

UNAPPROVED COUNCIL MINUTES
MEETING HELD ON 7th OCTOBER 2021, 9.00am to 12.00 noon
AG01 College Building

Members		Meeting 1 07.10.21	Meeting 2 26.11.21	Meeting 3 24.02.22	Meeting 4 01.04.22	Meeting 5 13.05.22	Meeting 6 30.06.22
Independent Members	Ms Julia Palca (Chair)	✓					
	Professor Anthony Finkelstein (President)	✓					
	Ms Kru Desai	✓					
	Mr Simon Harding-Roots	✓					
	Mr Adrian Haxby	✓					
	Professor Chris Jenks	✓					
	Mr Thomas Lee-Warren	✓					
	Dr Andrew Mackintosh	A					
	Ms Ebele Okobi	A					
	Mr Anant Prakash	✓					
	Ms Jen Tippin	A					
	Mr Ron Zeghibe	✓					
Staff and Student Members	Ms Mary Luckiram	✓					
	Ms Shaima Dallali	✓					
	Ms Liz Rylatt	✓					
	Professor Debra Salmon	✓					

Key: ✓ In Attendance A Apologies P Part Attendance N/M Not a Member S Sabbatical

In Attendance	Reason and Meeting Section
Mr James Birkett	Interim Director of Student & Academic Services (for Item 12)
Professor Andrew Jones	Interim Deputy President (IDP)
Dr William Jordan	College Secretary (CS)
Professor Susannah Quinsee	Vice-President, Education (interim) for (Item 11)
Ms Gemma Kenyon	Head of Careers Service (HOC) for (Item 13)
Ms Sarah Lawton	Governance Administrator for (Item 13)
Dr Sionade Robinson	Vice-President, Enterprise, Engagement & Employability

MINUTES SECTION A – OPEN FOR PUBLICATION

Part One – Preliminary Items

- Highlighted Items**
Council **agreed** the highlighted items.
- Minutes**
The minutes of the meeting held on 2nd July were approved.
- Matters Arising**
Council noted the table of actions arising from past meetings.

USS Update

As a conclusion to the 2020 Valuation process, the JNC recommendations for a hybrid set of changes, based on a stronger employer covenant, have been endorsed by employers/UUK. USS determined that an additional 0.5% was necessary and with effect from 1st October contributions for employers will rise from 21.1% to 21.4% and from 9.6% to 9.8% for employee members. The JNC decision was reached following the casting vote of the independent Chair.

UCU had declared a dispute with individual USS employers and would be conducting ballot for industrial action on USS (and on the outcome of the national pay bargaining process which resulted in a 1.5% increase to salaries from August 2021). The ballot

is disaggregated by individual employer; and it opens on 18th October and closes on 4th November. Industrial action could potentially start from Monday 22nd November.

Next steps at City included developing a communications plan to provide accurate information to members on the impact of the benefit reforms and planning to mitigate the impact of industrial action on students and other risks arising.

The SU President noted that, following the disruption of Covid-19 on students, the SU would not on this occasion be supporting any form of industrial action.

Fundraising

A meeting of the informal Fundraising Group would take place during October. Proposals would be developed to establish a Development Committee, going forward, as a formal committee of Council.

4. Conflicts of Interest

None.

5. Items Specially Brought Forward by the Chair

The Chair congratulated Professor Andrew Jones on his appointment as Vice-Chancellor of Brunel University and thanked him for all his work over his many years for City.

Senate was taking place on 20th October, with a further four scheduled for 2021/22 and the Chair encouraged independent members to attend one of these if possible.

6. Calendar

Council noted the calendar and that the unveiling of Professor Sir Paul Curran's portrait was taking place on Thursday 25th November at 4.45pm.

7. President's Report

Council considered the President's update report and in discussion the following points were noted:

- The President continued to meet groups from Faculties and Professional Services setting out his strategic reflections, management style and priorities.
- 'Deep Dives' with each of the Faculties were now being undertaken in order for the President to learn more about what was, and what was not working.
- The President had commissioned several 'Presidential Sprints' to take forward urgent reforms; and had established the President's Strategy Group to contribute to the strategy development process.
- The President had concluded that City's teaching portfolio needed reorganisation. There were too many 'sub-critical' programmes, too many uncompetitive identikit offerings, too few substantial taught PG programmes and virtually no collaborative offerings. Work would be needed to address these issues, but doing so would be complex.
- City's lines of management reporting and 'command' through to those engaged in front line service delivery were inconsistent and unclear. It would be difficult to move forward at pace without first addressing this.
- Many of City's operational problems were associated with clunky, manual, error-prone business processes arising from its student and curriculum model, which was in turn reflected in City's SITS system. This gave rise to differences across the institution and that were a likely cause of many student experience problems. This would need addressing rapidly and would most likely be a large and costly project.

Proposed changes of Structures and Names

- Council noted this paper which outlined a set of changes of structures and names of associated 'units' intended to support strategic positioning, improved management and academic development. These changes did not entail changes in existing staffing and were not being made in pursuit of cost savings. Rather, they were intended to form the basis for strategically-led growth and

would focus on “re-shaping”. The changes were being planned for full implementation from the beginning of the 2022/23 academic year.

- The President hoped that the changes would incentivise collaboration across the institution. The first step would be to send out that cultural and intellectual message. Secondly, the money needed to follow collaborative activity so that the benefits of engaging in these initiatives could be clearly seen. Thirdly, the President might contemplate rationing course codes so that academics had to teach outside of their primary disciplines.
- The President had initiated the search for a Chief Operating Officer and it was anticipated that the postholder would drive this change process forward.
- It was not anticipated that any of the proposed changes would impact negatively on students and the SU President thought that overall, the proposed changes were positive and made sense.
- The President would consider the comms opportunities, particularly regarding the creation of two new Schools.
- Council was supportive in principle of the proposed changes. The proposals would be presented to Senate and would return to Council in November for formal approval. **[Action]**

8. SU Report

Council considered the SU Report and in discussion the following points were noted:

- The Union had delivered a full program of Welcome Week activities recognising the importance to students of community and making friends. Activities included School “meet and greets”, a silent disco, bus tours and the Welcome Fair which had representation from 58 student societies and 18 sports clubs.
- As part of the strategy in priority 3 and the enablers, the Union committed to carrying out a Democracy Review. The SU engaged a Research and Democracy Consultant to conduct a survey, focus groups, stakeholder interviews and a best practice review across the UK, Europe, and other selected countries. The culmination of this research highlighted some key principles that needed to be applied to the new democratic structures. One proposed change would be to disestablish the Student Council and replace it with an assembly, comprising 50 elected members.
- Student consultation would take place on the key changes in term 1, with the revised Memorandum and Articles of Association, Byelaws and any supporting documentation being approved by mid-December. Following the approval within the Union, the Memorandum and Articles of Association would be presented to Council for approval in accordance with section 22 of the 1994 Education Act.
- The SU continued to stress the importance for City of taking a more rounded look at decolonisation beyond just the curriculum.
- The SU would lead on celebrations and provision of information throughout Black History Month.
- Post Covid-19 provided City with an opportunity to redefine the student experience at City and the SU would like to play a key role. The Union aimed to position itself as a “one stop shop” for student activities and engagement and would be requesting the realignment of some services to the management of the Union.
- Students were happy to be back on campus but many new students had still not been registered and did not have their timetables which was disappointing. Delays had arisen in part because of the revised requirements for the registration of EU students, which had caused some confusion for those students.

9. **Coronavirus: Campus Update**

The CFO provided a verbal update and in discussion the following points were noted:

- Many staff and students were now back on campus.
- Challenges remained regarding face coverings and ventilation. Institutions were no longer able to mandate the wearing of face coverings, although City continued to encourage it in its communications to staff and students.
- Reported Covid cases remained low and further details could be found on the University's website.
- City's Covid plan had been sent to Public Health England and a positive response was anticipated.
- Council thanked the CFO and all members of the Covid Management Group.

10.1 **Financial Performance 2020/21**

Council received a verbal update on the financial performance 2020/21 which had been considered in detail at SIPCo. In discussion the following points were noted:

- City's finances remained satisfactory. An underlying operating surplus of £1.2M was now predicted for the year 2020/21 – this was a one-off as a result of Covid and lockdown etc.,
- The previous year had, however, seen an underspend of £7 million against an original £29 million budget for non-staff expenditure.
- The Finance Team was currently preparing the year end and the Q4 Financial Report would be considered by SIPCo prior to Council in November.

10.2 **Student Recruitment**

Council received a verbal update on recruitment to date for 2021/22.

- Overall, undergraduate recruitment had turned out well and it was expected that the year's target would be met, or potentially exceeded.
- Postgraduate recruitment was expected to turn out less well, and was likely to reach 72% of target.
- By the November Council meeting the Senior Team would have a better understanding of the financial impact of the 2021/22 student recruitment round.

10.3 **Annual Investment Policy Review**

Council considered the Investment Policy.

Decision

Council **approved** the Investment Policy for 2021/22.

11. **Education and Student Experience: Future Plan & Approach**

Council considered the Education and Student Experience Plan and proposed approach.

- The paper recommended an approach which recognised that the NSS was one part of a series of measures that enabled City to listen to and respond to its students. The approach would require tactical measures in the immediate term in advance of NSS 2021/22 as well as longer term strategic transformative imperatives, led by the SLT.
- If a reactive approach continued, City would only be addressing the problems raised in the third year, rather than focussing on the overall strategic issues which needed to be fixed for all students in every year of their studies.
- Changes were also required to School governance and management structures, and on accountability and empowerment: staff needed to have accountability for their actions but at the same time need to be empowered to make changes.
- During Covid, City had succeeded in reducing its degree awarding gap, as a result of the change in assessment methods. Consideration should be given

to moving away from an exam culture in the future in order to reduce the attainment gap further.

- As the student experience differed from person to person a personalisation strand of work would address this and create an approach which was tailored to individuals.
- With so many commuter students at City, there was a big problem with the sense of community and so it would be important to define a clear identity for what it means to be a City student and to belong to that community. The SU were very supportive of this strand of work.
- It was likely that the benefits of the proposed approach would not be seen until the summer of 2023, but Council could receive update reports until then.
- Summing up the discussion, the Chair welcomed this more holistic approach to dealing with the issues which was a significant step forward and noted that Council welcomed the one-page manifesto which the President would circulate to both staff and students in due course. The Chair also noted that it would be vital to ensure that the right “building blocks” and underlying structures were in place at the outset.

12. Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

Council considered the annual report on student health and wellbeing and in discussion the following points were noted:

- New leadership was now in place for the Service, which was in the process of being reshaped, with DPpsych students now being invited to contribute ‘single sessions’ as part of City’s service offering to students.
- Staff recruitment continued within the counselling and mental health teams to build up its staff base following some departures. A new staffing structure was being populated with one additional senior administrative team leader role to ensure practitioner staff time was focused on seeing and supporting students.
- The Service was moving to a blended offer and to engage students one-to-one both remotely and in-person depending on user preference. Initial consultation meetings would usually be held remotely to ensure as many students could be seen as quickly as possible.
- Work would commence this term on the development of an action plan to move City towards an application for the University Mental Health Charter which had been deprioritised during the pandemic.
- Much of what was in place took a reactive approach to student needs and work was now underway to develop a more proactive approach – to build resilience and establish a community where students supported one another. This work would move forward in collaboration with the Thriving at Work group, chaired by the HR Director. Work could be done proactively to tackle anxiety and depression structurally at an early stage, for example by addressing assessment overloads.
- City’s counselling and mental health teams were also complemented by the work of its central Neurodiversity Team which tackled the needs of City’s neurodiverse students.

13. Graduate Outcomes and Employability

Council considered the report which had been considered in detail by SIPCo and in discussion the following points were noted:

- The Times Good University Guide positioned City joint 23rd in the UK for graduate prospects. Journalism was top in the UK for graduate prospects. There had been a decline in Economics and staff in the Careers Service were looking to identify and address the causes of this decline.
- The Employability Development Plan included two fundamental principles for long term graduate outcomes – the first was career focus, for students to have a better understanding of their skills and understand the breadth of

options available to them. The second was to provide a professional experience for all City students regardless of their background, e.g., micro placements and team project placements in businesses.

- It would be useful to see more meaningful benchmarking, comparing City with other institutions who were striving to achieve the same things, including other neighbouring institutions such as Queen Mary's.
- The intensive competition for NHS placement for nursing and midwifery students did not extend broadly into other areas (although Law and management consultancy posed some challenges).
- Work carried out through placements could potentially be mapped against the UN Sustainability Goals to demonstrate that it and its students were making a commitment to sustainability.
- The next stage of work would be to define the characteristics of the City graduate. Knowing what was special about themselves would enable students to describe their talents and experience effectively to employers and further promote their employability.
- Council commended the work being carried out and looked forward to receiving further updates in the future.

14. CGNC Recommendations for the Reappointment of Council Members and appointment of Chair of CGNC

Council **approved** CGNC's recommendation that the following independent Council Members should be reappointed for a further three years:

- Ms Kru Desai (Deputy Chair of Council)
- Mr Simon Harding-Roots

Council **approved** the appointment of Dr Andrew Mackintosh as Chair of CGNC when Professor Chris Jenks steps down on 31st December 2021.

15. Annual Committee Reports

15.1 SIPCo

Council received a verbal annual report from the Chair of SIPCo and noted the business covered by the Committee during the 2020/21 Academic Year.

15.2 CGNC

Council received a verbal annual report from the Chair of CGNC and noted the business covered by the Committee during the 2020/21 Academic Year.

16. Minutes for Note

Council received the minutes of the following meetings, noting that some had been approved by the Chair but not the entire Committee:

- 16.1 Senate, 12th May and 14th July 2021.
- 16.2 Audit and Risk Committee, 14th June 2021.

17. Strategic Estates Projects

Council received the update and noted that it had approved the surrender of the Willen House lease by circulation.

18. FOI Review

Council **agreed** that no changes were required.

19. Date of Next Meeting

Friday 26th November 2021 at 9.00 am (plenary session on Thursday 25th November at 6.30pm)

- 20.** There was a short meeting of independent members of Council without staff and student members present. This was not minuted.

Julia Palca, Chair of Council, October 2021