danger of underplaying the active role of the student in achieving the identified outcomes.

(f) The incorporation of both summative and formative assessment was intrinsic to initial programme design under the new pedagogy, and was intended to support the student in progressing towards the defined learning outcomes. It was agreed that in due course it would be helpful to share with Council some examples of the more advanced programme designs and learning outcomes so that members had a clearer grasp of the output from the pedagogy project.

(g) It was noted that implementing the new pedagogy required a time commitment from academic departments in the initial roll-out phase, but this was deemed to be a worthwhile investment in the future success of their programmes.

(h) In response to a query on a perceived rise in the number of student suspensions being reported to Council, it was noted that these were diverse cases and not indicative of any particular trend.

15-16/40 Key Performance Indicators


Attending the meeting to present the report, the Business Intelligence Development Manager (Alistair Knock) drew particular attention to the division of the data into a core set of actual performance indicators (KPIs) and further contextual information. It was noted that the former confirmed a general improvement across key areas (e.g. research income, student satisfaction, graduate employability), but that the latter also indicated the challenging nature of the external environment, especially as regards student recruitment.

The following comments were noted in discussion:

(a) Many indicators were inter-linked, with the result that an improvement in one area (e.g. higher entry tariff) might result in a decline in other areas (e.g. student fee income or widening participation target). Careful balance and judgement were therefore required, as was the case when setting contribution targets for departments.
(b) The importance of comparing academic departments with equivalent departments at other institutions was noted as the most reliable form of benchmarking, and an element of this would be incorporated in the new resource allocation model.

(c) It was suggested that, in order to prevent the financial indicators becoming an end in themselves (rather than enabling other activities), it might be useful to consider an acceptable range of outcomes rather than a single-figure indicator.

(d) As regards the use of motivational/stretching targets at departmental level, it was agreed that these needed to be separated out from the ‘taxation’ element of contribution to the wider institutional budget.

Following the above discussion, the Chair welcomed the ongoing development of KPIs and emphasised the importance of a clear fit with the planning system. It was agreed that the next stage of development would be the move towards more detailed and considered target-setting.

15-16/41 Counter-Terrorism and the Prevent Agenda

Council considered a report on compliance with the requirements of the Counter-Terrorism & Security Act (2015), the so-called ‘Prevent Duty’ (C.15-16/10).

Presenting the report, the Registrar highlighted the following:

- submission to HEFCE of the initial risk self-assessment;
- preparation of a further submission to HEFCE by 1 April 2016 providing an action plan and relevant policies;
- preparation of a new annual report to Council for subsequent submission to HEFCE as part of annual accountability returns (by 1 December 2016);
- liaison with relevant student organisations/societies and trade unions to provide assurance on avoidance of stigmatisation;
- treatment of the Duty as primarily a safeguarding and welfare issue to prevent vulnerable individuals being drawn into terrorism (i.e. not a surveillance activity);
- points of intersection with events management, research ethics, academic freedom and equality and diversity.

Council noted the following points:
(a) Initial awareness-training workshops had been provided to staff in key roles before HEFCE released a number of online training modules that would be available to all staff (via the auditable HR training gateway) and to students (via the VLE). Further guidance would also be provided to clarify the responsibilities of Heads of Department under the new University policy and management procedure.

(b) The different levels of internal management responsibility identified in the policy (Gold/Silver/Bronze) mirrored the approach adopted by the City of York’s Prevent Implementation Board as regards identification of the relevant points of institutional contact (effectively corresponding to strategic/tactical/operational levels).

(c) The University would need to be prepared to manage the obvious tension between the Education Act and the Counter-Terrorism Act as regards arrangements to guarantee freedom of speech. Transparency of communication with staff and students would be paramount here.

(d) The University had only limited ability to influence and intervene as regards events organised off campus.

(e) The submission of an annual report to HEFCE from governing bodies was the method chosen by HEFCE by which it would discharge its regulatory/monitoring role for onwards reporting to BIS.

(f) The sector had provided input to the consultation process on the new anti-terrorism regime which was recognised to be somewhat deficient in a number of areas but was felt to provide enough scope for local adaptation to avoid being overly restrictive or divisive.

Following the above discussion, Council formally approved the new University policy and management procedure in respect of the Prevent statutory duty.

Recruitment of Chair

Council received for information a report from the Nominations Committee on the planned arrangements for recruitment of the successor to the current Chair (C.15-16/40).
Members noted the appointment of recruitment consultants (Saxton Bampfylde), the establishment of a selection Working Party (chaired by Jenny McAleese, Pro-Chancellor) and the timescale for the process. As regards the latter, it was noted that the intention was to appoint a Chair Designate as an ordinary lay member for one year from 1 August 2016 before Council then formally elected this individual as Chair in July 2017 (i.e. at the last meeting of the current Chair). The Registrar reported that the contact details of the recruitment consultants would be provided to Council members so that they could submit suggestions.

15-16/43  
**Annual Report on Health, Safety and Security**

Council received for information the annual report on health, safety and security (C.15-16/41).

15-16/44  
**Financial Performance Data**

Council received for information financial performance data for the period ending December 2015 (C.15-16/42).

15-16/45  
**Business from Committees**

Business from the following committee meetings was noted and/or approved (C.15-16/43):

(a) Finance & Policy Committee: 11 December 2015 and 12 February 2016
(b) Nominations Committee: 5 February 2016
(c) Equality & Diversity Committee: 6 November 2015
(d) Health, Safety and Welfare Committee: 16 February 2016

15-16/46  
**Unreserved Business from Senate**

Council noted the following unreserved business from the meeting of the Senate held on 26 January 2016:

(a) Special Cases Committee annual report (C.15-16/44);
(b) establishment of International Committee (C.15-16/45)

15-16/47  
**Use of Seal**

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

The date of the next meeting was noted as Friday 20 May 2016.