

**COUNCIL MINUTES
MEETING HELD ON 26th MARCH 2021**

Members		Meeting 1 09.10.20	Meeting 2 27.11.20	Meeting 3 12.02.21	Meeting 4 26.03.21	Meeting 5 14.05.21	Meeting 6 02.07.21
Independent Members	Ms Julia Palca (Chair)	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Professor Sir Paul Curran (President)	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Ms Kru Desai	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Dr Paula Franklin	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Mr Simon Harding-Roots	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Mr Adrian Haxby	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Ms Philippa Hird	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Professor Chris Jenks	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Mr Thomas Lee-Warren	✓	✓	A	✓		
	Dr Andrew Mackintosh	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Ms Ebele Okobi	N/M	N/M	✓	✓		
	Mr Anant Prakash	N/M	N/M	✓	✓		
	Ms Jen Tippin	A	✓	✓	✓		
	Mr Ron Zeghibe	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Staff and Student Members	Ms Mary Luckiram	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Mr Saqlain Riaz	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Ms Liz Rylatt	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Professor Debra Salmon	✓	✓	✓	A		

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

In Attendance	Reason and Meeting Section
Professor David Bolton	Deputy President & Provost (DP&P)
Professor Andrew Jones	Interim Deputy President (IDP)
Dr William Jordan	College Secretary (CS)
Ms Sarah Lawton	Governance Administrator
Mr Tim Longden	Director of Marketing and Communications (Item 15)
Ms Hunada Nouss	Business School Naming Committee (Item 15)
Professor Zoe Radnor	Vice-President, Strategy and Planning (VP, S&P)
Professor Paolo Volpin	Dean of the Business School
Professor Caroline Wiertz	Faculty of Management, Business School (Item 15)

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 12th February 2021 were approved.
- Matters Arising**
Council noted the table of actions arising from past meetings.

USS Update

The HR Director gave a brief verbal update.

Earlier in the month, the USS Trustee presented the '76.1 Report' to the USS Joint Negotiating Committee and this set out 3 scenarios for the future level of USS contributions arising from the 2020 scheme valuation. The scenario's assumed that benefits remained unchanged and the contribution level varied according to the level of covenant support provided by USS employers. The current total contribution is 30.7%. Under the three scenarios this would rise to 42.1%, or to 49.6% or to 56.2%.

UUK had asked the USS Trustee to review the proposals and their approach to the 2020 valuation.

The JNC now had 3 months to determine how to address the Report from the Trustee.

UUK would be consulting with employers on the proposed covenant support measures, the contribution rate for employers and employees; and employers would be expected to consult employees on the proposals. The consultation would run for 7 weeks. Council members would be asked to contribute to and review City's draft consultation response.

Concern had been expressed by USS employers in the sector over the timing of the USS consultation which would be running in parallel with the annual pay negotiations. This carried an increased risk of industrial action.

A briefing session on USS to be delivered by Mercers was being scheduled for the morning of 29th April, as part of the SIPCo meeting. All Council Members would be invited to attend. **[Action]**

The Chair noted that Adrian Haxby had agreed to be a member of the USS subcommittee and welcomed further expressions of interest from other independent members with a particular background in finance.

Student Rent Strike

City was awaiting Government guidance on this matter. There were 463 City students in Unite Students accommodation and City was aware of 24 students who had not paid their rent and would therefore not be eligible for the discount being offered by Unite Students.

City's Student Hardship Fund could be accessed for students requiring support for accommodation costs and the maximum award was £1k.

4. Conflicts of Interest

The President noted that he was a member of the USS Ltd. Board; and had therefore declared an interest in Item 3 (above). Jen Tippin and Kru Desai declared an interest in agenda Item 16.

5. Items Specially Brought Forward by the Chair

Council Away Day

Planning was underway for a face-to-face Away Day to be held at Finsbury Square on 14th May. Masks would have to be worn and it was likely that attendees would have to bring their own lunch. If attendees wished to drive to the Away Day, an NCP car park was situated under Finsbury Square. Pre-booking was advisable.

Meetings with Staff and Students

The Chair noted that meetings with staff and students had not been held since lockdown began but would resume next term. **[Action]**

5.1 Delegated Authority for Senior Appointments

Council considered the paper which asked it to approve an exception to the delegations of authority set out in City's Ordinances, to enable appointments to Professor Anthony Finkelstein's senior leadership team to be made prior to his taking up office.

Decision

Council **agreed to delegate authority** to a Committee chaired by Professor Anthony Finkelstein, on which the Chair of Council will sit, to make appointments to the Senior Leadership Team. From 28th June, the "overarching rule" set out in Ordinance B.1 will apply once more, without exception.

6. Council Calendar

Council noted the calendar and that an update on the Employability Development Plan would be added for July. **[Action]**

7. President's Update: IHRA Working Definition on anti-Semitism

Council noted the update and in discussion the following points were noted:

- The Secretary of State had asked Universities to adopt the IHRA Working Definition as a statement of the sector's commitment to dealing with anti-Semitism. The request had divided opinion within the sector and within City.
- The responses of individual Universities reflected their particular history, political complexion, religious balance and governance arrangements.
- At City, the Executive Board had established a small Working Group to take matters forward. This was chaired by the President and comprised City colleagues who were there as individuals rather than as representatives. The Working Group recommended that City seek an acceptable compromise: to *recognise* the IHRA Working Definition and undertake work with City's Jewish staff and students to identify and combat anti-Semitism.
- Consultation on this proposal had begun in early February. Council were part of this consultation and their views would be drawn together, by the Working Group, with those of others. The Working Group would put forward a further recommendation later in April, with the final decision being taken by the President.
- Separately, in early March, the Students' Union had announced that the SU would hold a referendum on the question of whether the University should reject the IHRA Working Definition of anti-Semitism in order to gauge student opinion. 945 had voted in the referendum – there were 671 votes to reject the definition, 260 to not reject the definition and 14 abstentions. City was the only SU to have run such a referendum
- The SU President noted that, for the SU, the critical issues were the protection of freedom of speech, recognition that the IHRA definition was imperfect and not well suited for use at educational institutions, and the potential implications for the composition and conduct of disciplinary panels of either 'recognising' or 'adopting' the IRHA definition. Many definitions of anti-Semitism were emerging across the world and the SU would like City to explore the options in greater detail.
- The SU President noted that the SU had been under pressure from UK Lawyers for Israel to stop the referendum. He had been talking to the SU Jewish Society about the outcome of the referendum and hoped that City would now undertake a meaningful piece of work with Jewish staff and students, recognising the lived experiences of these students and of students from other religious backgrounds.
- If City did not adopt the IHRA definition, there was a risk that the University would be seen as unwelcoming to Jewish staff and Students. City might also be deemed 'unsafe' for Jewish staff and students because the definition had originally (16 years ago) been developed in the context of the Holocaust. There was, however, no evidence that the City campus was in any way unsafe (in the usual sense of the term 'unsafe') for any student.
- A further consequence of not adopting the IHRA definition would be that OfS could in that case levy fines on City (or in the extreme, deregister the University) should it not be content with City's handling of complaints of anti-Semitism in the future. Currently the risks here were low, as complaints of anti-Semitism were rare (there was around one substantiated complaint every two years, on average).
- The IHRA definition was badly drafted and risked encroaching on freedom of speech, but not adopting the definition also carried risks for City in terms of the perceptions of Jewish staff and students. While the definition might conflate

anti-Semitism with anti-Zionism, it was also the case that anti-Zionism could be used to 'mask' anti-Semitism. There was a case for finding a 'middle way' in response to the Secretary of State's request.

- Council's responsibility on this issue was to ensure that City was applying transparent principles and creating a protective environment in which all staff and students could flourish. One possibility might be to 'note' rather than 'acknowledge' the definition but then to undertake an extensive piece of work to engage on the issues directly with its staff and students.
- Summing up the discussion, the Chair of Council noted that City needed to safeguard all its students, that Council supported the intent underlying the IRHA definition but not the wording of the definition and that therefore the Council view was that the best course would be not to adopt the definition but to acknowledge it in some way. Further consideration should be given to what an appropriate definition of antisemitism might be, in a timely fashion, and to the safety of Jewish staff and students.
- Council would be notified of the President's decision, when taken. **[Action]**

8. Students' Union Report

Council received the report and in discussion the following points were noted:

- SU Elections 2021: 2986 votes had been cast and Council congratulated the successful candidates:
 - President, Shaima Dallali
 - Vice-President Education, Ruqaiyah Javaid
 - Vice President Community and Wellbeing, Shahd Haj Khalil
- Students United Against Tuition Fees: The officer team had joined a national campaign headed by the LSE Students' Union, Students United Against Tuition Fees. The campaign calls for fee compensation from the Government and SLC (Student Loans Company) for a re-evaluation of the marketisation of HE and the Government's silence on the Augar review. The SU President was one of 20 national officers sitting on the campaigns advisory board.
- Following a successful audit and completion of corrective actions, the Union had been awarded the Advice Quality Standard kite mark and received its certificate. This was a nationally recognised quality mark for organisations providing free, independent advice to members of the public. Council congratulated the SU on this award and on all of the advances it had made to date.

Part Two – Major Items for Discussion or Decision

9. Coronavirus: Update

Council received a verbal update and the following points were noted:

- City's Covid Campus Management Group continued to meet weekly. The Group considered guidance from Public Health England regularly and the Group would continue to monitor and act on the latest advice.
- The University remained open during the current lockdown with access restricted to a small number of students and staff. All management and administration activity continued remotely via Microsoft Teams and Zoom.
- The number of City students on campus remained low, with approximately 600 staff and students onsite daily, around 3% of the City population.
- After Easter, the Government would review whether students on other courses could return for particular activities early in term three, or if the return would be delayed until 17th May.
- City had taken delivery of 80,000 face masks provided by the Department of Education for staff and students to use.

- Students and staff attending campus continued to be encouraged to take a test twice a week. City remained the biggest user of the University of London's testing facility, with usage at 20% of all bookings for staff and students.
- City's Covid-19 statistics remained publicly available on its website. As of Friday 26th March 2021, City's total Covid-19 positive cases since September 2020 were 57 staff and 303 students.
- Although further guidance was awaited, City's planning, in line with the rest of the sector, was on the basis that social distancing was likely to remain in place until the end of the year.
- City was undertaking a "Space Planning Review" - Finance and HR were taking part in an agile pilot – looking at reconfiguring the use of space in Gloucester Building and reconsidering ways of working. Council would like to receive updates on this review. **[Action]**

10. Tackling Racial Inequality at City

10.1 Council Response to the Historic Sources of Funding at City Report

Council had considered the review of Historic Sources of Funding at its meeting in October 2020 and although the minutes of that meeting recorded Council's endorsement of the work of the Review Group, Council wished to respond formally to make clear its continued and sustained desire to see action taken to tackle racial inequality at City.

Council considered and endorsed the response which would be sent to the Chair of the Historic Sources of Funding at City Group. **[Action]**

10.2 Tackling Racial Inequality Progress Report

Council received verbal updates on action taken to address racial inequalities at City for students and staff and in discussion the following points were noted:

Update from the Deputy President and Provost (Employability and Attainment)

- 81% of students who attended the employability and careers sessions were from BAME backgrounds. A short programme in collaboration with the SU was run for BAME students and included advice on marketing, networking and access to a BAME professional panel which provided advice and support.
- City did have a gap in terms of employability outcomes – BAME students were 8-10% less likely than white students to take up a graduate job or move into graduate study,
- An employer engagement diversity pledge was in place between City and micro-placement providers to reduce the likelihood that students would be subject to bias. BAME students made up 65% on micro placements currently.
- Schools were developing their own detailed attainment action plans. Previous actions had been put in place to ensure that assessments did not disadvantage students from BAME backgrounds but the new plans were more detailed and based on available data.
- City's attainment gap in terms of degree class had reduced from 11% to 6% for BAME students from lower socioeconomic backgrounds. This trend appeared to be in evidence across the sector and might be attributed to the mitigations in place as a result of the pandemic – a shift in practices, such as online teaching and assessment might be benefiting these students. Where programmes had undergone changes to assessment design there seemed to have been a reduction in the attainment gap - analysis was ongoing.
- Updates on both the Employability Development Fund and the Access and Participation Plan would be provided to Council in July. **[Action]**

Staff Update from the HR Director

- Many strands of activity were ongoing but one highlight was a new recruitment platform which had been introduced to provide a new approach to recruitment and selection processes at City. This included the introduction of anonymous shortlisting for Professional Services roles using models developed and used at other universities.
- The diversity of recruitment and promotion panel membership was also being addressed. There were already processes in place to ensure a gender balance but new processes would now also ensure ethnic diversity on panels.
- In addition to 'active bystander' training, consideration was being given to providing anti-racism training.
- Change could be measured by the fact that 50% female staff who had engaged with the development programme were from BAME backgrounds. Encouraging BAME colleagues to come forward through the new recruitment platform had thus far been successful.

Update from the Assistant Vice-President (EDI)

- Professor Jessica Jones-Nielsen had recently been appointed to the role of Assistant Vice-President (EDI), a role which would enable her to act as the conduit of change and to make sure that staff and student voices were heard at senior levels. She was also co-chair for the Race Equality Charter application and the author of research focussed on racial inequalities in mental and physical health.
- It was heartening to have support for this work from the Executive Board and colleagues across City. Many colleagues had energy and passion for this work; and this was a valuable resource on which to draw.
- The delivery plan for the EDI work set out short, medium and long-term goals, looking at both staff and students, to highlight and provide critical strategical oversight of all the work being done and to ensure that success criteria were being monitored across City.
- It was vital to stress the importance of the lived experience of those from the most marginalised communities at City to determine the priorities moving forward.
- The goal was to align all of the strands of work from the NRJ groups into a single institutional Race Equality Action Plan. Council would receive updates on the action plan to enable it to track progress. **[Action]**

Summing up the discussion, the Chair noted that the amount of energy being focussed on this work was impressive and she extended special thanks to the Assistant Vice-President (EDI). The Chair looked forward to future updates on EDI issues and reminded everyone that it was the impact of this work which was most important. The Chair asked the independent members to provide EDI contacts, from their respective areas of business, to the Assistant Vice-President (EDI). **[Action]**

11. Students

11.1 Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

Council noted the update and in discussion the following points were noted:

- The paper provided a short update on student access to the Student Counselling, Mental Health and Accessibility Service (SCMHAS) and general wellbeing during Lockdown 3.
- SCMHAS had continued to offer its online provision via MS Teams.
- While data showed that demand for services had decreased this year, new registrations had increased in March, and as staff absence continued to provide a high workload for counsellors, this had resulted in longer student

waiting times. The DP&P would provide Council with more detailed data on this recent increase in student waiting times. **[Action]**

- Students were presenting in more anxious states and with increased levels of suicidal ideation and there had been an increase in the number of students being hospitalised under the Mental Health Act resulting in their need to defer or interrupt their studies.
- Students experiencing suicidal ideation were given immediate instructions on 'keeping safe' (including the use of their GPs, of A&E and of the Samaritans) and invited for a 30 minute 'triage' consultation with the SCMHAS over MS Teams (to enable appropriate referral letters to be drafted immediately).
- Throughout any "incident", there was a continuous interaction with the student's academic "home" and processes were in place to assess the student's fitness to study, as the ultimate goal was to guide and support a student to a return to their studies.
- There was an ongoing discussion in the sector about linking mental health and the curriculum, so that the student experience has a link to mental health, and the SCMHAS was interested in pursuing these discussions in more detail.
- The Chair stressed the importance of ensuring that the SCMHAS was well staffed, to seek to avoid the risk of unacceptable waiting times for students to access the service.
- When Student Mental Health and Wellbeing was next on Council's agenda it should be allocated at least 30 minutes to ensure for a more in-depth discussion of the issues. **[Action]**

11.2 Report on Student Complaints

Council received the report and in discussion the following points were noted:

- The paper provided a summary of how student complaints relating to Industrial Action and Covid-19 from 2019-20 had been managed and gave an update on the number of Stage 2 complaints requesting financial compensation to 10 March 2021.
- The DP&P noted that there would, in due course, be a more formal report providing the findings of a review which compared what City said it would deliver to its students with what has actually been delivered. The OfS required that this report be shared with Council.
- In an unregulated private sector environment, providers would naturally consider how they should adjust prices to reflect the nature of the services being provided over the pandemic period and the value these offered to their 'customers' - rather than responding reactively to the receipt of complaints.
- While a sector-wide approach to these issues seemed inevitable in HE, it might nonetheless be valuable for City to begin its own debate on this subject.

12. Q2 Financial Performance Report

Council noted the report which provided an update on City's financial performance for the first half of 2020/21. The report presented the Mid-Year Forecast (MYF) and compared actual records on SAP at the end of period 06 to the profiled MYF.

The MYF had been prepared earlier than usual to provide a forecast for 2020/21 to be used in the OfS AFR. The SOCIE showed a deficit of £11.9M (bottom line £12.3M). When adjusting out the FRS102 pension movements, the operating deficit was £10.2M compared to the Draft Budget approved by Council of £10.9M. Updated information was noted under the risks section.

13. REF 2021: Final Status Report

Council received the update and in discussion the following points were noted:

- The paper summarised the key elements of City's Research Excellence Framework 2021 (REF2021) submission and reported on the final preparations to meet the submission deadline of 31 March 2021.
- Research England, which coordinated the REF on behalf of all four nations in the UK, had put in place contingency measures to help institutions as they prepared their submissions under COVID-19 restrictions. These measures included the option for institutions to request an extension of up to six weeks, (up to 14th May 2021), for uploading the narrative templates (impact case studies and the unit and institutional-level environment templates) for one or more of their UoA submissions.
- In terms of indicators, other than the number of research publications, the number of completing PhD students was almost double that of 2014 and research grant income was also up – these could indicate a strengthening for City. City's strengthened research standing was indicated by an increase in the number of its staff on national assessment panels.
- The results of REF 2021 would not be known until April 2022 and predicting the judgement of the REF Panels was difficult. There were many uncertainties and the final scores would be down to subjective readings from the REF panel members. A factor to consider was that with the changes to the rule for REF2021, the profiles of all UoAs would likely be considerably improved compared to REF 2014. This may lead to a harsher judgement environment.
- The relationship between excellence in research, the reputation of institutions and their attractiveness to students merited a much longer discussion. It should be noted, however, that Postgraduate Taught students, an important source of revenue at City, always sought to study at institutions with world-leading reputations in research, and that in general the reputation of universities was more strongly linked to research excellence than to teaching excellence.
- The Interim DP expressed his thanks to his Research and Enterprise colleagues who continued to work hard on the technical side of City's submission.

14. Council Away Day

Council noted the draft agenda.

Hunada Nouss, Tim Longden and Caroline Wiertz joined the meeting.

15. Business School Name Update

Council received a tabled presentation which provided a brief update to Council ahead of full consideration of the name on 16th April on the process to date. In discussion it was noted that the following additional information should be presented to Council to inform discussion at its meeting on 16th April:

- More information on the potential costs of building the brand for each name option – as some brands were easier to build than others.
- Further analysis/data on the extent to which, when coming up with recommendations, City had addressed the issues of race which triggered this process; what factors had driven the naming process to reach the final recommendations; and whether there had been any inherent biases which had gone into the promotion of certain names.
- Data on the implications of using the word "management" in the final name.

The Chair of Council thanked Hunada Nouss, Professor Wiertz and Tim Longden for their work in leading the naming process, and Professor Wiertz for her excellent presentation. She asked for new members to be sent the initial Council paper relating

to the decision to change the name of the Business School prior to the next meeting of Council on 16th April. **[Action]**

Hunada Nouss, Tim Longden and Caroline Wiertz left the meeting.

16. CGNC Recommendations

Council considered the CGNC recommendations.

Decision

Council **approved** the appointments of Kru Desai as Deputy Chair of Council and Jen Tippin as Chair of RemCo (both from 1st April) as noted in Item 7 of CGNC minutes at Item 17.2.

Part Three – Items for Information

17. Minutes for Note

17.1 RemCo, Thursday 20th November 2021

17.2 CGNC, Thursday 11th February 2021

17.3 SIPCo, Thursday 4th March 2021

17.4 ARC, Monday 8th March 2021

18. Strategic Estates Projects Update

Council noted the update.

19. Staff Spin-out Companies Policy

Council noted the policy.

20. Guidance to the OfS: Secretary of State for Education’s Strategic Priorities

Council noted the letter.

21. Council and Council Committee Dates for 2021/22

Council noted the dates.

22. FOI Review

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

Farewell to Philippa Hird

The Chair extended Council’s warmest thanks to Philippa Hird for the nine years of service she had offered to Council as an independent member, Chair of Remuneration Committee and most recently Deputy Chair of Council.

As Chair of Remuneration Committee, Philippa had introduced the publication of an annual remuneration statement, making City a leader in reporting transparency, being one of the first institutions to publish such a statement.

The Chair thanked Philippa for her probity, loyalty and enthusiasm, noting that she would be greatly missed.

23. Date of Next Meeting

Council Away Day, 14th May 2021, 9am

Part Four – Meeting of Independent Members

There was a brief informal discussion among the independent members which was not minuted.

Julia Palca, Chair of Council, April 2021.