Meeting of the Council (23 January 2015)

Agenda Item 1

Academic and Governance Services

Council

14/55 A meeting of the Council was held in Room 201, Carrington Building, on Friday 21 November 2014 at 2.15pm.

The President
The Vice-Presidents (Mr R Dwyer, Ms S M Woodman)
The Vice-Chancellor
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor G Brooks)
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Mr V Raimo)
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor R Van de Noort)

Mr T Bartlam
Mr T Beardmore-Grey (following
Minute 14/56)
Professor J Board
Ms T Corless
Dr B Cosh
Lord Crisp
Dr P A Erskine
Mr R E R Evans
Dame Moira Gibb
Ms N Harper

Mr S Hawker
Dr O B Kennedy
Mrs M Martin
Dr P R Preston
Mr S P Sherman
Sir John Sunderland
Professor G H Tucker
Professor S Walker
Mrs S L Webber

In attendance:
The Chief Operating Officer
The Head of University Administration
The Director of Finance and Corporate Services
The Director of Quality Support and Development
The Director of Legal Services (up to minute 14/67)

Apologies were received from Professor R H Ellis, Mr H W A Palmer, and Mr S C C Pryce.
The President welcomed Lord Crisp, Ms Corless, Ms Harper, Dr Kennedy, Mrs Martin, Mr Raimo, Professor Van de Noort, and Professor Walker to membership of the Council.

The President reported that Mr I P Smith had resigned from the Council since its last meeting. The Council recorded its gratitude to Mr Smith for his valuable work not only on the Council but also on some of its sub-committees, and wished him well.

The President reported the deaths of:

**Emeritus Professor Sir Peter Hall** who was appointed Professor of Geography from January 1968, served as Head of Department of Geography from 1969 to 1981, as well as Dean of the Faculty of Urban and Regional Studies from 1975 to 1978, and retired in 1989.

**Mr Jim Hillier** who came to the Bulmershe College of Higher Education to join the Department of Film & Drama in 1979. He was Head of the Department of Film & Drama from 1996 to 2001, and retired in 2005.

**Emeritus Professor Walter Redfern** who joined the University in 1960 as Assistant Lecturer in French, becoming a lecturer in 1963. He gained the Personal Title of Reader in 1972 and of Professor of French in 1980, and retired in 2001.

14/56 The Council agreed to give early consideration to the recommendation that Mr T. Beardmore-Grey be appointed to membership of the Council, as specified in the Report of the Appointments Committee (2)(a) (Item 8). The Council approved the recommendation. Mr Beardmore-Grey was then invited to join the meeting and the President welcomed him to membership of the Council.

**Resolved:**

1. “That Mr T. Beardmore-Grey be appointed to the Council in Class 2 (vice Mr I. Smith) for the period from 1 November 2014 to 31 July 2017.”

14/57 The minutes (14/32-14/54) of the meeting held on 14 July 2014 were confirmed and signed.

**Items of Report**

14/58 **Terms of Reference** (Item 2(a))

The Council received a statement of its Terms of Reference.

14/59 **Disclosure of Interests** (Item 2(b))

The Council noted a paper from the University Secretary in regard to Disclosure of Interests.
14/60 Report on the Exercise of Vacation Powers (Item 2(c))


14/61 Report of the Strategy and Finance Committee (Item 2(d))

The Council received the report of the meeting of the Strategy and Finance Committee held on 13 October 2014 relating to items for report.

14/62 Delegation of Powers by the Council (Item 2(e))

The Council received a paper on the Delegation of Powers by the Council.

14/63 Availability of Council papers (Item 2(f))

The Council received, for its information, a paper relating to availability of Council papers.

Resolved:

1. “That the following reports, now submitted, be received:

   Report of the Strategy and Finance Committee held on 13 October 2014 relating to items for report;”

2. “That the Record of Delegation of Powers by the Council be approved.”

14/64 Documents sealed and to be sealed (Item 2(g))

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

14/65 Report of the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor reported:
undergraduate and postgraduate admissions in September 2014 had been strong, with each showing an increase in the region of 12% on the previous year. Sector-wide data on admissions were not yet available, but initial indications suggested that the University had been among the more successful institutions. The recruitment cycle for 2015 showed early signs of promise, with a 17% increase in attendance at the most recent open day relative to the equivalent event last year and a 20% increase in applications to date. While such indications, so early in the cycle, needed to be treated with due caution, the University at this stage appeared to be in a stronger position than the sector as a whole and than some of its competitor institutions. The University was striving to reach the full range of high-quality prospective applicants, and had recently hosted a meeting with the Girls’ Schools Association and the Headmasters’ Conference with a view to raising the University’s profile among their member schools;

Welcome Week 2014 had been more structured and had a higher profile than in previous years, and had received very positive feedback. There had been a temporary shortfall in University accommodation for new students, and, in consequence, some REDACTED S.43 had been placed in local hotels for a fortnight or so. The shortfall arose from a combination of a very positive admissions round and a relaxation of the normal quota for second and third-year students given hall accommodation. Bridges Hall had opened before the beginning of the academic year, which marked the completion of the current halls development programme. The University, together with UPP, would consider future accommodation needs given the University’s ambition to increase its student numbers;

the results of the Research Excellence Framework would be published on 18 December 2014, and a briefing note would be issued to all members of Council later in the week;

following the successful refurbishment of the second and fifth floor of the Library, the redevelopment of the remaining floors was now being planned, including a redesign of the entrance area and a remodelling of the exterior. The refurbishment had received very positive feedback from users. The University Library had recently celebrated the fiftieth anniversary of its opening in 1964, and Dame Lynne Brindley, former Chief Executive of the British Library and an alumna of the University, had given an anniversary address;

the University and College Union had instituted a boycott of assessment from 6 November 2014 in pursuit of their dispute over the Universities Superannuation Scheme; the action had been suspended with effect from 20 November pending negotiations in January 2015;

the University’s fund-raising campaign had raised REDACTED S.43 in donations or pledges over the past year, which was an impressive result for a university of Reading’s size;

at the Degree Congregations in December, the University would confer the title Alumna of the Year on Councillor Sarah-Jane Hacker, who next year
would be Mayor of Reading, and the degree of DLitt honoris causa would be awarded to Professor Andrew Wallace-Hadrill, formerly Professor of Classics at the University, Director of the British School in Rome, and Master of Sidney Sussex College, Cambridge. The Chancellor’s Awards would be presented to the University’s top-performing Part 1 and Part 2 students at a celebration in early December.

Resolved:

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

14/66 Presentation on League Tables (Item 4)

Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor Van de Noort) made a presentation to the Council on League Tables (copy inserted in Minute Book).

Professor Van de Noort outlined the importance of league tables to the University, the criteria used in their compilation, the University’s recent performance, and the actions being taken to improve the University’s ranking. He described how a high ranking in league tables shaped perceptions of a university and yielded benefits across the range of a university’s activities, including research. In response to questions, Professor Van de Noort affirmed the University’s commitment to understanding students’ experience from initial contact to graduation and beyond, to strengthening processes which ensured the consistency and quality of the learning experience, and to attracting talented students from a range of educational backgrounds.

14/67 Charter, Statutes and Ordinances (Item 5)

The Council received a paper on the reform of the University’s Charter of Incorporation, Statutes and Ordinances, containing a draft revised Charter, a proposal to remove the Statutes, and draft revised Ordinances. The Council also received an additional paper which included a copy of a letter sent by the local branch of the University and College Union (UCU) to members of Council and a brief response prepared by the University Secretary, Director of Human Resources and Director of Legal Services. The Council had discussed the initial draft proposals at its meeting on 14 July 2014.

The University Secretary explained that the purpose of the proposals was to ensure that the University’s instruments of governance were transparent and fit for purpose. The current instruments were difficult to understand and impeded the efficient conduct of business, requiring that amendments to procedures included in Statutes be referred to the Privy Council for approval and specifying unduly complex and cumbersome procedures in a number of areas. Matters currently governed by the Statutes had been reassigned to the Charter or Ordinances, as appropriate, and some matters currently in the Ordinances would be transferred to policy documents. The enduring importance of academic freedom had been enshrined in the Charter.
The Vice-Chancellor reported that the University had consulted closely with the UCU Local President and the UCU Regional Officer through a series of fruitful and constructive meetings, and that he expected that such meetings would continue in the same spirit to consider any points not so far resolved.

The proposals were submitted to this meeting for the first resolution of Council, and would subsequently be referred to the Senate and Convocation for comment before being submitted for the second resolution of Council at its meeting on 23 January 2015. The proposals would then be submitted to the Privy Council in February 2015 for consideration and approval. It was intended that the revised instruments of governance would be effective from 1 August 2015.

Three members of the Council who had been charged with reviewing matters on its behalf (Professor Cosh, Mr Dwyer and Mr Preston) all supported the position proposed. The Council endorsed the proposals and believed that they would benefit the University, its staff and students by making the instruments of governance more easily understood and allowing matters to be dealt with more efficiently. Mr Dwyer noted that the provisions relating to staff followed employment law closely. The President of RUSU spoke favourably in terms of the involvement of RUSU in the process and the improvements in the transparency of the Ordinances.

The Council undertook to consider at its next meeting how to discharge its oversight of the policies relating to employment, which sat below the Ordinances.

**Resolved on the first occasion, subject to any changes which the Privy Council should require in agreement with the Council:**

1. “That a revised Charter of Incorporation, now submitted, be approved for communication to the Senate and to the Standing Committee of Convocation;”

2. “That, contingent on (a) above, a proposal to abolish the Statutes of the University be approved for communication to the Senate and to the Standing Committee of Convocation;”

3. “That, contingent on (a) and (b) above, revised Ordinances, now submitted, be approved subject only to any comment that the Senate may have on the matter.”

**14/68 Annual Report of the Audit Committee to the Council and the Vice-Chancellor for 2013-14 (Item 6(a))**

The Council received the Annual Report of the Audit Committee to the Council and the Vice-Chancellor for 2013-14.

As Chairman of the Audit Committee, Mr Sherman reminded the Council of the Committee’s principal responsibilities and was pleased to report that the University’s arrangements had been found to be satisfactory. Mr Sherman informed Council that the Committee had received an update on the Internal Audit Review of the Efficiency and Effectiveness Programme Management, which had been instituted to provide assurance that controls over the programme management of the Efficiency and Effectiveness Review were operating effectively
and that risks were being consistently managed. The Audit Committee was content with the approach taken by Internal Audit Services and had agreed to receive regular reports on the Efficiency and Effectiveness Programme.

14/69 Management Letter and Audit Highlights Memorandum from KPMG for the year ended 31 July 2014 (Item 6(b))

The Council received the Management Letter and Audit Highlights Memorandum from KPMG for the year ended 31 July 2014, which had been submitted previously to the Audit Committee and to the Strategy and Finance Committee.

As Chairman of the Audit Committee, Mr Sherman reported that KPMG anticipated issuing unqualified audit opinions on the University, its subsidiaries and trusts, and that there had been no uncorrected audit differences. In response to a question from Mr Hawker, Mr Sherman advised Council that the University was strengthening its procedures in relation to the UK Bribery Act and that the recently appointed Director of Legal Services would be developing a training programme as soon as possible. The Council asked that a report on progress in the development of training in connection with the UK Bribery Act be submitted to its next meeting.

14/70 Draft Letter of Representation to the University’s Auditors (Item 6(c))

The Council received the Draft Letter of Representation, which had been submitted previously to the Audit Committee and to the Strategy and Finance Committee.

14/71 Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2014 (Item 6(d)(i))

The Council received the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2014, which had been submitted previously to the Audit Committee and to the Strategy and Finance Committee.

The President explained that the University Group had retained a surplus of REDACTED S.43, which was attributable to very sizeable profits on disposal of surplus land. The Academic Group deficit stemmed in large part from the investment in the Efficiency and Effectiveness Programme, which, in due course, would substantially reduce operating costs. The Academic Group’s financial performance was expected to show significant improvement in the current year. In response to a question from Mr Hawker, the Chief Operating Officer explained that there had been a number of forecasting errors which had been identified too late for remedial action to be taken and for which additional controls had now been put in place.
14/73 **Annual Assurance Return to HEFCE** (Item 6(e))

The Council received a copy of the Annual Assurance Return to HEFCE, for its information in relation to Part 1 and for its approval in relation to Part 2.

14/74 **Report of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 11 November 2014** (Item 6(f))

The Council received the Report of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 11 November 2014.

**Resolved:**

1. “That the Annual Report of the Audit Committee to the Council and the Vice-Chancellor for 2013-14, now submitted, be approved;”

2. “That the Management Letter and Audit Highlights Memorandum from KPMG for the year ended 31 July 2014, be received;”

3. “That the President be authorised to sign the Letter of Representation to KPMG and that the Director of Finance be authorised to sign the letters of support for the University's subsidiary companies;”

4. “That the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2014, now submitted, be approved and adopted;”

5. “That it be confirmed that in all material respects the University has conducted its affairs during the year ended 31 July 2014 in accordance with its status as a charity and that the President be authorised to sign the Annual Assurance Return to HEFCE to this effect”.

14/75 **Report of the meeting of the Strategy and Finance Committee held on 13 October 2014 relating to items for discussion and decision** (Item 7)

The Council received reports from the meeting of the Strategy and Finance Committee held on 13 October 2014 relating to items for discussion and decision.

In regard to item 7(a), University Strategy, the President reported that the Strategy and Finance Committee was maintaining oversight of the University Strategy, that work was currently progressing on a number of interlinked projects which would be completed by the end of the academic year, and that costs associated with this activity had been included in the budget.

In regard to item 7(b), Undergraduate and Postgraduate Admissions 2014, the Vice-Chancellor had reported on this matter in his Report (Minute 14/65).

In regard to item 7(c), 90th Anniversary Arrangements, the Vice-Chancellor explained that the arrangements to mark the 90th anniversary of the University being granted its Royal Charter (17 March 1926) were designed *inter alia* to raise the
University’s external profile, to engage alumni, and to strengthen ties with the region, and would focus on both the University’s long heritage and its ambitions for the future. Key events would include the official opening of the Malaysia campus, an event on the date of the anniversary, and a ‘homecoming’ day in June or July for alumni and their families. In addition, a range of events, such as graduation and public lectures, would promote awareness of the 90th anniversary.

In regard to item 7(d), University of Reading Malaysia Progress Report, the President noted that delays in construction were being closely monitored and managed, and that the academic and administrative capacity to support a fuller range of programmes was being put in place.

Resolved:

“That:

(a) A paper on activity as part of the University Strategy, now submitted, be received;

(b) a paper on Undergraduate Admissions 2014, now submitted, be received;

(c) a paper on the University’s 90th anniversary in 2016, now submitted, be received;

(d) a progress report on the University of Reading Malaysia, now submitted, be received.”

14/76 Report of the Appointments Committee (Item 8)

The Council received the Report of the meeting of the Appointments Committee held on 13 October 2014.

The Council noted that a public advertisement had been issued inviting expressions of interest in membership of the Council. The University Secretary reported that, to date, there had been 26 expressions of interest. In response to a question from Dame Moira Gibb, the President indicated that the Council had not agreed a specific ambition in respect of gender balance in its membership, though efforts had been made to place the advertisement in a variety of places intended to encourage a greater diversity of interest. The President suggested that this was a matter which the Council might wish to consider further.

The President noted that his term of office would end on 31 July 2016, and reported that he had asked the Vice-President (Mr Dwyer) to lead the process for selecting the next President of Council. Mr Dwyer explained that he would consult each lay member on who they believed might best fulfil the role and whether they themselves might wish to be considered as a potential candidate. Mr Dwyer would report on potential candidates to the next meeting of the Appointments Committee on 9 February 2015, being cognisant of any potential new members of Council who had emerged following the public advertisement. A small panel would be convened to interview potential candidates with a view to reporting to the Appointments Committee on 22 June 2015. This timetable would allow the President-designate to
shadow a number of meetings during 2015/16 before taking up the appointment on 1 August 2016. The President indicated that he would not participate in the selection process, but was willing to discuss with any member the nature of the role, its demands and responsibilities.

Resolved:

1. “That:
   (i) Dr P.R. Preston be appointed to the Strategy and Finance Committee (vice Mr T. Bartlam) for the period from 1 January 2015 to 31 July 2017;
   (ii) Mr S.P. Sherman be re-appointed as Chair of the Audit Committee for the period from 1 January 2015 to 1 January 2016.
   (iii) Dr P.R. Preston be appointed to the Audit Committee to serve as a representative from the Strategy and Finance Committee (vice Mr T. Bartlam) for the period from 1 January 2015 to 31 July 2017.
   (iv) Mr T. Beardmore-Grey be appointed to the Audit Committee (vice Mr I. Smith) for the period to 31 July 2017, with a view to taking over as Chairman from 1 January 2016.
   (v) Mr S.C.C. Pryce be appointed to the Investments Committee (vice Mr I. Smith) for the period to 31 July 2016;”

2. “That the Report of the meeting of the Appointments Committee held on 13 October 2014, now submitted, be approved.”

14/77 Report of the Student Experience Committee (Item 9)

The Council received the Report of the meeting of the Student Experience Committee held on 13 October 2014.

As Chairman of the Committee, Mr Dwyer was pleased to report that, following concerns that RUSU had not been included in the process for setting rents for UPP accommodation, RUSU representatives had attended the UPP Contract Management Group and that, in the light of these discussions, rent increases had been limited to 3%. The UPP Contract Management Group had agreed that, in future, RUSU would routinely be included in discussions on rent increases. Progress was also being made in relation to the provision of clearer information to potential applicants about the costs of university accommodation and, more generally, the costs of living in Reading. The President of RUSU reported that the discussions between RUSU, the Chief Operating Officer and UPP had been very fruitful and that RUSU looked forward to further constructive engagement.

Resolved:

“1. That the Report of the meeting of the Student Experience Committee held on 13 October 2014, now submitted, be approved.”
14/78 Report of the Senate (Item 10)

The Council received the Report of the meeting of the Senate held on 15 October 2014.

Resolved:

1. “That, with reference to item 1, Professor P. Stratton-Lake be re-appointed as Head of the School of Humanities for the period from 1 August 2015 to 31 July 2017;”

2. “That, with reference to item 2, under the provisions of Ordinance XXIV the title of Professor Emeritus be conferred on each of the following with effect from the date indicated:

   Professor L. Bunce (1 October 2014)
   Professor C. Gray (1 October 2014);”

3. “That, with reference to item 3, the following be accorded the title of Honorary Fellow for a period of five years from the date indicated:

   Mr Jon Barrett (1 September 2014)
   Mrs Stephanie Curran (1 August 2014)
   Mrs Phillipa Hardman (1 August 2014)
   Mr Philip Sainsbury (1 August 2014)
   Mrs Jean Scott-Barr (1 October 2014)
   Mr Alan Sielicki (1 October 2014)
   Dr Richard Steward (1 October 2014)
   Dr Inge Weber-Newth (1 June 2014);”

   “That the Report of the meeting of the Senate held on 22 October 2014, now submitted, be approved.”

14/79 Induction for new members of Council (Item 11)

The Vice-Chancellor advised that induction meetings for new members of Council were being scheduled for January/February.