Council: 28 February 2014

University of York

Council

Minutes of the meeting held on 28 February 2014

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

Mr R Armitage
Mr M Burton
Mr M Galloway
Mr B Greenwood
Mrs D Jagger

Mrs J McAleese
Professor P Sells
Professor L Stewart
Mr K Taylor (SU)

The Registrar and Secretary
The Director of Finance
Governance Officer, Dr P Evans
The Director of Estates (for M13-14/29 & 30)
Dr O Craig, Archaeology (for M13-14/30)
Mrs L Booth, CLL (for M13-14/31)
Professor J Robinson, Pro-Vice-Chancellor/T&L
(for M13-14/31)
Mr D Muckersie, Director of Corporate Planning
(for M13-14/34)
Mr W Mackintosh, Business Intelligence Unit (for
M13-14/34)

Apologies for absence were received from the Pro-Chancellor (Mr D Tecwyn),
Mrs M Loffill, Mr W McCarthy, Professor R Taylor, Ms J Unwin and Mr Y
Wang (GSA).

13-14/23 Presentation/Visit: Atmospheric Chemistry

Council visited the National Centre for Atmospheric Science and
received a presentation from Professor Alastair Lewis (Chemistry).

13-14/24 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.
Minutes

The unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 15 November 2013 were approved (C.13-14/25). Council also noted the action schedule based on the minutes (C.13-14/26).

GSA Constitution

The Registrar reported that the GSA had approved amendments to its constitution, which required ratification by Council in order for officer elections to be held in May. Council decided to delegate approval to the Chair acting on its behalf, noting that the main change to the constitution was the introduction of a full-time sabbatical officer post for the GSA President.

Statute Amendments

Further to M13-14/18(d) [Unreserved business from Senate], it was reported that the agreed amendments to Statutes 18 (Boards of Studies) and 20 (Congregations) had been duly approved by the Privy Council.

Vice-Chancellor’s Report

Further to M13-14/5 [Council Effectiveness], Council received a report from the Vice-Chancellor on current issues (C.13-14/6), noting that such a report would henceforth be a standing agenda item.

The Vice-Chancellor drew particular attention to the following aspects of his report:

- ongoing consultation to develop a new University Strategy (interim report back to Council scheduled for July 2014);
- building stronger relationships with key policy makers, potential industrial collaborators and research funders;
- confirmation of government cuts of £125m to the HEFCE budget for 2014/15 (the University would receive its grant letter on 24 March 2014);
- confirmation of the penalty imposed by HEFCE (£218k in the current year, 2014/15 and 2015/16) for over-recruitment beyond the student number cap;
- likely penalty of £552k imposed by the ERDF Court of Auditors in respect of non-compliance with its procurement regulations (relating to Heslington East development);
• restructuring of the USS pension scheme, with likelihood of increased employer contributions and changes to scheme benefits for members;
• ongoing industrial action by campus trade unions (UCU, Unison and Unite) in respect of the current year’s pay offer, with the possibility of a marking boycott from the end of April.

During discussion the following points were noted:

➢ With regard to the clawback of ERDF funding, the Registrar clarified the set of circumstances that had led to the current situation, which related to the transfer of a funding bid from Yorkshire Forward to the ERDF and consequential difficulties in attempting to “retro-fit” procurement activities that were already in train to a different, more stringent regulatory regime. Council noted that the matter had been referred to the Audit Committee which would consider a report on the lessons learned at its next meeting. The view was also reported from the University’s external auditors that such problems with complex European funding arrangements were not uncommon in the sector.

➢ On the matter of the HEFCE fine for over-recruitment, it was noted that this issue would disappear when the student number control was abolished in 2015/16. In the meantime, it was reported that the Admissions Office was planning carefully for the current recruitment round in collaboration with departmental admissions tutors, although once again there was likely to be a degree of uncertainty right up to the end of the clearing/adjustment process. It was noted that the fine in the current year was accommodated by a contingency allocation that had been included in the budget. In terms of forward planning for the new recruitment environment following removal of the number cap, it was noted that it was currently too early to assess the likely impact on the University’s market position. It was noted that target setting with academic departments would take place at the start of 2015 through the annual planning process, which would be reviewed in the context of the new market conditions. As regards the relative financial impacts of both over- and under-recruitment, it was noted that, HEFCE penalties notwithstanding, the former was currently more beneficial, although other (non-financial) difficulties could arise.
Executive Reports

With regard to consideration of the annual executive reports from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor/T&L and the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (C.13-14/32 & 33), it was decided that these should be deferred until a later meeting.

Financial Regulations and Scheme of Delegation

Council considered updated versions of the University’s financial regulations and scheme of delegation (C.13-14/31), noting that these had been approved at the meeting of the Finance and Policy Committee held on 14 February 2014.

It was noted that the revised regulations had been based on the model for HEIs provided by the Chartered Institute of Public Finance Accountants (CIPFA) and had also been benchmarked against sector best practice by the external auditors. As regards the scheme of delegation, Council noted that one substantive change was the dissolution of the Treasury Group, with its terms of reference subsumed into those of the Finance and Policy Committee.

In response to a query on the capital projects in the range £1m - £4m approved by SMG, it was agreed that these should be reported to Council for information (e.g. via the Vice-Chancellor’s report at each meeting).

Council approved the updated financial regulations and scheme of delegation.

Key Performance Indicators

Council considered its annual report on institutional key performance indicators (C.13-14/34).

Attending the meeting to present the report, the Director of Corporate Planning (David Muckersie) drew particular attention to the two new
measures on ‘home undergraduate market attractiveness’ (percentage of ABB+ equivalent students and ratio of firmly accepted home/EU offers to total home/EU offers). Council also noted the roll-out of KPIs at departmental level, with quarterly reporting to SMG via the Academic Coordinators.

The following comments were noted in discussion:

(a) As regards the new recruitment indicator (ABB+ students), it was important to monitor this at programme level and also to factor it into the consideration of proposals for new programmes. When the student number cap was lifted entirely, it would remain important to maintain close monitoring of the quality of the student intake.

(b) On the matter of research income per academic, it was noted that there was often a time-lag before the full impact of new professorial recruitment (as academics did not always bring their research grants with them when they first joined the University).

(c) More detailed KPIs for business and community activity would be reported via the annual report from the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Business & Community). Income opportunities in this area were becoming increasingly significant and also represented an important measure of the ‘value’ delivered by HEIs. It was also important to develop means of capturing all academic consultancy activity, some of which went unrecorded.

(d) The University was relatively strong in widening participation and exceeded its benchmark against 1994 and Russell Group comparators. The percentage of young first degree entrants from WP target populations was expected to show further improvement in the figures for 2012/13 (18.6% in 2011/12). Internal analysis of degree outcomes did not show any variances based on social class and funding from the WP budget was targeted at provision of academic support where there was identified need.

(e) It was proposed that where an agreed target existed (e.g. the WP target in the University’s agreement with the Office for Fair Access), it could usefully be included in the KPI set. It was also suggested that the number of students participating in volunteering and internships might be a more useful measure than the number of hours delivered (which, without benchmarking, could not be interpreted as either positive or negative).
Following the above discussion, the Chair thanked the Planning Office for its work on the KPI data, noting that it would in due course need to be revised to accord with the new University Strategy.

13-14/35 Business from the Nominations Committee

Council received for information a report from the meeting of the Nominations Committee held on 7 February 2014 (C.13-14/35), noting that members would shortly be canvassed for suggested names in respect of new lay members of Council and the position of University Chancellor, with reference to relevant criteria agreed by the Committee.

Council noted in this context its approval for the recommendation that John Lister (group chief risk and capital officer at Aviva; former chair of York Cares employee volunteering organisation; member of York City Council Fairness Commission) be appointed to Council for an initial two-year term from 1 August 2014 until 31 July 2016, subject to his willingness to serve (M13-14/40 below refers).

13-14/36 Council Away Day

Council received for information the summary notes of its Away Day held on 6 February 2014 (C.13-14/36).

13-14/37 Annual Report on Health and Safety

Council received for information the annual report on health and safety (C.13-14/37).

13-14/38 Financial Performance Data

Council received for information financial performance data for the period ended 31 December 2013 (C.13-14/38).

13-14/39 Development and Alumni Activities

Council received for information an update on development and alumni activities (C.13-14/39).

13-14/40 Business from Committees

Business from the following committee meetings was noted and/or approved (C.13-14/40):
(a) HYMS Joint Board: 26 June 2013
(b) Remuneration Committee: 28 October 2013
(c) Health, Safety & Welfare Committee: 29 October 2013 & 18 February 2014
(d) Equality & Diversity Committee: 31 October 2013
(e) Ethics Committee: 1 November 2013
(f) Nominations Committee: 7 February 2014
(g) Finance & Policy Committee: 6 December 2013 & 14 February 2014

13-14/41 Unreserved Business from Senate

Council noted the following unreserved business from the meeting of the Senate held on 28 January 2014:

➢ comments on foundation college proposal (C.13-14/41)

13-14/42 Use of Seal

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

13-14/43 Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was noted as Friday 20 June 2014.