

Ulster University

Council

3 May 2019

Minutes of a meeting of the Council of Ulster University held at the Magee Campus on Friday 3 May 2019.

PRESENT

Mr J Hunter (Chair), Professor P Nixon (Vice-Chancellor and President), Mrs H Bingham, Mr D Clements, Ms G Horgan, Mr A Langan, Mrs M Lindsay, Mr P Lobban, Dr P McNaney, Mr K McStravock (Students' Union), Mrs H Quigley, Mr R Sloan, Dr J Stuart, Dr E Way

APOLOGIES

Professor K Burnett, Mrs J Pyper, Mr P Sheridan

IN ATTENDANCE

Professor A Adair, Mrs F Kane, Mrs N Lamond, Mr E Mullan, Mr R Millar,

PRESENT BY INVITATION

Professor M Durkin, Mr M Fitzpatrick

PRESENTATION FROM EXECUTIVE DEAN OF THE ULSTER UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

Professor Durkin (Executive Dean for Ulster University Business School) presented Council with an insight into the work of his faculty. The faculty had developed teaching and course content around the needs of students and employers. The faculty had built its success on flexibility and being responsive to the needs of industry and business.

Within the operational excellence agenda, the faculty's income has grown by 6% on last year to £27m. Staff costs to income ratio is 36%. The staff to student ratio currently stands at 29:1. The five year income growth positions the Faculty in the top ten of Russell Group and almost twice the level of QUB.

The number of overseas students stood at 135. The percentage of overseas from partner institutions stood at 71% with the remaining 27% from direct entry.

Council noted the support system for flexible programmes and how far ahead of QUB the faculty was in terms of business engagement.

Council complimented Professor Durkin on his achievements over the last number of years and how the Ulster University Business School had responded to local needs and the global market.

19.11 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 15 FEBRUARY 2019

The minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2019 were approved.

19.12 MATTERS ARISING

There were no items.

19.13 COLERAINE AND MAGEE CAMPUS MASTER PLANS PRESENTATION

Mr Fitzpatrick (acting Director of Estates) presented the Masterplans for Coleraine and Magee. The plans would provide a high quality environment for both staff and students. The proposals would harness the distinctive academic strengths and infrastructure available on each campus.

The plans would also see the University engaging with all civic leaders, to promote and deepen the partnership between the University and the local community. The University would strive to enhance the attractiveness of its campuses to the international market, by highlighting the economic, social and cultural vitality of the region.

The Magee campus needed to expand its civic presence and become a University City and attract people to work, study and meet. It needed to promote its landscape setting and its connection with the River Foyle.

The Coleraine campus needed to be more attractive to encourage students to spend more time on campus. The natural landscaping and proximity to the River Bann would be developed, as would its role as a University town.

The Chairman noted the challenge of attracting students to Magee.

Council noted the Campus Plans for Coleraine and Magee.

19.14 REPORT OF THE INDEPENDENT REVIEW INTO THE INDUSTRIAL TRIBUNAL JUDGEMENT

The Chairman informed Council that owing to the sensitive issues surrounding the independent review, he had decided not to circulate the report at this stage as the University had received preliminary legal advice, which cautioned against publication on the grounds that it contained unsubstantiated assertions and criticisms of individuals. These assertions and criticisms went beyond the facts as established by the Tribunal. Following the Chairman's introduction and brief discussion all staff members present left the meeting.

The Chairs of Council Committees had discussed the report on 29 April 2019. The report questions the degree of oversight exercised by senior staff and Council in relation to the redundancy issue. Despite the legal concerns, the Chairs Group, in consultation with senior officers, had agreed that the free standing recommendations at the end of the report were broadly acceptable. For example, one of the early recommendations in the report was for the Vice-Chancellor and

Chairman of Council to write to all staff who had been wrongfully dismissed during the process to apologise. The Chairman offered to circulate to Council members copies of the recommendations.

Staff members rejoined the meeting.

Following a full discussion on the issue, Council agreed that:

- The Chairman would contact the writer of the report to ascertain if they were aware of the possibility of the report being made public
- Senior staff mentioned in the report, be advised that they would have the opportunity to respond/right of reply to criticisms in the report
- The recommendations would not be released at this stage, pending further legal advice
- A special meeting of Council may be required and devoted to the independent report
- The way forward would be actioned by the June meeting of Council at the latest, when further consideration would be given to the importance of an early meeting with UCU in an effort to set the scene for improved industrial relations.

19.15 CHAIRMAN'S COMMUNICATIONS

The Chairman mentioned the following matters:

- 1 The Chairman commented on the success of the Joint Council and Senate meeting held on 6 March 2019. The theme had been Wellbeing at Ulster. The University was proactive in addressing, through training, the physical, mental health and wellbeing of students and staff.
- 2 The Chairman informed members that the Vice-Chancellor had been appointed as one of the three Vice-Presidents of Universities UK. The Vice-Chancellor had been nominated by the Vice-Chancellor of QUB. It is the first appointment of a Vice-President from Northern Ireland
- 3 The meeting of Court held on 20 March 2019 ratified the appointment of Pro-Chancellors, Jenny Pyper from 3 December for four years. Aidan Langan would also take up the role of second Pro-Chancellor and deputy chair from 1 July 2019 for a four year period
- 4 The CUC Spring Plenary meeting on 4-5 April had included the issue surrounding the pension scheme and the additional costs to employees and employers. The additional contributions were onerous across the sector and would put institutions under financial pressure
- 5 Members were reminded that they had received an invitation from the Student President to the Students' Union Learning and Teaching Awards on 24 May 2019 in the Europa Hotel
- 6 Members were asked to submit travel claim forms before the ninety day deadline

19.16 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT (C/19/11)

The Vice-Chancellor presented his report and Council noted:

Sustainable Strategy 2034 Review

The Vice-Chancellor informed Council that it was hoped to have independent consultants in post from 13 May 2019 to assist with the delivery of the project. Professor Loughrey planned to have an interim report by September and the final report by Christmas.

Industrial Relations

Formal consultations have taken place with the three unions on the review of the academic promotion scheme, internal trawling arrangements, facilities time for trade union representatives, on line student assessment, REF 2021 and sabbatical leave.

The Vice-Chancellor, in response to a comment on the funding of the CAIN archive, informed Council that the intention had never been to close the resource but going forward it need a different financial support structure.

City Deals

The Heads of Terms document for the Belfast Region City Deal had been signed and the first meeting of the Innovation Board had taken place. The University continues to work closely with Derry City and Strabane District Council to refine the projects already under discussion for a City Deal for Derry.

Graduate Entry Medical School

Work continues with the Department of Health and other key stakeholders to advance the proposal. The University responded to the latest comments by the Department on 18 April 2019. The University continues to work closely with QUB to advance collaborative opportunities.

It would be important to be cautious as we proceed but ensure all stakeholders are kept updated on the proposal.

League Tables

The QS subject ranking league tables had been published on 27 February 2019. The University had scored in 40 subjects and ranked in Nursing, Sport, Art & Design, Psychology, Business & Management and Computer Science.

Risks

The risks being managed by the University include:-ongoing GBD pressures, communication and development of Sustainability review2034 Review, progressing the Medical School, lack of NI Executive and subsequent lack of

decision making and implications of publishing the Independent Industrial Relations review.

19.17 COMMITTEES OF THE COUNCIL

a) Resources Committee (15April 2019) (C/19/12)

Mr D Clements presented the minutes highlighting the following:

The Committee had received a People and Culture Directorate report (minute 19.13i) and noted work was ongoing in developing an Employee Well-Being Strategy. Support would be increased to assist managers and to help staff suffering from ill health. The People and Culture Strategy would be presented to Council in June.

The Committee had noted the Heads of Terms for the Belfast Region City Deal (minute 19,14a) had been signed and would see £350m committed to innovation projects.

The Committee had noted that USS had not accepted UUK proposals on how to trigger the additional contributions (minute 19.14b).

The Vice-Chancellor commented that the pensions issue was indeed a significant issue for the University.

The Committee had received an update on the Greater Belfast Development (minute 19.15) and noted that contractors were in place for mechanical, engineering and cladding work. The Programme of Works had been assessed and agreed to enable a settlement agreement with Somague. Completion dates had been noted, October 2020 for block BD and December 2020 for block BC. A VEAT notice was being prepared to inform the market of the modified agreement with Somague. The Committee had been concerned that any challenge to the VEAT from the administrators for Lagan's could cause a delay in the programme. The Committee had been reassured that there had not been any substantial modification to the contract.

The Committee had received a report on Infrastructure Planning (minute 19.16) and noted that the University had responded to a Development Plan from the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council. It would still leave room for expansion, including an area earmarked for the Veterinary School proposal. Options for the Portrush site are also being explored. In Jordanstown there had been planning permission gained for an area beside the lough and consideration is being given for the disposal of this site. In Magee, opportunities will be explored to sell potential excess areas of the Foyle College sites, to allow other sites to be purchased to facilitate expansion and integration into the city. For Belfast, areas have been identified for potential expansion.

The Committee had received the Annual Environmental Sustainability report for 2017-18 (minute 19.19) and noted that the University had been nominated for the Environmental Leadership Award at the 2019 Business in Community

Responsible Business Awards. Members had noted the excellent progress made but that targets for air travel should be revised to be more in line with the new Global Engagement Strategy.

Council endorsed the minutes of the Resources Committee held on 15 April 2019.

b) Governance, Nominations and Remuneration Committee (2 May 2019)

The Chairman presented a verbal report of the meeting held on 2 May 2019:

The Committee had received a report on the progress with implementing the new Remuneration Code.

The Committee had received information on the Review of the HE code of Governance which the University had responded to. The indication had been that there would not be any major developments in our governance arrangements.

The Committee had received a paper on the Review of Court and its role. The University consulted all external organisations and a small number responded to say that Court should still exist but were unclear of its role going forward. The University would bring a proposal to Council to formally disband Court.

The Committee noted that an external Effectiveness Review of Council would be undertaken, commencing over the Summer, with a report and recommendations being presented to the Council in the Autumn.

The Council noted the verbal report the minutes would formally be presented to Council at its meeting on 14 June 2019.

19.18 GREATER BELFAST DEVELOPMENT UPDATE (C/19/13)

Mrs Lamond presented the update informing members of the current position with the project and progress with the Frederick Street car park. The University had entered into a Heads of Terms agreement with Somague/Sacyr and the conditions are being progressed by both parties. The updated Economic Business Case will be presented to the Chairs of Council Committees on 5 June and Council on 14 June. Work continues with SIB to ensure questions on the Economic Business Case are answered.

The third party consultants currently being appointed by SIB will perform an audit on GBD which will primarily be concerned with assurance matters.

Mr Clements informed Council that the Resources Committee had been alarmed that delays with submitting the Business Case could have serious implications for securing funding of the project by July and therefore further impact the settlement agreement with Somague.

Council noted the progress made with the project but that any substantial delay with funding may have implications for the scheduling and completion of the project.

Council noted the progress.

19.19 FITNESS FOR PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE-CHANGES TO ORDINANCE XLII (C/19/14)

Mr Mullan presented the paper and informed members that the changes had been ratified by Senate at its meeting on 17 April 2019. The title of the Ordinance would change from Fitness for Practice to **Fitness to Practice**. The changes are in line with the majority of the professional regulators use of the term. Other changes include, amendments to the anonymous disclosure paragraph, to encourage disclosure of complainants and clarity on steps/procedures for investigation, including timelines and referral to the regulatory procedures for the relevant profession.

Council was also asked to delegate authority to the University Secretary to make minor administrative changes to the Statutes and Ordinances without the need for presenting to Council.

The Council endorsed the changes to Ordinance XLII and delegated authority to the University Secretary to make minor changes to Statutes and Ordinances.

19.20 SCHEDULE OF SUMMER GRADUATIONS (C/19/15)

Mr Mullan presented the schedule which indicated the location, dates and times of the thirteen ceremonies over the seven day period. The schedule also indicates when each of the eleven honorary graduates will receive their degrees. Council members will also receive invitations to process at or attend the ceremonies.

There will also be a formal, black tie Gala Dinner on 2 July 2019 on the Coleraine campus. This will celebrate the 50th anniversary of the University being on the Coleraine campus.

Council noted the Graduation schedule.

19.21 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Vice-Chancellor congratulated the Chairman on his award of an honorary degree and encouraged members to attend the ceremony on 9 July 2019 in the Millennium Forum Theatre.

The Vice-Chancellor also paid tribute to a staff cycle team who had raised £12,000 for a sponsored cycle in memory of their colleague who had sadly passed away. The money would be donated to the Mind you Mood project.