

Council**MEETING HELD: Wednesday 12 February 2025, 1:30 PM – 4:30 PM GMT****Derby Suite****Present:**

Carmel Booth, President (Chair); Hans van Mourik Broekman, Vice-President; Professor Tim Jones, Vice-Chancellor; Professor Richard Black, Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor; Rowan Bradbury, President of the Liverpool Guild of Students; Cilla Ankrah-Lucas; Dr Mark Carawan; Fiona Cullen (via Teams); Barry Flynn; Dr Kashmir Gill (via Teams); Vanessa Griffiths (via Teams); Mark Proctor; Matthew Reed; Dr Diana Walford (via Teams); Professor Julia Balogun (via Teams); Professor Thomas Teubner; Kieran O'Sullivan; Professor Hazel Scott; and Othman Ibrahim, Vice-President of the Liverpool Guild of Students.

Apologies:

Lucy Everest, Chief Operating Officer; and Dr Alison Campbell.

In attendance:

Professor Gavin Brown, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Education; Nicola Davies, Chief Financial Officer; Professor Anthony Hollander, Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact; Kevan Ryan, Clerk to Council/University Secretary and General Counsel; and Emma Leonard, Head of Governance and Deputy Secretary.

COMMITTEE AND MEMBERSHIP MATTERS**1. Disclosures of Interest**

Members were asked to disclose any interest that could give rise to conflict in relation to any item on the agenda. No such interests were disclosed.

2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting**2.1. Minutes of the Meeting Held on 28 November 2024****AGREED:**

- a. The minutes of the meeting held on 28 November 2024 should be approved as an accurate record.

2.2. Minutes of the Special Meeting Held on 29 January 2025

AGREED:

- a. The minutes of the special meeting held on 29 January 2025 should be approved as an accurate record.

3. Report on Action Taken by the President on Behalf of Council and Business Dealt with by the Pensions Sub-Group

RECEIVED:

- a. A report on action taken by the President on Council's behalf.

REPORTED:

- b. The President had taken Chair's action as follows:

Enterprise Board Changes (approved 2 December 2024)

To approve changes to the Enterprise Board to reconstitute it with terms of reference to develop and support the wider enterprise environment and establish an investment group involving only lay members (and the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact as Chair) to make decisions on spin-out and investment in the companies. As an interim measure to allow decisions to continue to be taken as the Board is being set up, a small group comprising the Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research and Impact, Dr Alison Campbell and Norman Molyneux had been put in place.

Revisions to Procedure for Student Complaints in the Event of Major Disruption (approved 3 December 2024)

To approve revisions to Appendix A of the Student Complaints Policy, Procedure for Student Complaints in the Event of Major Disruption, to ensure compliance with an OIA recommendation following a student complaint case.

Appointments to the Enterprise Board (approved 21 January 2025)

To approve the re-appointment of Mark Wyatt as a lay member of the Enterprise Board for the period to 31 July 2027.

To approve the appointment of Norman Molyneux as a full lay member of the Enterprise Board (as opposed to an external adviser as his previous conflict of interest had come to an end) for the period to 31 July 2027.

Appointment to the ULPF Board (approved 21 January 2025)

To approve the open-ended appointment of the Chief Operating Officer, Lucy Everest, as a University Nominated Trustee on the ULPF Board.

Revised Policy on the Safeguarding of Children, Young People and Vulnerable Adults
(approved 27 January 2025)

To approve the revised Safeguarding Policy which had been recommended for approval by the Safe and Welcoming Campus Board. Drafting changes had been made to update roles and terminology.

Modern Slavery Statement for the Year Ending 31 July 2024 (approved 27 January 2025)

To approve the Statement following its endorsement by the Senior Leadership Team.

AGREED:

- c. The action taken by the President on Council's behalf as outlined in 3b above should be endorsed.

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL/NOTE/DISCUSSION

4. President's Communications

RECEIVED:

- a. An oral report from the President of Council on her attendance at recent northern and national Committee of University Chairs and Universities and Colleges Employers Association meetings.

5. Clerk to Council's Communications

RECEIVED:

- a. An oral report from the Clerk to Council.

REPORTED:

- b. In July 2024 the High Court had rejected an application for a group litigation order (GLO) filed on behalf of current and former students of University College London over breach of contract claims. The refusal to grant a GLO was a broadly positive result for the affected universities. However, the decision by the Court to convene a series of test cases based on particular cohorts of students would bring its own challenges, particularly if this was applied to the 17 other universities, including Liverpool, who had received notification of potential claims.
- c. The University's draft response to the consultation on the OfS strategy for 2025 to 2030 had recently been approved by the Senior Leadership Team. This has made clear that,

given the emphasis on achieving value for money and efficiency, a focus by the OfS on reducing the regulatory burden for universities would be welcome.

6. Vice-Chancellor's Communications

RECEIVED:

- a. A report from the Vice-Chancellor on University, sector wide and political news, covering:

University Updates

- Rankings
- New College of Veterinary Medicine at University of Al Dhaid
- Plans to Collaborate with Iraq's Higher Committee for Education Development
- December Graduations
- New Sustainability Strategy
- Liverpool University Press to Become British Academy's New Publishing Partner

Sector and Political Updates

- Visit from Rt Hon. Pat Mcfadden MP
- Mayors Steve Rotherham and Andy Burnham Deliver the Heseltine Institute Annual Lecture
- Collaborative Venture between the Universities of Liverpool and Manchester
- Visit from the House of Commons Science, Innovation and Technology Select Committee
- Sector News.

7. Liverpool Guild of Students Update, including Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2024

RECEIVED:

- a. An oral update from the President of the Liverpool Guild of Students on the Guild's work.
- b. The Liverpool Guild of Students Report and Financial Statements for the Year Ended 31 July 2024.

REPORTED:

- c. The principal income sources for the Guild were the block grant provided by the University of Liverpool and funds generated through commercial activity. The Guild

had produced a surplus for the financial year of £127,796 before the movement on the pension scheme liability (2023: £41,303). Net liabilities at 31 July 2024 stood at £155,599 (2023: £148,562). The cash and current asset investments balance at the financial year end was £2,522,081 (2023: £2,662,355). In summary, the Guild was in a stable financial position, but the Trustees were cognisant of future pension liabilities arising from the SUSS (Students Union Superannuation Scheme) pension scheme – now closed to accrual for Guild staff – and the financial strategy of the Guild reflected this risk while adequately resourcing ongoing charitable activities.

8. India Update

RECEIVED:

- a. An oral update from the Vice-Chancellor following his recent visit to India.

REPORTED:

- b. An application had been submitted to the University Grants Commission (UGC) in India for a license to open a campus in India in September 2026 and a decision was awaited.
- c. The business case continued to be developed and would be presented to the Council Sub-Group and then to Council in due course.
- d. The Vice-Chancellor had visited several potential sites for the campus whilst in India, with two being shortlisted.
- e. The Vice-Chancellor had also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Karnataka Government, underlining a commitment to fostering greater cooperation in education, skills and research.

9. 2024/25 Financial Forecast 1

RECEIVED:

- a. A paper providing details of the forecast year end position for the University in the current financial year.
- b. A presentation providing a student recruitment overview of Entry 2025 applications, offers, accepts and targets figures.

REPORTED:

Paragraphs c -e redacted due to commercial interest.

NOTED:

- f. The quality of the student intake in September 2025 was expected to be broadly comparable to Entry 2024 and individual subject targets would be adhered to.
- g. The sale of Carnatic had continued to be held up because of delays in the granting of planning approval.
- h. Any negative impact on the student experience was an important factor in determining whether a replacement post was business critical.

AGREED:

- i. The forecast 1 for 2024/25 should be approved.

10. Recovery Plan Update

[The Interim Director of HR, Jo Squires, attended for this item.]

RECEIVED:

- a. A paper providing an update on Recovery Plan implementation and proposing the launch of a Voluntary Leavers Scheme.

REPORTED:

- b. Following a shortfall in international student recruitment for 2024/25 (in line with the position in many other Russell Group universities), and other income shortfalls, a Recovery Plan had been approved in the autumn containing a number of pay and non-pay savings, together with measures to diversify and boost income.
- c. Whilst non-pay savings were on track, staff turnover had been lower than expected and there was also a need to 'bridge' to new revenue streams, many of which were unlikely to grow significantly in the coming year. Further action was therefore needed this financial year to help rebalance the cost base and avoid erosion of the University's cash reserves. The University was currently forecasting a deficit for 2024/25.
- d. It was therefore proposed to launch a Voluntary Leavers Scheme, in keeping with many others in the sector. The offer would be twelve months' salary (inclusive of any

notice period) for individuals with 10 or more years' service, tapering to 8 months for those with 5-10 years' service and 4 months for those with 2-5 years' service. The scheme would be launched as soon as possible, with a deadline for applications of 22 April 2025, and a presumed departure date of 31 July 2025. Roles would be lost, to ensure permanent savings are achieved, and leavers would not be eligible for re-employment for 3 years. Applications would be refused if not deemed to be in the University's strategic interest, or if there was a significant threat to the quality of the student experience.

- e. The proposal was not to set a formal target in terms of volume of savings, but rather to create the conditions in which more extensive measures would be unnecessary.

NOTED:

- f. The Cost Oversight Group who would be responsible for the final decisions on cases would ensure that 'brain drain' was avoided and that services were not overly impacted.
- g. An update on the Scheme would be provided at the Council awayday in April.

AGREED:

- h. The implementation of a Voluntary Leavers Scheme as proposed was balanced, generous and measured and should be approved.

11. Academic Quality and Standards (Presentation)

[The Director of Academic Quality and Standards, Trish Barker, attended for this item.]

RECEIVED:

- a. A presentation providing an overview of academic quality and standards and the regulatory landscape, covering:
 - English Higher Education Regulation (Students): Government Departments and Regulatory Agencies
 - Regulatory Bodies Reporting to the Department for Education
 - Main Areas of Academic Portfolio and Primary Regulators
 - OfS Quality Conditions (BI-6)
 - Academic Quality Committee Structure
 - Internal Quality Processes
 - Recent Enhancements
 - Future Challenges.

REPORTED:

- b. The presentation supplemented the Annual Quality Report presented to Council each year, and recognised Council's responsibilities in relation to academic assurance.
- c. Internal quality processes included:
 - Student involvement at all levels and on all committees/panels
 - At module level: module evaluations, module review board, moderation, external examiners, module changes
 - At programme level – new programme approvals/revalidations, annual subject action plans, internal periodic review, NSS, progression boards, final boards, external examiners, moderation, B3 outcomes, Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies
 - In relation to collaborative programmes – annual monitoring, institutional review, quality assurance operational framework
 - The Code of Practice on Assessment – the internal regulatory framework.
- d. Recent enhancements had been made including: streamlining of University Approval Panel considerations/reporting outcomes; Faculty Scrutiny Panels; a sprint option for programme design and review; and a risk based approach to collaborative annual monitoring.
- e. The OfS was consulting on its new Strategy 2025–30, with consideration being given to an Integrated Quality Monitoring Model, Quality Risk Register, Potential Institutional Reviews and TNE Monitoring, all of which might place additional regulatory and cost burden on providers.

NOTED:

- f. Further work was being undertaken to streamline processes to avoid unnecessary bureaucracy and duplication across different levels of the institution.

12. Diversity and Equality Reports

[The Interim Director of HR, Jo Squires, and the Head of Organisational Development and Equality and Engagement, Mary Moran, attended for these items.]

12.1. Diversity and Equality (Public Sector Equality Duty) Report 2023/24

RECEIVED:

- a. The Diversity and Equality (Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)) Report 2023/24.

REPORTED:

- b. The report was a statutory requirement which aimed to fulfil the University's PSED under the Equality Act 2010.
- c. The approach had been updated slightly as of 2024, as a new Equality Objectives Progress Report had been introduced. The D&E PSED Report provided a top-level overview of progress made against the specific equality objectives outlined within the University Equality Objectives Action Plan from academic year 2023/24, a more in-depth overview of activity against each of the following areas: Gender, Race, Disability and LGBTQIA+ equality (as standard areas to report on per year), as well as activity relating to: bullying and harassment, pay gaps, recruitment, promotion and development, including the implementation of positive action measures. The report also included three appendices providing further equality monitoring information including comparative data between different years.

NOTED:

- d. Although reports of bullying and harassment had increased, this reflected growing confidence in reporting and understanding of the support available.
- e. The positive action guidance had been made more user friendly and accessible for recruiting managers.
- f. Overall disclosure rates of protected characteristics continued to be a challenging area.

AGREED:

- g. The Diversity and Equality PSED Report (2023/24) should be approved.

12.2. Equality Objectives Progress Report 2023/24

RECEIVED:

- a. A report on progress made against the University's Equality Objectives Action Plan (2022–2028).

REPORTED:

- b. The report provided an in-depth overview of activity taken during the previous academic year (2023/24), in response to core Equality Objectives and related KPIs, as outlined within the University's Equality Objectives Action Plan (2022 – 2028) (EOAP).
- c. Reporting on progress made against the EOAP was a Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) requirement and, once approved, reports would be published online.
- d. The report also included planned activity for academic year 2024/25 (Year Two), as well as reflections on the current position of the University and considerations regarding commitments made in Year One (2023/24), which may need to be postponed given financial limitations, capacity, and the need to address more pressing priority areas.

AGREED:

- e. The Equality Objectives Progress Report and accompanying 'Year Two' (2024/25) summary infographic should be approved.

13. Academic Freedom/Freedom of Speech Annual Update (Presentation)

RECEIVED:

- a. A presentation from the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor providing an update on the University's ongoing commitment to upholding Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom, as well as an overview of recent Government announcements with regard to the implementation of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech Act) 2023.

REPORTED:

- b. On 15 January 2025 the Secretary of State for Education had confirmed that the Act would go ahead with several changes. The key changes/removals would now be:
 - The duty would no longer apply to Students Unions

- Student complaints about free speech would continue to go to the OIA not the OfS
 - Removal of the Tort
 - The duty to report on overseas funding was to be kept under review (this was initially due for implementation in September 2025).
- c. The University had already undertaken a lot of work in preparing for the implementation of the Act prior to it being paused. This had included formalising a joint Policy and Code of Practice with the Guild of Students.

REPORTS FROM COUNCIL'S COMMITTEES

14. Finance and Resources Committee

RECEIVED:

- a. A report on the meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee held on 29 January 2025, covering the following items:

For approval:

- Finance Forecast 1 Report (*dealt with as a substantive item by Council – see minute 9 above*)
- Recovery Plan (*dealt with as a substantive item by Council – see minute 10 above*)
- Cisco Contract

For noting:

- Vice-Chancellor Update
- Admissions/Recruitment Update
- Finance System Transformation Programme (Unit4 Cloud): Business Case for Unit4 Reimplementation
- Liverpool University Press (LUP) Annual Report
- Enterprise Board: Output from the Governance Review.

AGREED:

- b. The proposal to consolidate all University existing Cisco contracts into a single contract should be approved, noting that this would take advantage of savings being offered by Cisco, reduce the administrative burden on the University, and provide certainty over support for the next five years. The contract period was five years at a cost of c£23m including VAT.

15. Health and Safety Governance Committee

RECEIVED:

- a. A report on the meeting of the Health and Safety Governance Committee held on 28 January 2025, covering the following items:

For noting:

- Local Management of Health and Safety: Department of Physics
- Safety Adviser's Report
- Merseyside Fire and Rescue Service Visits November–December 2024
- Actions Arising from PwC Audit of the Radiation Protection Office
- Business Continuity Management Governance and Direction
- Health and Safety Aspects of Proposed Changes to Hybrid Working
- Staff Wellbeing Annual Report 2023/24
- Student Services Annual Report 2023/24
- Update from Science and Engineering Compliance Steering Group.

16. Senate

RECEIVED:

- a. A report on the meeting of the Senate held on 29 January 2025, covering the following items:

For approval:

- Minor Revisions to the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure
- Researcher Development Concordat

For noting:

- Academic Freedom/Freedom of Speech Annual Update
- Green Paper: Additional Considerations, Transforming Student Support Project
- Annual Compliance Report for the Academic Session 2023/24
- Reports from Senate's Strategic Committees:
 - Education Committee – 16 January 2025
 - Research and Impact Committee – 15 January 2025
- Senate Reports from other Sub-Committees
 - Collaborative Provision Committee – 12 December 2024
 - Postgraduate Research Committee – 10 January 2025.

NOTED:

- b. In relation to the Annual Compliance Report, further information would be provided on the increase in academic integrity cases linked to the increase in use of Artificial Intelligence tools, the increase in appeals contesting these academic integrity decisions, and whether this necessitated any changes to the framework.

AGREED:

- c. The minor revisions to the Student Complaints Policy and Procedure should be approved, noting that the updates related to the following: URL links updated; clarification that the Guild of Students Advice Centre was staffed by professional advisors; clarification of procedures for students studying under collaborative agreements at partner institutions; point added to advise that advice should be sought from the relevant HR Business Partner where a student raises issues of complaint relating to staff; and consideration of compliance with OfS Condition of registration in relation to Harassment and Sexual Misconduct (advice to students and staff that such complaints may be considered under other procedures).
- d. The University's action plan and review documentation for its institutional commitment to the principles of the UK Concordat to Support the Career Development of Researchers (The Researcher Development Concordat) should be approved.

ROUTINE BUSINESS

17. Date of Next Meeting

NOTED:

- a. The next meeting would be an Awayday to be held on Thursday 10 April 2025, with timings to be confirmed.