

School of Technology

Council of the School

2.00 p.m. on Friday, 23 October 2020

Meeting online via Zoom

UNRESERVED MINUTES

Present: Professor John Dennis (Chair)
Professor Richard Prager
Professor Clemens Kaminski
Professor Ann Copestake
Professor Christoph Loch
Dame Polly Courtice

Dr Stella Pachidi
Professor Alastair Beresford
Professor Alexander Routh

Professor Holger Babinsky
Professor Andrew Flewitt
Professor Michael Sutcliffe
Professor Simon Guest
Professor Simon Godsill
Professor Richard Penty
Dr Patrick Barrie

Professor Garth Wells (School observer)

Dr Shui Lam (Secretary)
Mr Matt Burgess (School Finance Manager)
Dr Ann Thompson (Research Strategy Facilitator)

In Attendance: Ms Tracy Brooks, Ms Daphne Ioannidis, Ms Isobel Cohen

Apologies: Professor Tim Minshall

The Chair welcomed Professor Kaminski and Professor Sutcliffe as new members.

Declarations of interest

There were no declarations of interest.

1. Minutes

The unreserved minutes of the meeting held on 12 June 2020 were approved.

1.1. Membership of the Council of the School

Paper **T/20/38**, showing the membership of the Council of the School from January 2021, was noted. The Council of the School agreed to co-opt the members in Class D for two years from 1 January 2021.

Matters Arising

There were no matters arising other than those minuted here.

Chair's Report

The Chair provided a verbal report.

- Capital Projects:
 - The CISL building project to renovate 1 Regent Street was approved by PRC at its last meeting, with a total cost of £12.8m, subject to resolution of some issues raised by the Building Committee. The Chair congratulated Dame Polly Courtice and her team on progressing this project and expects the building to become a landmark for the University.
 - Following a meeting with the BEIS Head of Aerospace an application to BEIS for £18m towards funding the Whittle laboratory project has been submitted, the results of which would be known in December 2020. The Chair thanked Professor Miller and Dame Polly and her team for placing this on the UK government agenda, including through links with HRH the Prince of Wales.
 - The Move West Project Board would have to consider other major Engineering projects, such as the IfM, in due course.
- Finances:
 - Budgeting for 2020-21: In maintaining the Chest budget for recurrent expenditure, such as funding for posts, the University has decided to reduce non-recurrent expenditure such as the equipment funds. As this would impact research activity, it has been argued that this could only be a one-off to help reduce the deficit exacerbated by the Covid pandemic.
 - Procurement: The Chair reported on the procurement transformation project that was expected to have the potential to make between £10-20m per year in savings. Anyone with comments on the project should feed them to the Chair.
- West Cambridge Shared facilities:
 - Four working groups have been established regarding sharing mechanical workshops, research facilities (i.e. cleanrooms), equipment, and technicians across the departments on the North West - West Cambridge site to avoid duplication and develop common models of access and costing.
- The Chair congratulated the Department of Engineering on being awarded a Silver Athena Swann Award, as this is harder to attain the second time round.

- The Chair held a School workshop on the 12th October 2020 on how the School could engage with industry. The recommendations would be taken forward.

Reports from the Deputy Head of School and the Director of Education were as attached in Paper **T/20/39**.

The Deputy Head of School provided a verbal report:

- The School is undertaking to increase income and cost-recovery on grants, including the School's management of the University Investigator Time Policy.
- The recent EPSRC Core Equipment award received a good set of proposals from across the Departments, that resulted in over £1m in funding across the two tranches the EPSRC made available; allocations were made to the Departments of Engineering, Computer Science and Technology and Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology.
- RPC discussed the next SRI call at their last meeting. A further SRI call will come out in November 2020 inviting expressions of interest by a deadline in February 2021. Anyone with an interest in submitting an SRI application should contact the School Research Strategy Facilitator who will support any applications that have School involvement.
- The EPSRC circulated their report on gender imbalance in the investigators applying for research funding, as well as a survey inviting responses regarding to issues raised by the report.
- A recent invitation from the EPSRC was circulated regarding recruitment to their Strategic Advisory Network (SAN). The School encourages individuals within the Departments to apply to this, particularly as the School of Technology has had no recent representation on this strategically important group that provides the EPSRC Executive with advice and guidance.

The Director of Education provided a verbal report:

- Several emergency taskforces have been convened over the summer to help deal with teaching issues, that have been either dissolved or rebranded.
- The Board of Graduate Studies has been replaced with a Postgraduate Committee.
- Undergraduate numbers have generally increased due to the raised A-level attainment levels caused by Covid disruption to these exams, but this has had little effect on School of Technology undergraduate admissions.
- Postgraduate numbers have risen by 2% in the School, mostly in UK students, with EU student numbers only decreasing by 1%. CUED had a notable increase in doctoral students.
- Online teaching is a challenge to do well, and the School distributed the funds it was allocated by the centre to the departments to support digital teaching. A challenge remains in replacing laboratory based face-to-face teaching with digital based teaching. Plans regarding online assessments within departments are being coordinated by the Director of Education. Input from academics regarding to the University systems supporting digital teaching is requested.

2. Starred Items

The Council of the School approved the starred items.

3. Strategic Business

3.1. University Size and Shape of Student Population

The University's Size and Shape Working Group has been reconvened recently. Paper **T/20/40** is a document by the Senior Pro-Vice Chancellor titled "Squaring the Circle: moving towards a new Memorandum of Understanding on student numbers", now available for discussion with Schools. The Strategy and Planning Committee considered and discussed the questions under "Suggestions for Squaring the Circle". The Colleges have also been consulted. The Head of School produced a draft response to the paper after discussions with the Director of Education and the Secretary of School.

Paper **T/20/41** contains the draft aspirational, but realistic, planned student numbers which Dr Barrie coordinated from the Departments. A correction was requested by the Head of CST as to clarification that any increases in student numbers would be from expansion of current courses. It was noted that part-time PGR Student numbers looked high because of the categorisation of students mostly in CISL.

Within the Departments of the School there is capacity for student numbers to substantial increase if constraints imposed by the current system could be relaxed.

Opportunities to increase student numbers were discussed. These include part-time professional courses for high-calibre people beyond their early twenties, with no need for a career-break.

Issues restricting expansion of postgraduate courses included:

- Constraints from College accommodation,
- Uncertainty of the financial returns to School/Departments from increasing Masters students.
- Space limitations in departmental buildings.

It was agreed to have further discussions on the CST space requirements outside the meeting.

The Head of School also agreed to revise the draft response and circulate it to the Council of the School.

3.2. HR Consultations

Professor Eilis Ferran, in her email of 28 September 2020 (Paper **T/20/42**), sought views from Schools and institutions on the development of three key

policies: a Mutual Respect Policy (to replace the current Dignity at Work Policy), a revised Grievance Policy, and a new Redeployment Policy. These proposed policies have been prioritised in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and form part of the University's Recovery Plan.

The Council of the School was invited to discuss the key points of the consultations.

It was agreed that anything that streamlines the current processes, which can become significantly lengthened by the numerous points at which appeals can be raised, would be welcomed. It was noted that established officers posts were not included in the policy because of the burden of proof required.

Significant concerns were raised about the redeployment scheme for researchers since this may reduce the freedom to appoint the best candidates. It is important to appreciate that post-doctoral positions are transitional roles in an academic career, with the end goal of getting a tenured academic post.

It was agreed that the HR Business Manager would co-ordinate responses for the School.

4. Regular business

4.1. 2020-21 Budget

As a consequence of the financial uncertainties arising from COVID-19 and broader concern about the University's structural deficit, the 2020 University Budget Report has still not been finalised. Finance Committee rejected PRC's initial Budget Report, which was reported to Council of the School at its last meeting; The University was asked to identify additional savings of c£20m, before an updated budget would be approved. The Finance Committee met again recently, to discuss a new proposal, following significant work over the summer to identify potential savings across the University, which culminated in planning meetings in September for all Schools and NSIs. Paper **T/20/43** outlined the additional work undertaken and sets out the latest understanding of School's Chest allocation (based on current proposals) as well as likely savings targets for departments.

Professor Cardwell attended the meeting of the Planning and Strategy Committee and the key points of discussion were minuted (Paper **T/20/44**). Paper **T/20/45** was submitted by the School of Technology, in advance of its planning meeting.

Subject to the concerns raised by the Strategy and Planning Committee, the Council of the School approved the allocations in Paper **T/20/43** (subject to formal confirmation by the Regent House).

The Council of the School also approved that 50% of savings targets be made recurrently before 2020-21 budgets are finalised.

4.2. Chest and Non-Chest Reserves

Paper **T/20/46** analysed Chest and Non-Chest reserves by School. It was produced by the Planning Office in advance of School planning meetings and was a focus of conversation in the meetings themselves. The School's Chest reserves are unexceptional, relative to other Schools, but the Non-Chest reserves are significant. The planning meeting was a helpful opportunity to explain to the Officers, the challenges of accessing Non-Chest funds which are proliferated down into a significant number of local PI accounts. Even so, there is likely to be a renewed push from the University for Departments to both utilise Non-Chest reserves and better understand and forecast how funds will be used, for budget purposes.

Heads of Department were concerned by the news and commented that they could manage the current financial situation because of departmental reserves. Departmental reserves either were required to maintain key departmental activities and strategies during times of financial difficulties or had planned uses for supporting research activities.

The possibility of using reserves as a service to leverage better cashflow to enable the School and Departments to invest in more strategic activities was discussed. The School Finance Manager agreed to prepare a position paper for the Strategy and Planning Committee for discussion.

4.3. Planning: Student numbers

There has been no central guidance issued so far about the planning round that the University used to undertake. However, there have been separate requests to submit various elements of the old planning round to support the University's financial planning.

One recent request is to submit planned student numbers over five years (2021-22 to 2025-26). Paper **T/20/47** contains the numbers of entrants for undergraduate courses, which was prepared by the Director of Education after after discussions with the Deputy Heads of Department. The Council of the School approved Paper **T/20/47** for submission by the end of October 2020.

The planned postgraduate numbers over five years (2021-22 to 2025-26), as well as non-degree student numbers (a new requirement), would be considered by the Council of the School at the next meeting because of the longer deadline.

4.4. School Research Investigator Time Policy

The University's Research Policy Committee has recently approved a policy of requiring a minimum Investigator Time on grants. Schools are required to implement local procedures for enforcing minimum recovery levels and addressing exceptional cases for dispensation. Nevertheless, the School's

default position remains that Investigator (PI and Co-I) Time at these minimum levels, is recoverable on all eligible awards. The Council of the School approved the local procedure recommended for the School by the School's Research Committee contained in Paper **T/20/48**.

4.5. Strategic Research Review 2019-20: CST

The Strategic Research Review for the Department of Computer Science and Technology took place in 2018-19. The Head of Department prepared a response (Paper **T/20/49**) which has been considered and approved by the Faculty Board of Computer Science and Technology.

The Council of the School was pleased with the progress made by the Department and endorsed the report which would be submitted for consideration by the General Board.

5. Other Business

5.1. *Global EMBA course application**

At the meeting on 1 July 2020, the Graduate School Committee discussed a revised proposal for the Global EMBA and endorsed the updated proposal. Based on the recommendation from the Graduate School Committee, the Head of School approved the proposal on behalf of the School.

5.2. *HR Briefing**

The HR Business Manager's HR briefing, Paper **T/20/50** was noted.

5.3. Health and Safety Matters

No matters relevant to Health and Safety were raised.

5.4. Risk Assessment

No decisions were made that would require updating of the Risk Register.

6. *Minutes of Other Committees**

Strategy and Planning Committee	13 October 2020	T/20/51
Graduate School Committee	01 July 2020	T/20/52

7. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

8. Dates of Future Meetings 2020-21

2.00 p.m. meeting online via Zoom:
Friday, 27 November 2020

2.00 p.m. meeting online via Zoom:
Friday, 5 February 2021

2.00 p.m. meeting online via Zoom:
Friday, 12 March 2021

2.00 p.m. meeting online via Zoom:
Friday, 14 May 2021

2.00 p.m. meeting online via Zoom:
Friday, 18 June 2021