A meeting of the Council was held in Room 201, The Carrington Building, on Friday 19 March 2010 at 2.30pm.

The President
The Vice-President
The Treasurer
The Vice-Chancellor
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Professor T A Downes)
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor D C Berry)
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor R L Robson)
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor C M Williams)

Mr T Bartlam
Ms S Brennan
Mr R Buller
Mrs H Dominick
Mr R Dwyer
Professor R H Ellis
Mr R E R Evans
Mr T Gilchrist
Professor S Hawker
Dr J C F Hayward
Dr A M Hodge

Councillor P Jones
Professor P M Leopold
Professor S J Mithen
Dr I Mueller-Harvey
Professor J Pemberton
Dr A P Reed
Sir John Sunderland
Councillor P Swaddle
Professor S F Walker
Dr J D Wilkins

The University Secretary

In attendance: The Director of Academic Services
The Director of External Affairs
The Director of Facilities Management
The Director of Finance and Corporate Services
The Director of Student Services

Apologies were received from Professor C.J. Bones, Mr H W A Palmer and Mr P Walsh.

The President reported the death of Mrs S J Rayner. Sue Rayner had been appointed to the then Press and Information Office in 1994 and had become Communications Manager in 1998. She had held the title of Director of Communications at the time of her death.
The minutes (10/01-10/13) of the meeting held on 22 January 2010 were confirmed and signed.

**Minute 10/09**

It was reported that the President, acting on behalf of the Council, had appointed Professor S Nortcliff on the nomination of the Senate to the standing Restructuring Committee.

**10/17 Report of the Strategy and Finance Committee (Item 2(a))**

The Council received the Report of the meeting of the Strategy and Finance Committee held on 1 March 2010 relating to items for report.

In regard to item 2, HEFCE consultations on revisions to the Financial Memorandum (2009/46) and Regulating higher education institutions as charities (2009/45), the President reminded the Council that, at its last meeting, he had alluded to events at London Metropolitan University which had resulted in the resignations of the Vice-Chancellor and from the Governing Body and had observed that this affair, which for the most part had been played out in public, provided a timely reminder of the importance of governing bodies taking seriously their fundamental responsibilities for oversight, scrutiny and challenge. He had since requested that the Vice-Chancellor remind the members of the Senior Management Board of their duties and obligations in support of this and the Vice-Chancellor had done so.

**Resolved:**

“That the Report of the Strategy and Finance Committee held on 1 March 2010 relating to items for report, now submitted, be received.”

**10/18 Report of the Board of the College of Estate Management 2008-09 (Item 2(b))**

The Council received the Report of the Board of the College of Estate Management 2008-09.

**Resolved:**

“That the Report of the Board of the College of Estate Management 2008-09, now submitted, be received.”

**10/19 Documents sealed and to be sealed (Item 2(c))**

The Council received a list of documents sealed and to be sealed.

**Resolved:**

“That the Council approve the action taken by the Officers and Members in affixing the University Seal to documents sealed since the last Ordinary Meeting of the Council and authorise the Seal of the University to be affixed to the documents to be sealed as now reported.”
Items for Discussion and Decision

10/20 The Vice-Chancellor:

(a) explained that the University’s HEFCE grant letter, recently received, was in line with expectation and accorded with the Financial Forecasts approved by the Council. Press reports to the effect that Reading had suffered one of the largest percentage cuts in the sector failed to take account of the moderation funding granted to it in 2009-10 in consequence of the Research Assessment Exercise 2008 and served to mask the fact that the effective reduction in recurrent funding of some 0.08% saw the University faring neither better nor worse at this stage that the majority of its competitors;

(b) described the success of his recent visit to China in terms of forging new collaborations and attracting international students but remarked on the reputational damage being inflicted on UK higher education by unfortunate perceptions of a sector in crisis;

(c) reported on the steps that had been taken by the University to facilitate the continuation of the activities hitherto undertaken by the School of Health and Social Care and the School of Continuing Education in the region. Discussions with Thames Valley University were continuing with a view to the transfer of Social Work to that institution with effect from 1 October 2011; and agreement had been reached for the activities formerly undertaken by the three component elements of the School of Continuing Education (Professional Management Programmes, Careers Studies and Public Programmes) to be delivered by the Henley Business School, the University of Warwick and the University of Oxford respectively. Collaborative initiatives included language programmes in association with the University of Oxford and Day Schools mounted by the University’s Museums and Collections Service.

In response to a question from Dr Mueller-Harvey, the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the totality of the cuts visited upon the University represented a permanent erosion of its financial baseline. Councillor Jones commented that further reductions in grant appeared inevitable and asked what steps the University was taking to ensure that it paid full attention on its core business through a period of retrenchment. The Vice-Chancellor explained that the University would continue to focus on excellence and to exploit opportunities to influence, where it could, the developing research agenda both nationally and internationally.

Resolved:

“That the Report of the Vice-Chancellor, now submitted, be approved.”

10/21 Reports of the meeting of the Strategy and Finance Committee held on 1 March 2010 relating to items for discussion and decision  

(Items 4(a)-4(i))

The Council received the Reports of the meeting of the Strategy and Finance Committee held on 1 March 2010 relating to items for discussion and decision.
In regard to item 4(a), the Review of the Centre for Advanced Computing and Emerging Technologies (ACET) and the Review of the School of Systems Engineering, the Reports of the Review Groups were presented by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and by Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Williams) respectively. In regard to ACET, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor described a self-financing centre the business model for which had not worked and showed little prospect of so doing. Accordingly it had been agreed that the Centre be closed with effect from 31 July 2010 and that the consequences of this for the staff assigned to it be considered in the context of the review of its parent School, the School of Systems Engineering. In regard to the School of Systems Engineering, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Williams) explained that the Review Group had identified many areas of excellence within the School which had the potential to contribute to certain of the University's areas of strategic focus. On the other hand, a dysfunctional approach to research leading to a disappointing RAE performance, complex and overburdensome teaching programmes and a lack of cohesion amongst senior members of the School had clearly signalled a need for radical change if this potential were to be realised. Reductions in numbers of Academic and support staff were therefore being recommended, in a numerical range sufficient to achieve viable income/expenditure and staff/student ratios for the future.

Councillor Jones suggested that composition of the Groups appointed to review both areas of activity had been weighted too heavily towards University management and had thus been denied the essential discipline of external challenge. Mr Evans articulated the contrary view that this suggestion served to confuse the respective roles of management and governance. Noting that the Review of the School of Systems Engineering had been occasioned, for the most part, by relative underperformance, Sir John Sunderland asked why shortcomings had not been identified at an earlier stage and, in consequence, whether the University had an adequate performance management system in place. Despite assurances that the alert engagement of the relevant Dean allied to the outputs from Staff Development Review system provided sufficient managerial control in the majority of circumstances, the President suggested that the wider issue be the subject of more detailed discussion by the Strategy and Finance Committee. Dr Wilkins suggested that the management challenge facing the incoming Head of the School of Systems Engineering should not be underestimated.

In regard to item 4(b), the Report of the Project Board for the Reshaping of the University in regard to the Life Sciences, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor explained that the recommendations at present before the Council for reductions in the numbers of Academic Staff in the School of Biological Sciences and the Department of Chemistry had come about as a result of active engagement by the Heads of the relevant Schools with the Reshaping Project Board and, in particular, its Life Sciences Working Group. Within the School of Biological Sciences, an increase in student numbers allied to a modest reduction in Academic Staff would underpin a more sustainable staff/student ratio and a concentration on areas of research that had the potential for excellence. Within Chemistry, a rigorous external review commissioned by the Department itself had served to identify areas of notable strength and of relative weakness in research. The President of the Students' Union reassured the Council that she understood the need for the University to build areas of strength but feared for the immediate impact on the quality of the student experience of staffing reductions allied to increases in student numbers. The Dean of the Faculty of Life Sciences explained that the identification of dedicated staff capable of delivering excellent taught programmes had been a fundamental concern of the Life Sciences Reshaping Working Group as it had gone about its work.
The Council received a letter dated 18 March 2010 addressed to the President of the Council from the President of the Reading branch of the University and College Union (UCU) registering concern at the adequacy of the material presented to the Senate as a basis upon which to formulate its comment on the academic merits or otherwise of the proposals for reductions in the numbers of Academic Staff in the School of Biological Sciences and the Department of Chemistry; and asking that the University seek first to achieve its desired reductions in staff by voluntary means. Speaking as the representative elected by the Senate to the Council, Professor Leopold confirmed that, in her view, the relevant section of the Report of the Senate to the Council provided a balanced account of the inconclusive discussion that had taken place. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor assured the Council that a notice outlining the means by which members of the University might register an interest in early retirement or voluntary severance had, earlier in the day, been posted to the Reshaping section of the University website.

In regard to item 4(c), the Progress Report of the Project Board for the Reshaping of the University in regard to savings identified, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor explained that, on the basis of current projections which, over time, might worsen due to circumstances beyond the University’s control, the Re-shaping Project was on target to deliver the savings that had been set for it by the end of Session 2011-12: earlier departures of staff through early retirement and voluntary severance could yet accelerate this. In response to a question from Councillor Jones, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor explained that the costs associated with adjustments to staffing were not included within these figures but were to be met from the moderation funding provided by HEFCE for precisely this purpose. In response to a question from Dr Mueller-Harvey it was explained that significant budgetary reductions in the Directorates had already been effected but that those required of academic areas would perforce take longer to achieve.

In regard to item 4(d), the Financial Report: January 2010, the Director of Finance and Corporate Services reported that the sale of the site of the former Mansfield Hall had recently been concluded. In response to a question from Dr Mueller-Harvey, an assurance was provided that, in resuming its work, the Research Platforms Working Group would pay due regard to the lessons to be learned from the failure of the business plan for ACET. In particular, business plans would be tested rigorously against the reality of local circumstances.

In regard to item 4(e), Financial Strategy 2009-14, the Council approved the Strategy for submission to HEFCE and, in so doing, noted that those sections relating to levels of annual operating surplus and contingency represented a direction of travel rather than an immediately achievable aim. The Council could expect to receive revised Financial Forecasts at its next meeting.

In regard to item 4(f), the Interim Report of the Halls Accommodation Project, the Council noted that the University remained in dialogue with three counterparties whilst maintaining the option of pursuing an independent way forward. Councillor Jones offered to share with relevant officers his recent experiences of the OJEU tendering process. The President reminded the Council that certain actions (such as the demolition of Childs Hall) must perforce be taken before the financing model for Phase 2 of the Halls Redevelopment Programme had been finalised.
In regard to item 4(g), Analysis of Research Grants and Contracts: FQ2, 2009-10, Mr Bartlam sought to understand the University’s relatively poor performance in relation to attracting grants from industry and commerce. It was explained that relationships with this sector were strong but that the preferred method of collaboration tended to be through knowledge transfer partnerships and the like rather than research grant funding per se.

In regard to item 4(h), Major Capital Projects, the Director of Facilities Management explained that a lease arrangement for the Library Book Repository was shortly to be signed whereupon this Project would be assigned a ‘green’ notation.

In regard to item 4(i), the Report of the Health and Safety Committee: Autumn Term 2009, the University Secretary explained in response to a question from Dr Wilkins that, with effect from Session 2010-11, meetings of the Health and Safety Committee had been scheduled early in each Term, thus permitting the onward passage of the resulting report through the Senior Management Board to the Strategy and Finance Committee and on to Council ‘within Term’. The opportunity would also be taken to refresh the traditional style of report.

Resolved:

“1. That, with reference to item 4(a), Review of the Centre for Advanced Computing and Emerging Technologies (ACET) and Review of the School of Systems Engineering; and, with reference to item 4(b), Report of the Project Board for the Reshaping of the University in regard to the Life Sciences:

(a) there be a reduction in the permanent Academic Staff of the School of Systems Engineering of between six and twelve FTEs and that, in consequence, a Restructuring Committee be established in line with Statute XXXIII Part II and the University’s Review and Restructuring Policy;

(b) a reduction in permanent support staff of the School of Systems Engineering of between five and ten FTEs be included within the remit of the proposed Restructuring Committee;

(c) within the School of Biological Sciences REDACTED S.40(2):

(i) in Environmental Biology, there be a reduction of between three and five Academic Staff and that, in consequence, a Restructuring Committee be established in line with Statute XXXIII Part II and the University’s Review and Restructuring Policy; and

(ii) in Biomedical Sciences, there be a reduction of between two and four Academic Staff and that, in consequence, a Restructuring Committee be established in line with Statute XXXIII Part II and the University’s Review and Restructuring Policy; and
(d) within the Department of Chemistry, there be a reduction of between two and four Academic Staff (REDACTED S.40(2)) and that, in consequence, a Restructuring Committee be established in line with Statute XXXIII Part II and the University’s Review and Restructuring Policy.

“2. That, with reference to item 4(c), the Progress Report of the Project Board for the Reshaping of the University in regard to savings identified, now submitted, be received.”

“3. That, with reference to item 4(d), the Financial Report: January 2010, now submitted, be received;”

“4. That, with reference to item 4(e), the Financial Strategy 2009-14, now submitted, be approved.”

“5. That, with reference to item 4(f), the Halls Accommodation Project: Interim Report, now submitted, be approved.”

“6. That, with reference to item 4(g), the Analysis of Research Grants and Contracts: FQ2, 2009-10, now submitted, be received.”

“7. That, with reference to item 4(h), the Report on Major Capital Projects, now submitted, be received.”

“8. That, with reference to item 4(i), the Report of the Health and Safety Committee: Autumn Term 2009, now submitted, be received.”

10/22 Report of the Audit Committee

The Council received the Report of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 18 February 2010.

The Council noted that, at the request of the President, the Vice-Chancellor had provided information and reassurance to the Audit Committee on the University’s position relative to that of the University of East Anglia which had recently attracted adverse press coverage for certain aspects of its climate science research and its compliance or otherwise with freedom of information legislation. The Committee had thanked the Vice-Chancellor for his report and asked to be kept informed of any relevant developments.

Resolved:

“1. That, with reference to item 2, KPMG be appointed as external auditors for the University for the financial year ending 31 July 2010 and that their remuneration be settled with the Chair of the Audit Committee.”

“2. That the Report of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 18 February 2010, now submitted, be approved.”
10/23 Report of the Appointments Committee

The Council received the Report of the meeting of the Appointments Committee held on 25 January 2010.

Resolved:

“1. That, with reference to item 2, Mr Stephen P Sherman be appointed to membership of the Council in Class 3 (vice Dr J D Wilkins) for the period 1 August 2010 to 31 July 2013.”

“2. That, with reference to item 3,

Dr Lorna Arnold
Dr Saul Lehrfreund
and Dr Susan Solomon

each be appointed to membership of the Court in the category Recent Honorary Graduates.

“3. That the Report of the meeting of the Appointments Committee held on 25 January 2010, now submitted, be approved.”

10/24 Report of the Support Services Policy Committee

The Council received the Report of the meeting of the Support Services Policy Committee held on 25 January 2010.

The President endorsed the view expressed by Dr Hodge regarding the importance of the work carried out by the Support Services Policy Committee and asked that its Report be accorded greater prominence within future agendas. The Council noted that the University enjoyed an enviable reputation for its care of students with disabilities but recognised that this, in turn, placed these very services under considerable strain.

Resolved:

“That the Report of the meeting of the Support Services Policy Committee held on 25 January 2010, now submitted, be approved.”

10/25 Report of the Senate

The Council received the Report of the meeting of the Senate held on 10 March 2010.

Resolved:

“1. That, with reference to item 1:

Professor T.A. Downes be re-appointed as Deputy Vice-Chancellor for the period from 1 August 2010 to 31 July 2014;
Professor R.L. Robson be re-appointed as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for the period from 1 August 2010 to 31 July 2014;

Professor S.J. Mithen be appointed as Pro-Vice-Chancellor for the period from 1 August 2010 to 31 July 2014.”

“2. That, with reference to item 2:

Professor G. Marston be re-appointed Head of the School of Chemistry, Food and Pharmacy for the period from 1 August 2010 to 31 July 2014

Professor S.N. Chandler-Wilde be appointed Head of the School of Mathematics, Meteorology and Physics for the period from 1 August 2010 to 31 July 2013

Dr P.J. Giddings be re-appointed Head of the School of Politics and International Relations for the period from 1 August 2010 to 31 July 2011

Dr B. Cosh be appointed Head of the School of Systems Engineering for the period from 1 April 2010 to 31 July 2013.”

“3. That, with reference to item 3, the following be accorded the title of Visiting Professor:

(a) School of Politics and International Relations

Admiral Sir Jonathon Band, School of Politics and International Relations, for the period ending 31 March 2013

Mr D. Bowen, School of Politics and International Relations, for the period ending 31 March 2013

(b) ICMA Centre

Professor J. Pezier, ICMA Centre, for a further period ending 31 October 2012

(c) School of Humanities

Professor B. Taylor, School of Humanities, for the period ending 31 December 2012.”

“4. under the provisions of Ordinance XXIV the title of Professor Emeritus be conferred on Professor G. Jeronimidis with effect from 1 April 2010”

“5. That, with reference to item 5, alterations to Ordinance III (Degrees Diplomas and Certificates) and Ordinance LV (Degrees of Master (Postgraduate)) to provide for the degree of Master in Teaching and Learning, be approved”

“6. That the Report of the meeting of the Senate held on 10 March 2010, now submitted, be approved.”
10/26  
**Edited Report of the Restructuring Committee established in respect of the School of Health and Social Care**

The Council received the edited Report of the Restructuring Committee established in respect of the School of Health and Social Care. This differed from the full Report presented at Minute 10/31 below only in the absence of the names of individual staff members being recommended for dismissal by reason of redundancy.

As Chair of the Restructuring Committee, Mrs Scott commented that, since making its interim report to the Council, the Committee had been pleased to note a marked improvement in communications and had attributed this to the continuing efforts of the Transition Management Group and, in particular, to the work of Ms Ann Quinn as Head of School.

Dr Mueller-Harvey made a number of detailed observations relating to the Equality Impact Assessments annexed to this Report and to the Report of the Restructuring Committee established in respect of the School of Continuing Education. It was agreed that these matters be referred to the Director of Human Resources with a view to his response being made available to Dr Mueller-Harvey as soon as was practicable and to the Council at its next meeting.

10/27  
**Edited Report of the Restructuring Committee established in respect of the School of Continuing Education**

The Council received the edited Report of the Restructuring Committee established in respect of the School of Continuing Education. This differed from the full Report presented at Minute 10/32 below only in the absence of the names of individual staff members being recommended for dismissal by reason of redundancy.

As Chair of the Restructuring Committee, Dr Hayward noted that common themes emerging from its work had included:

(a) widespread perceptions of delay in populating and convening a Restructuring Committee;

(b) the importance of good internal communication which, in this case had been complicated by the very large number of Sessional teaching staff involved; and of publicising, particularly to the local and regional communities, the reasons why the University had had to withdraw from these activities in Continuing Education and the very considerable efforts it had made to minimise the damage;

(c) the need to emphasise the University’s continuing commitment to the region through a range of activities in this and other areas, including provision by the University of Oxford of Public Programmes at Whiteknights, a co-branded Reading-Oxford series of language programmes, Saturday Schools organised by the University’s Museums and Collections Service, and the outreach work undertaken by many of the Schools of the University including the Institute of Education.
The Council received the Report of the meeting of the Students’ Union Liaison Committee held on 20 January 2010.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor commented on the constructive relationship that continued to prevail between the University and the Students’ Union and drew that attention of the Council to the financial surplus that had been achieved by the Union in the year ending 31 July 2009.

Resolved:

“That the Report of the meeting of the Students’ Union Liaison Committee held on 20 January 2010, now submitted, be received.”

The Council noted that its final meeting in the Session 2009-10 had been scheduled for Monday 5 July 2010 at 2.15pm.