

Council

20/73 A meeting of the Council was held online on Wednesday 25 November 2020 at 10.00 am.

The President
The Vice-Presidents (Mr T. Beardmore-Gray, Mrs H. Gordon, and Mrs K. Owen)
The Vice-Chancellor
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor M. Fellowes)
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor E.M. McCrum)
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor D. Zaum)

Professor J. Board	Ms S. Maple
Mrs S. Butler	Mr P. Milhofer
Mr K. Corrigan	Ms L. Moses
Mrs P. Egan	Miss R. Osbourne
Professor R. Frazier	Mrs S. Plank
Professor J. Gibbins	Mr N. Richards
Professor Uma Kambhampati	Dr C. Shaw
Miss B. Karki	Mr J. Taylor
Mr J. Magee	

In attendance:

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Professor J.R. Park) (Item 5 only)
RUSU Education Officer (Mr G. Ingram) (Item 7 only)
The Chief Strategy Officer and University Secretary
The Chief Financial Officer
The Director of Quality Support and Development

Apologies were received from Mr S.C.C. Pryce.

The President welcomed Mrs Butler, Ms Moses, and Mrs Plank to their first meeting of the Council.

The President thanked members for attending the online social gathering the previous evening, which had led to interesting and useful conversations and had allowed members to get to know one another better.

20/74 The minutes (20/64-20/72) of the meeting held on 1 October 2020 were confirmed and signed.

Items for note

20/75 Membership and Terms of Reference (Item 4.1)

The Council received a statement of its Membership and Terms of Reference.

20/76 Council Standing Orders (Item 4.2)

The Council noted the Council Standing Orders.

20/77 Disclosure of Interests (Item 4.3)

The Council noted a paper from the University Secretary in regard to Disclosure of Interests. The Council received a list of members' interests and members were asked to notify the University Secretary of any amendments as a matter of urgency.

20/78 Freedom of Speech Annual Report (Item 4.4)

The Council received the Freedom of Speech Annual Report.

20/79 Report on the Exercise of Vacation Powers (Item 4.5)

The Council noted that there had been no occasion to exercise the Vacation Powers.

20/80 Availability of Council Papers (Item 4.6)

The Council noted a paper from the University Secretary in regard to the availability of Council papers.

20/81 Documents sealed and to be sealed (Item 4.7)

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

20/82 Committee membership (Item 4.8)

The Council noted that it had approved, by circulation, the appointment of Kevin Corrigan to membership of the Strategy and Finance Committee with effect from 1 December 2020 to a date co-terminous with his end-date on Council, and the appointment of Andrew Beshaw to membership of the Investment Committee with effect from 1 November 2020 for three years in the first instance.

Resolved:

1. "That the Freedom of Speech Annual Report, now submitted, be received."
2. "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."

Main items of business: strategic and governance matters for discussion

20/83 Presentation by the Pro-Vice-Chancellors (Education and Student Experience) (Item 5)

The Pro-Vice-Chancellors (Education and Student Experience) (Professor McCrum and Professor Park) delivered a presentation on priorities for the development of teaching and learning, including proposals under the University Strategy.

Professor McCrum and Professor Park noted the success of the University's Teaching and Learning Strategy (2018-21), which had included completing a comprehensive review of the undergraduate curriculum, transforming the tutorial system, and improving the processes for listening to the student voice. The ambitions for teaching and learning under the new University Strategy related primarily to three of its four strategic themes and focussed on: establishing a national and international reputation for educational excellence; building a strong academic community, encompassing students, staff and alumni; and global sustainability as a central theme in the University's offer to students. Education and student fees were the bedrock of the University's financial sustainability.

Professor McCrum and Professor Park outlined the two key proposals under the Strategy Implementation:

- (a) portfolio review and enhancement, which would include a rationalisation of the portfolio of programmes and modules, a reduction of the assessment load, a simplification of programme structures, and the development of blended learning (incorporating more online learning);
- (b) Restructuring of the academic year, which would reduce the number of end-of-year exams, allow better use of the Summer Term for teaching, and offer an improved student experience.

They also reported on the outcomes of the National Student Survey 2020 and the action plan to address areas identified as priorities for improvement. The University had achieved an overall satisfaction score of 84%, and, having risen 11 places, was now ranked 64th of 154 institutions. The priorities for improvement were assessment and feedback (the quality and timeliness of feedback on work, in particular), student voice and partnership (focussed on communicating more effectively actions taken in response to students' feedback on their programmes), and learning resources (provision of more study space). Performance had improved in each of these areas due to action in previous years, and further action was in train this year. The actions were informed by an analysis of students' qualitative comments, which included warm appreciation of the refurbished Library.

Professor McCrum and Professor Park affirmed the University's commitment to enabling students to develop their skills, knowledge, understanding and experience and to become confident, highly employable graduates.

The RUSU Welfare Officer reported that students generally supported the proposals for teaching and learning in the Strategy, and particularly welcomed the proposed reduction in the assessment load. They looked forward to sharing in the further development of the proposals and their implementation, working in close partnership with the University and Schools'

In response to a question from Mr Corrigan, Professor McCrum explained that it would probably be necessary to reduce the programme portfolio by one-third in order to achieve the expected simplification and efficiencies, and align with institutions with a similar profile. The impact on Schools would be different across the University depending on the size and coherence of their current portfolio. Care would be taken to safeguard student choice and to protect recruitment. Professor McCrum noted that there was some evidence to suggest that reducing the size of the programme portfolio improved recruitment since a wide range of

choices was potentially confusing for prospective students and complicated their decision-making.

In response to a question from Mrs Plank, Professor Park explained that the University sought to consolidate its position as one of the research-intensive universities which offered an excellent student experience and was highly attractive to students. Given the profile of its research and its profile of disciplines related to the environment, the University was well placed to project its 'green' credentials as a differentiating factor for prospective students. It was equally important that the University established its credentials for developing graduates who were highly employable and for enhancing their career opportunities. The University also needed to improve the student experience and to innovate in the curriculum, both of which would be enabled by a simplified, more coherent, and more efficient programme portfolio.

In response to questions, Professor McCrum and Professor Park reported that academic colleagues largely supported the ambitions for teaching and learning, but that staff were concerned that there should be careful and detailed thought about how the proposals were implemented and that the process of consultation should continue throughout the implementation. In general, they strongly endorsed the proposed reform of the academic year, but views on portfolio rationalisation were more mixed. Professor McCrum and Professor Park assured the Council that process of portfolio rationalisation would be data-led and transparent.

Professor Frazier spoke of strong support among academic staff for the reform of the academic year and the reduction in the assessment load, but indicated that there was unease about the workload implied by this body of work and some questions about how the portfolio review would facilitate working across School boundaries. Professor McCrum acknowledged these concerns, and explained that there was a clear expectation, as part of the portfolio review, that Schools should work together across organisational boundaries to achieve efficiencies and improve the student academic experience. Colleagues' workload would be carefully considered in the development of the proposals.

In response to a question from Mr Beardmore-Gray, Professor McCrum and Professor Park explained that, while universities were free to organise the academic year as they saw fit, there was advantage in aligning with the pattern of the academic year in other parts of the world to facilitate recruitment and with practice at other universities in the UK. The University's current three term pattern, with assessment at the end of the year, was now out of line with the majority of the UK sector, and appeared to be less attractive to students.

In response to a question from Mr Milhofer, Professor McCrum and Professor Park explained that administrative processes had been rationalised this year, which had enabled staff to focus on the key priorities of teaching and assessment, and that there would be further rationalisation next year. The portfolio review, which would reduce the volume of assessment, would also reduce workloads for academic and professional staff, and create capacity for other priorities. Professor McCrum and Professor Park paid tribute to colleagues who had shouldered heavy workloads over the past nine months to ensure high quality teaching and fair and rigorous assessment for their students. Ensuring that workloads were reasonable and were more effectively managed was a key consideration both during the implementation of the Strategy and as one of its long-term objectives.

The President thanked Professor McCrum and Professor Park for their presentation and their work to ensure that the University provided an excellent education and student experience efficiently and on a sustainable basis.

20/84 Implementing the University Strategy (Item 6)

The Council received a paper on Implementing the University Strategy.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) outlined the University's approach to the implementation of the Strategy. He explained that the Strategy was driven by the University's commitment to use its resources most effectively for the maximum benefit of the student and staff community. The Strategy had emerged from wide consultation across the University and beyond, and, likewise, there had been extensive consultations on the implementation with Senate, RUSU, Schools and Functions, the University and College Union and the Staff Forum among others. The University believed that it had learned from shortcomings in earlier major change programmes and was committed to a consultative and collaborative approach in the implementation of the Strategy.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) noted that changes in practice across the University arising from the pandemic had helped to shape the thinking about the Strategy's implementation, had positively influenced its ambition, and had, in effect, already progressed some of the changes in culture and practice implicit in the Strategy. He reported on issues identified through the consultation included: the challenges of culture change and the need to engage staff and students throughout the process; the need to invest in change; the importance of clarity in relation to data and targets; and the paramount importance of well-being for staff and students.

In response to a question from the President, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) acknowledged that the need to establish a more sustainable model for the University was pressing and that the five-year period for implementation was longer than would often be expected in other sectors. He explained that regulatory and contractual constraints necessarily extended lead times for the implementation of change: new programmes effectively needed to be advertised for some 18 months before the first entry and the final year of a new programme would be taught for the first time in its third year; at the same time, existing programmes which were being withdrawn normally needed to be taught out over a four or five year period, covering the year of application and the duration of the programme. There were, however, some changes, particularly in relation to space, which could be implemented to a shorter timescale. He indicated that a shorter timeframe would have only covered planning the implementation rather than the implementation itself.

In response to a question from Mrs Egan, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) explained that the Director of Digital Technology Services was introducing far-reaching efficiencies in the IT provision, which involved consolidation around a limited range of standard packages and which would be funded largely through the re-orientation of existing budgets. A separate piece of work would be undertaken to consider the infrastructure to support teaching and learning and to enable the development of blended learning.

In response to a question from Professor Gibbins, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) (Professor McCrum) recognised that academic and professional staff were already working under considerable pressure, that the process of transition from the current to future models of teaching would necessarily involve some complexity, and that the interconnections between programmes across Schools were a further complicating factor. She assured the Council that she, Professor Park, together with other colleagues, were working through these issues in detail. The Strategy Implementation was proposing integrated solutions (for example, by addressing at the same time the reform of the academic year and

portfolio review) which would minimise transition periods and protracted pressure on staff. The changes were designed to facilitate collaboration, rationalise workloads, and achieve economies of scale. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) noted that the consultative approach and the early engagement of staff and other stakeholders in the development of the implementation plans meant that such issues were not yet resolved and that solutions would be developed through discussion and collaboration. Professor Gibbins expressed his appreciation for the openness of the consultation and the quality of the resulting discussion.

In response to a question from Mrs Butler, the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that training and support would be provided for all those with responsibility for leading this extensive programme of change.

In response to questions from Mr Corrigan, the RUSU Welfare Officer and others, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) explained that the well-being of staff and students was at the heart of the new Strategy, as represented in the emphases on a sense of community and engagement. He believed that the University provided well for the physical health of staff and students, and was making good progress in relation to mental health. In response to suggestions that the University might consider assigning specific responsibility for well-being to a member of the senior leadership team, the Vice-Chancellor was concerned that physical and mental health should remain the responsibility of each member of the UEB and not be concentrated in a single role. Similarly, he noted that a range of co-ordinated initiatives related to mental health were currently being planned or were in train, including provision of training for mental health first aiders and promotion of the resources and support available; this work, while not labelled a strategy, fulfilled the same end.

In response to questions from Mr Milhofer and Mr Magee, the Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Academic Planning and Resource) recognised the risk that major change programmes lost momentum and did not achieve the promised change. He believed that, given the distinctive culture of universities, a key factor in successfully delivering the Strategy's ambitions was to establish a clear framework of shared purposes and expectations, and then to empower Schools to work within this framework with some degree of autonomy and independence to achieve those purposes.

Resolved:

“That the paper on Implementing the University Strategy, now submitted, be received, the progress made so far welcomed, and the direction of travel endorsed.”

20/85 Report of the Student Experience Committee (Item 7)

The Council received the Report of the meeting of the Student Experience Committee held on 5 November 2020.

The RUSU Education Officer delivered a presentation on students' academic experience over the Summer and Autumn Terms, based on a student survey conducted in October which had attracted some 600 responses.

The RUSU Education Officer acknowledged the extraordinary efforts of staff across the University to mitigate the impact of Covid-19 on the student academic experience. He hoped that the findings of the survey and the recommendations would be understood as a constructive contribution to the University's enhancement work.

The key findings of the survey were:

Communications

In response to a question about the University's communications about decisions on arrangements in the Summer Term, 37% of students were satisfied or very satisfied and 35% were dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. A number of comments acknowledged that the minimal and belated guidance from the regulator and the general uncertainties intrinsic to the situation had impeded decision-making in March. Concerns related to communications which were variously seen as insufficient, unclear, lacking in substance, and inconsistency. Students were more critical about communications around the new academic year (34% satisfied or very satisfied and 41% dissatisfied or very dissatisfied), and there were particular concerns about confusing and untimely information in relation to the timetable. RUSU's recommendations included provision of information in a single format rather than across multiple formats, provision of sufficient early information to inform decision-making, and increased resource for the timetabling activity.

Assessment—take-home papers

Students had been very positive about the change in the examination format from traditional timed, closed exams to 23-hour take-home papers (47.5% satisfied/very satisfied, 10% dissatisfied/very dissatisfied; 31% indicated that the question was not applicable, presumably because they were this year's first-years or were only doing coursework). Take-home papers had removed the time-pressure and intensity associated with traditional exams, and reduced stress; this format particularly benefited students with disabilities. There were some negative comments focussed on technical problems.

Assessment—safety net

Students had not been asked a specific question about the University's safety net (which allowed a final module mark to be calculated on the basis of a sub-set of marks achieved broadly before the onset of Covid-19 in the UK, subject to a number of conditions). However, a number of students criticised the safety net in their comments on the grounds that the conditions meant that some students—mainly those taking modules assessed principally by terminal exams and minimally by coursework—were not eligible to benefit from the allowance. RUSU recommended that any future mitigation should be constructed to offer all students some benefit.

Value for money

In response to the question 'How satisfied are you that the recent student experience is value for money?' 74% of respondents were either dissatisfied or very dissatisfied. A negative response to this question was expected in normal times, but the current circumstances had increased the negative sentiment. Many of the text comments pointed towards the reduced face-to-face teaching as the primary issue, and other factors included lack of access to laboratories and other specific teaching spaces, the Library, and co- and extra-curricular opportunities. Since these restrictions were driven by the Government's guidelines, it was difficult to recommend ameliorative action to the University. However, the paper recommended actions to promote the sense of a student community outside the classroom, to improve the quality of online events and resources, and to make clear to students that the University was listening to their concerns.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor noted that Reading was among the universities with the highest proportion of face-to-face teaching, and Professor Frazier commented that participation by students in face-to-face classes had been good, but had been poorer online. Further work was

need to raise students' awareness that active engagement was a pre-requisite for learning, success, and a rewarding student experience.

In response to questions, the RUSU Education Officer suggested that the negative sentiment around value for money could be attributed, at least in part, to students' sense that they were not benefitting from the social life and extra-curricular activities which were so important to students' experience of university and their personal development. He noted that the University was mindful of this and was working with RUSU to how to remedy this loss once the pandemic restrictions had been lifted.

In response to further questions, the RUSU President reported that RUSU was working hard to ensure that the extra-curricular student experience was as good as possible in the circumstances and to engage students both in social activities and personal development. The RUSU Welfare Officer spoke of her work to support students' mental well-being and to ensure that mental health resources were well signposted.

The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the University and RUSU were considering the resumption of social events in the Summer Term, on the assumption that restrictions might have eased, and how best to create more social and recreational opportunities beyond the normal provision. He noted that RUSU was financed through a combination of a block grant from the University and its commercial income, and that the reduction in its commercial activity had led to a substantial deficit. The University and RUSU were working together on actions to address RUSU's financial position.

Lay members of the Council expressed admiration for the energy and enthusiasm of the RUSU team in these challenging circumstances, and thanked them for their constructive approach. They asked that the University and RUSU consider how students might be assured that the student voice had been heard and that their concerns were being addressed.

Resolved:

“That the Report of the meeting of the Student Experience Committee held on 5 November 2020, now submitted, be approved.”

Matters for approval

20/86 Report of the Audit Committee (Item 8)

The Council received the Annual Report of the Audit Committee to the Council and the Vice-Chancellor for 2019/20.

Mr Richards, as Chair of the Audit Committee, reported the Committee's opinion that the University's arrangements on the regularity and propriety of public funding and their effectiveness were satisfactory overall. The opinion was based on consideration of a range of sources, including the work of the Internal Audit Services and the reports of Deloitte, the external Auditor. Mr Richards praised the work of the Risk Management Group, Major Incident Team and Major Recovery Team in ensuring business continuity over the period of the pandemic. He reported that Deloitte, although the audit remained in progress, had not identified at this stage, and did not anticipate, any significant concerns. The Committee noted the Audit Committee's commentary on the management and quality assurance of data and value for money, including reference to areas where costs needed to be reduced.

The Council received:

- Draft Letters of Support in respect of the University's subsidiary companies
- Draft Report to the Audit Committee on the audit for the year ended 31 July 2020 from Deloitte
- Draft Letters of Management Representations to the University's Auditors
- Financial Statements for the year ended 31 July 2020.

[Redacted, Section 43]

[Redacted, Section 43]

The Council also received a paper on the Trust ownership of land assets. Mr Richards explained that, while all land registry titles for Trust property were held in the name of the University, the University was currently unable to locate the formal documentation vesting land/building assets in each Trust beneficially. In order to resolve this matter, Deloitte and the University had jointly agreed that Council be asked formally to re-affirm the properties held by the University for each Trust for 2019 and 2020, which would establish a base record and allow the Trusts and the University to proceed with clarity in the management of their assets. Given the commercial sensitivity of the information, the Council agreed to authorise the President and the three Vice-Presidents, on its behalf, to review and, if appropriate, approve the statement on the ownership of assets.

The Chief Financial Officer advised that Deloitte expected to complete the audit by 9 December. The Council was asked to approve the financial statements, subject to a further review by the Audit Committee and the Chair of Council following completion of the final version. A summary indicating any substantive changes from the current version of the report would be shared with the Council. This timeframe was consistent with Office for Students' filing deadline, which had been extended due to the pandemic. [Redacted, Section 43]

The President thanked the Chief Financial Officer, Finance Director and their team for their work on the audit and financial statements.

Resolved:

1. "That the financial position of the University for 2019/20, the financial statements and the audit report, now submitted, be noted and approved for signature by the President, Vice-Chancellor and Chief Financial Officer, subject to the Audit Committee overseeing the final stages of the audit process, only returning to Council if there are substantial changes."
2. [Redacted, Section 43]
3. "That the progress of the audit by the external auditor Deloitte and its scheduled completion on 9 December 2020 be noted."
4. "That it be confirmed that in all material respects the University has conducted its affairs during the year ended 31 July 2020 in accordance with its status as a charity and with the requirements identified in the Accountability Return to the Office for Students, and that the Vice-Chancellor be authorised to sign the Accountability Return to this effect."
5. [Redacted, Section 43]

Matters for report

20/87 Report of the Senate (Item 9)

The Council received the Report of the meetings of the Senate held on 30 September and 4 November 2020.

The Council considered the Degree Outcomes Statement 2020 and was satisfied that it set out and analysed the University's classification profile clearly, provided a reasoned explanation of the classification method, and outlined appropriate actions arising from the review of degree outcomes on which the Statement was based.

The Vice-Chancellor noted that Senate had held additional meetings to allow sufficient discussion of the Strategy Implementation proposals.

Resolved:

1. "That the University's Degree Outcomes Statement 2020, now received, be approved for publication;"
2. "That the Report of the meetings of the Senate held on 30 September and 4 November 2020, now submitted, be approved."

20/88 Report of the Vice-Chancellor (Item 10)

The Council received the Report of the Vice-Chancellor.

The Vice-Chancellor paid tribute to staff across the University for the determination and hard work which had enabled the University to continue to deliver on its educational and research commitments over the period of the pandemic, and to maintain a safe environment for staff and students. He mentioned, in particular, the achievements of the Deputy Vice-Chancellor in her leadership of the University's response through the Major Incident Team and the Major Recovery Team. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor reported that the total number of positive Covid cases among students had been low (with some 293 to date) and appeared now to be declining. The University was putting in place a mass testing programme for asymptomatic students, as required by the government, and some staff would also have the opportunity to be tested. It was expected that a mass testing programme would be required in January following students' return to campus.

The Chief Financial Officer reported that a proposed agreement for film studios on the Thames Valley Science Park (TVSP) had been considered by the University Executive Board. In addition to the financial and academic benefits to the University, the development was expected to create 1,500 jobs directly and a further 1,500 jobs in the supply chain. Given the commercial sensitivity of the proposal, the Council appointed a small group, comprising the President, the three Vice-Presidents and Mr Corrigan, as Chair of the Investments Committee (which would be acting in its capacity as the RET Committee), to consider the detail of the agreement with a view to signing it within a very short period of time.

[Redacted, Section 43] He noted that Reading Borough Council welcomed the development of TVSP and regarded the University as an anchor institution for the local area and its economic future.

The Council considered the Researcher Development Concordat Annual Report to Council. The University recognised that a supportive research environment and wider institutional culture underpinned the quality of research and the institution's ability to recruit staff, and had been one of the first signatories to the Concordat when it was published in September 2019. The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) advised that the University was making good progress against its action plan for implementation of the Concordat, as recognised in its achievement of the Human Resources Excellence in Research award.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) reported that the University was a runner-up for two Guardian University Awards (Research Impact and Marketing and Communications Campaign), both of which related to research projects.

Resolved:

1. "That the Annual Report on the Researcher Development Concordat 2020, now received, be approved;"
2. "That the Report of the Vice-Chancellor, now submitted, be approved."

20/89 Report of the Strategy and Finance Committee (Item 11)

The Council received the Report of the meetings of the Strategy and Finance Committee held on 21 September, 19 October and 14 November 2020.

The Vice-Chancellor reported that, regrettably, the University's bid to host the activities under the EU's Copernicus programme contracted to the European Centre for Medium-range Weather Forecasts (ECMWF) had not been successful. The University awaited detailed feedback, but it had become evident that, in the absence of agreed terms for Brexit, the EU-funded programme could not be located in the UK. It was hoped that ECMWF's headquarters would, however, be located on campus, which would generate significant synergies with the University's meteorological and climate research. The President noted that the outcome was disappointing; the University had submitted a strong bid and had negotiated with skill and judgement, but had been frustrated by Brexit and the UK's current status in relation to the EU.

The Council commended the University's thorough and careful work in relation to health and safety, and noted, in particular, the focus on mental health.

Resolved:

1. "That the Report of the meetings of the Strategy and Finance Committee, held on 21 September, 19 October and 14 November 2020, now submitted, be approved."
2. "That the annual report of the Health and Safety Committee be approved."

20/90 Report of the Appointments and Governance Committee (Item 12)

The Council received the Report of the meetings of the Appointments and Governance Committee held on 19 October 2020.

The President noted that the Committee of University Chairs' new Code of Governance set out the values and principles underpinning good governance rather than, as previously, a series of practical steps which a governing body might follow. The Appointments and Governance

Committee believed that the University was already fulfilling the values and principles set out in the new Code, but considered that there would be benefit in reviewing the University's practices in the light of the new Code, identify any areas where practice could be improved, and consider how fulfilment of the Code could be evidenced.

The President noted that Council was well informed on the perspectives of academics and students, through the reports of Senate and the Student Experience Committee, but that currently there was not a corresponding route by which Council could understand the perspectives of the professional services. The Council welcomed proposals, developed by Mrs Gordon and Mr Magee following discussion with Heads of Function, which would foster a closer relationship with professional services and allow Council to understand better their role and contributions.

The President thanked the Committee for its scrutiny of the Prevent Duty annual return.

Resolved:

1. "That the terms of office of the following be extended to the date specified:
Kate Owen (to 31 July 2024)
Penny Egan (to 31 December 2024);"
2. "That:
Sian Butler be appointed to the Audit Committee to 31 July 2023
Lola Moses be appointed to the Student Experience Committee to 31 July 2023;"
3. "That a group with the following membership be convened to review the CUC Code of Governance, to identify areas of practice where action might be required, and to consider how adherence to the Code could be evidenced:
Helen Gordon (co-Chair)
Kate Owen (co-Chair)
Mr Milhofer
Professor Gibbins
Professor McCrum
Mr Magee;"
4. "That the President of Council be authorised to sign the Prevent Annual Accountability Statement and Declaration on behalf of the Council for submission to the Office for Students."
5. "That the Report of the meetings of the Appointments and Governance Committee, held on 19 October 2020, now received, be approved."

Members of the University Executive Board withdrew at this point, before the discussion of the Report of the Remuneration Committee.

20/91 Report of the Remuneration Committee (Item 13)

The Council received the Report of the meeting of the Remuneration Committee, held on 19 October 2020, and the Annual Report of the Remuneration Committee 2019/20.

Mr Beardmore-Gray, as Chair of the Committee, reported that, due to the University's current financial position and the uncertainties arising from the pandemic, Brexit and other factors,

the University Executive Board (UEB) had recommended that its members, including the Vice-Chancellor, should not receive pay awards this year. The Committee, having commended the Board for its successful management of very challenging circumstances, endorsed this position and determined that no pay awards be granted this year.

Mr Beardmore-Gray noted that the Vice-Chancellor, from his initial appointment and since, had declined to accept salary increases. While the Committee respected the Vice-Chancellor's position on this matter, it wished to record that, in its view, the Vice-Chancellor was paid below the market rate, and that, in future, in order to recruit a suitably qualified candidate, the University would need to increase the current salary.

Mr Beardmore-Gray confirmed that the Remuneration Committee was continuing to monitor developments in relation to the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS), and noted that the University had engaged actively in the national consultation on these issues.

In response to a question from Mr Corrigan, Mr Beardmore-Gray explained that the Remuneration Committee was responsible for determining any pay awards to the Vice-Chancellor on the basis of a recommendation from the President. The President would base his recommendation on the extent to which the Vice-Chancellor had achieved the objectives set for the year by the President; this appraisal was informed by feedback from a range of stakeholders, including Council members. Bonuses were small compared with the commercial sector and served as a gesture of goodwill.

The President noted the concerns of the Office for Students last year in relation to Vice-Chancellors' salaries, and referred to a recent survey of Vice-Chancellors' pay, which would shortly be shared with the Committee.

In response to questions, the President spoke warmly of the qualities of the current senior leadership team and their effectiveness in managing the challenges of the pandemic and in developing an ambitious, realistic strategy for the University. He would be pleased to communicate his, and Council's, appreciation of their work more publicly to the University community, and would discuss this possibility with the Vice-Chancellor.

In response to a further question, the President noted that there were a significant number of academic and professional staff paid in excess of £100k. He explained that the framework for determining salary increases among senior staff, which had been introduced recently, was based on performance and the achievement of clear objectives, rather than being based on best endeavours. He noted that the Strategy Implementation included provisions for more robust performance management. He believed that the large majority of staff across the University were committed, hard-working, and making an effective contribution.

Resolved:

1. "That the Annual Report of the Remuneration Committee, now received, be approved."
2. "That the Report of the meeting of the Remuneration Committee, held on 19 October 2020, now received, be approved."

20/92 Dates of further meetings of the Council in the Session 2020/21

Further meetings of the Council in this Session had been scheduled for:

Tuesday 26 January 2021 at 2.15pm
Monday 15 March 2021 at 2.15pm
Monday 5 July 2021 at 2.15pm.