



COUNCIL

CONFIRMED MINUTES

Minutes of the 233rd meeting of Council held on **Tuesday, 17 October 2023** at 2.00pm in ESGW402, Eastern Gateway Building

Present: Ms Amanda Rowlatt (Deputy Chair); Professor Stuart Palmer (Chair) Teams); Mr Mukhtar Ahmed (Teams); Ms Sharon Blackman; Ms Janet Dean; Professor Dave Delpy; Ms Rita Gardner; Mr Mark Garrett; Professor Paul Hellewell; Ms Lucinda Hunt; Professor Andrew Jones (Vice-Chancellor & President); Mr David Kennedy; Ms Josie Mangan; Mr Shashank Manjunatha; Mr Chris Maw (Teams); Mr Suraj Shaw; Dr Peter Thomas; Ms Anne Waltham; Professor Jonathan Wastling;

In attendance: Ms Gemma Bailey (Director of HR); Mr Jonathan Bainbridge (Director of Professional Development Centre); Mr George Bennett (Deputy Director of Finance); Professor Trevor Hoey (Pro Vice-Chancellor, International and Sustainability); Professor Geoff Rodgers (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Enterprise & Employment); Dr Nicola Rogers (Chief of Staff); Dr Rosa Scoble (Director of Strategic Planning); Professor Hua Zhao (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research)

Officers: Mr Tristan Foot (University Secretary and General Counsel); Mrs Joanna Barry, Governance Officer (Notes)

Invited Guest: Ms Smita Jamdar (Partner & Head of Education, Shakespeare Martineau)

Apologies: Ms Tone Rosingholm; Mr Kevin Thomas

REGULAR BUSINESS

23/01 DECLARATION OF INTEREST(S)

01/01 NOTED: that there were no declarations of interest.

23/02 MINUTES OF THE 232ND MEETING (CO/3957)

02/01 APPROVED: the minutes of the 232nd meeting held on 12th July 2023.

23/03 MATTERS ARISING (CO/3958)

03/01 NOTED: the outstanding action for Council to receive a Cyber Briefing from the Chief Digital Information Officer would be deferred to the November '23 meeting.

23/04 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT (CO/3959)

04/01 NOTED: the report and an overview of the key highlights presented by the Vice-Chancellor.

- 04/02** The Vice-Chancellor expressed a special thank you to all the staff who had been involved in resolving the recent issues impacted by both RAAC and SharePoint challenges.
- 04/03** **AGREED:** that USGC liaise with Communications to ensure that independent members of Council continue to receive all staff communications.
- 04/04** **AGREED:** that the November '23 Council meeting would be updated on progress with the development of PVC and supporting portfolio plans.
- 04/05** Members acknowledged the distressing events taking place in the Middle East and the need to be supportive of staff and students who may be experiencing difficulties at this time. A member requested that staff be mindful of any potential antisemitic behaviours, particularly at the forthcoming Winter graduation ceremonies.

EDUCATION AND STUDENT EXPERIENCE

23/05 NSS RESULTS 22/23 (CO/3960)

- 05/01** **NOTED:** the report provided an update on the outcome of the National Student Survey 2023.
- 05/02** The Vice-Chancellor reported that Brunel's overall results were positive compared to previous years, showing considerable improvements in assessment and feedback, and an average increase of a sixth of the way up in rankings.
- 05/03** Members noted the University's commitment to improving the student experience with the appointment of two new Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education roles in Quality Assurance and Student Experience, and in continuing the work in relation to programme direction and the NSS.

23/06 TEF 2023 (CO/3961)

- 06/01** **NOTED:** the report provided an update on the outcome of the 2023 submission of the Teaching Excellence Framework to the Office for Students, and the University's provisional TEF rating.

23/07 REPORT FROM UBS (CO/3962)

- 07/01** **NOTED:** the report provided a summary of the ongoing representational activity and outcomes of the UBS and a view of challenges and ambitions for the year ahead.

RESEARCH AND INNOVATION

23/08 REF 2028 – EARLY DECISIONS (CO/3963)

- 08/01** **NOTED:** the report detailed the initial decisions on the high-level design of the next REF and some major changes to be introduced in the submission and assessment process.
- 08/02** Discussions focussed on the need to invest in high quality academic staff that appropriately align to the academic establishment plans and prioritised research disciplines.

ENTERPRISE AND EMPLOYMENT

23/09 GRADUATE OUTCOMES AND LEO REPORT 2023 (CO/3964)

09/01 **NOTED:** the report shared the most recent Graduate Outcomes and LEO (graduate salary) data.

23/10 NET ZERO PARK ROYAL

10/01 **NOTED:** the presentation by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Enterprise and Employment) that provided an overview of the Net Zero Park Royal project to support businesses at Park Royal to address their innovation challenges. Members acknowledged that the project presents an important strategic opportunity for the University that aligns to its civic mission and strategy.

INTERNATIONAL AND SUSTAINABILITY

23/11 INTRODUCTION TO “TRUSTED RESEARCH” (CO/3965)

11/01 **NOTED:** an update on external developments in trusted research and the key actions that the University will take to mitigate risks associated with international research activities, thus protecting both the institution and individuals.

11/02 **NOTED:** that the Audit & Risk Committee will receive an annual report.

11/03 Members recognised the importance of communicating information with the wider academic community to raise awareness.

11/04 **AGREED:** that in order to provide greater understanding of the many acronyms referred to in HE, the USGC would circulate a glossary to members for information.

OPERATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

23/12 LEAGUE TABLES – KEY METRICS AND DATA (CO/3966)

12/01 **NOTED:** the report provided a summary on university leagues tables relevant to Brunel; how they work and which metrics feed into them; how they are typically perceived and used; and some precautionary notes on conclusions that could be drawn.

23/13 FINANCIAL STATEMENTS 2022/23 UPDATE

13/01 **NOTED:** an update report highlighting the financial statements are in the process of production and will come to the Audit and Risk Committee for sign off on 9th November '23 before going to Council on the 22nd. The 'front half' (the narrative) is considerably more concise this year.

13/02 **NOTED:** that there was an operating surplus above budget; a healthy strengthening of the balance sheet strengthened by positive movement in the pension liability; and similar positive movements in historic borrowing agreements due to increases in interest rates throughout the financial year. Closing cash was therefore slightly higher than the previous year.

23/14 UPDATE FROM THE ESTATES SUB-COMMITTEE

- 14/01** **NOTED:** that the first meeting of the Estates Sub-Committee (ESC - Sub-Committee of the Finance Committee) was held on the 12th October 2023.
- 14/02** The Chair reported that the ESC recognised the need to ensure that estate expenditure aligns with the strategic objectives of the University and academic areas, and that estate projects would be supported by a full business case to aid informed decision making and prioritisation.
- 14/03** [REDACTED]
- 14/04** The Chair reported that buildings affected by RAAC had been vacated and steps taken to make safe.

23/15 GOVERNANCE OF STUDENTS' UNIONS (CO/3967)

- 15/01** **NOTED:** the report presented by Shakespeare Martineau who had been commissioned to provide external legal advice relating to the University's legal obligations relating to governance of the Students' union.
- 15/02** **APPROVED:** the recommendations as contained within the report.

23/16 FORTHCOMING COUNCIL MEETING DATES

- 16/01** **NOTED:** Forthcoming meeting dates:
 22 November 2023
 30-31 January 2024 (Council Dinner and Away Day)
 13 March 2024
 3rd July 2024

23/17 MEETINGS OF COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND SENATE (CO/3968)

- 17/01** **NOTED:** the report from Senate held on 13 September 2023.
- 17/02** **NOTED:** that the minutes of the Audit & Risk Committee minutes (12 October '23) and Remuneration Committee minutes (28 September '23) would be made available at the next meeting.

BRUNEL EVENTS

23/18 BRUNEL MEDIA COVERAGE (CO/3969)

- 18/01** **NOTED:** the report that provides a summary of media coverage of the University and its achievements gained over the months since the last update.

23/19 OFS COMPLIANCE SUMMARY (CO/3970)

- 19/01** **NOTED:** the report that provides an assessment of Brunel's regulatory compliance position with the OfS.
- 19/02** Members noted that due to the challenges with HESA data quality verification tools, there are sector wide concerns that data quality may not

meet the expected standards and apprehension as to how the OfS will use Data Futures for the regulatory framework.

23/20 STAFF APPOINTMENTS, RESIGNATIONS AND LEAVE OF ABSENCES (CO/3971)

20/01 NOTED: the report provided an update on all academic, post-doctoral and senior professional appointments, retirements, resignations and fixed term contract terminations.

23/21 SEALING OF DOCUMENTS (CO/3972)

21/01 NOTED: the documents that have been sealed.

23/22 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

22/01 No other business was conducted.

23/23 DATE OF NEXT MEETING – 22 November 2023.

Meeting Minutes Approved:

Professor Stuart Palmer, Chairperson

Date