

**School of Technology**

**Council of the School**

2.00 p.m. on Friday, 15 May 2020

**Meeting online via Zoom**

**UNRESERVED MINUTES**

Present: Professor John Dennis (Chair)  
Professor Richard Prager  
Professor Lisa Hall  
Professor Ann Copestake  
Professor Christoph Loch  
Dame Polly Courtice  
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Dr Stella Pachidi  
Professor Alastair Beresford  
Professor Robin Langley  
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Professor Andrew Flewitt  
Professor Simon Guest  
Professor Tim Minshall  
Professor Simon Godsill  
Professor Richard Penty  
Dr Patrick Barrie  
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Professor Garth Wells (School observer)  
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Dr Shui Lam (Secretary)  
Mr Matt Burgess (School Finance Manager)  
Dr Ann Thompson (Research Strategy Facilitator)

In Attendance: Ms Daphne Ioannidis

Apologies: Professor Holger Babinsky, Professor Alex Routh

**Declarations of interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

**1. Minutes**

The minutes of the meeting held on 6 March 2020 were approved.

**Matters arising**

There were no matters arising other than those minuted here.

### **Chair's report**

The Chair provided a verbal report:

- The Chair is on the COVID-19 Response Crimson Recovery Task Force (which also has sub-groups in Research, HR, Education) which regularly meets to consider four possible scenarios arising from the current COVID-19 situation; Rapid Recovery, Global Gloom, Extended Lockdown and Repeated Wave. Chaired by the Pro-Vice Chancellor (Enterprise and Business Relations), the Task Force considers scenarios in detail to feed into the General Board and the Council in order to inform decision making. It was noted that the Crimson Recovery Task Force was also looking at opportunities as well as challenges arising from COVID, with the School well placed to contribute positively with appropriate investment, as well as reductions in some activities. The Chair invited any feedback regarding expansion of plans or arising opportunities the School could assist with.
- The Gold Finance Team has modelled the University finances under the four scenarios, with the resulting paper being considered by the Council on Monday the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2020. The modelled impact on reserves could be considerable, depending on the scenario, with Finance looking at mitigation strategies.
- The phased re-opening of University buildings for research is in the planning stage with laboratories with certain research activities being considered for prioritisation. The Chair has met with the Heads of Department of Engineering, Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology, and Computer Science and Technology, regarding a slow rump up to 30% capacity. Given that Engineering employs an estates management professional team, the Head of Engineering has suggested that the exact phasing of re-opening of Engineering buildings be delegated to the Department to be determined, subject to a light-touch operational oversight from the Estate Division. The Chair will feed this back to the Task Force.
- The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Strategy and Planning) has requested that the School updates its Vision over the next few months to include the impact of COVID; the Chair will consult with the Heads of Department on revising the School strategy in the near future.

The reports from the Deputy Head of School and the Director of Education are as attached in Paper **T/20/22**.

The Deputy Head of School highlighted the following points:

- The School Seed Fund call is now open, with £40,000 available to distribute over the course of the year to anything that needs support in

order to scale up research or support collaborations. The deadline for this round of applications is 25<sup>th</sup> May 2020.

- Those who applied to be on the expanded Restricted Bids committee were thanked, and it was hoped all had successfully joined.
- Those who contributed to the Open Access Review, to be included in the University's response to this consultation, were thanked.
- The consultation on the planned ARPA UK funding agency is now open, with a short deadline. The School will be providing a response based on Departmental input. The Chair noted that ARPA UK is a key part of Government funding and innovation strategy which it is important the School of Technology engages with.

The Director of Education highlighted the following points:

- Appropriate teaching and assessment online is largely in place. Online assessments have taken the form of traditional exams conducted remotely and have gone well so far.
- Plans to get research students back into the laboratory are underway, with UKRI prepared to fund extensions of up to 6 months on a case-by-case basis if these are appropriately justified. In cases with matched funding with partners, there is no obligation for the partners to provide any funded extensions.
- To assist in the transition between emergency arrangements and the new "normal", an Education Task Force has been set up with four working sub-groups (admissions, student numbers, remote teaching and learning, and welfare/student support).
- The Pro-Vice Chancellor (Education) circulated a document, "Education Provision in the Academic Year 2020-21", to Departments, setting out current University thinking and a timeline of planned actions. Departments are requested to respond directly by 21st May 2020.

## **2. Starred Items**

The Committee approved the starred items.

## **3. Strategic Business**

### **3.1 Financial overview**

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Planning & Strategy), Professor Cardwell, was unable to attend the meeting to share a financial briefing with the Council of the School. It was agreed to invite him to the next meeting of the Strategy and Planning Committee.

### **3.2 Academic (Teaching & Scholarship) Career Path**

During Michaelmas Term 2019 there was a consultation with Schools, Faculties, Departments and individuals on a proposed career pathway for the teaching focussed posts. The consultation informed the final proposals for implementation, as in the draft Report (Paper **T/20/23**) which has already been to central HR Committee.

The HR Committee asked Schools be consulted on the draft before it is submitted to the General Board, and then to Council for approval.

The proposals outlined in the paper were discussed, with main points as below:

- There were concerns raised as to the use of the title Professor for teaching focused staff, and inventing a system for a few people was not a good idea. This could be dealt with on a case-by-case basis. However, it was pointed out that while the School has only a small number of teaching-focused posts, in other parts of the University, the number is more significant.
- It was agreed that equal support would be needed for both career pathways, and it was good that the proposals ensured that staff can change streams, but cannot be forced to, in order for departments to massage REF metrics.
- The stint models and study leave (paragraphs 24 to 27) and other mechanisms to ensure that teaching focused staff can engage in relevant scholarship need to be agreed at School level. If sabbaticals are not an entitlement for these roles, they would be perceived to be second to the current academic posts, and the teaching-focused staff might not have the time to refresh their knowledge.
- Whether posts should be established or unestablished (paragraph 19) is decided at School level, with discussions agreeing that as long as new posts were permanent they did not also need to be established.
- The draft report proposes that these teaching-focused staff can apply for promotion following 1 full year of teaching, when the standard for academics is 3 full years' of teaching (Paragraph 37). The School is of the opinion that this should be equal for both of the career pathways.

It was agreed that the HR Business Manager should draft a response for circulation by approval by the Council of the School.

### **3.3 Whittle Laboratory Extension**

At the meeting, it was reported that the Department of Engineering would like to seek permission from the Planning and Resources Committee to progress the Whittle Extension Project to the next stage of design RIBA Stage 4. This is in advance of a Full Case submission that is dependent on planning approval

and for which there is not a date yet. Paper **T/20/24** was produced by the Department, and has been considered by the Move West Project Board.

The Head of Department of Engineering highlighted that PRC undertook to underwrite this project in 2018, if the Department made all efforts to raise the required funds. The Department has actively undertaken appropriate fundraising, including the part-funding of a CUDAR post to facilitate this. Despite efforts to keep to the original budget, costs have increased due to COVID. In addition, the infrastructure at West Cambridge would need to be upgraded and the details of the upgrade were now clearer. It was hoped that the additional infrastructure cost would be met by the University, who should be able to fund the infrastructure upgrades from the infrastructure levy it applies to each building project on the University estate.

The Council recommended the progression of the Whittle Extension Project to the Planning and Resource Committee

### **3.4 COVID-19 Temporary Recruitment Protocol**

At the meeting, it was reported that the University has imposed a recruitment pause for all posts from 1 May 2020 (Paper **T/20/25**). Exceptions could be granted by a School Exceptions Approval Group (EAG) or the central Recruitment Pause Oversight Group as explained in Paper **T/20/25**.

The School EAG is the Strategy and Planning Committee in the case of established offices, and the School's Vacancies & New Needs Group in the case of unestablished posts and researchers. The latter consists of the Secretary of School, the Finance Manager and the HR Business Manager and the Group meets weekly to consider the requests for exception. The decisions of the Group are monitored centrally, and justification for each role must be carefully made.

It was noted that the departments would find it useful if there was clearer guidance on how roles should be justified so that the process can be made easier. It was suggested that the HR Business Manager would liaise with departments over this.

## **4. Regular Business**

### **4.1 HR Briefing**

The Council of the School considered the HR Briefing paper (**Paper T/20/26**), prepared by the HR Business Manager. The HR Business Manager highlighted that several HR issues have arisen from the COVID situation including contract extensions and a review at the departmental level as to who could continue to do meaningful work while working from home. Under review is who could potentially be put forward for the Government's furlough scheme, which has some complexities around eligibilities, especially for research staff.

## **4.2 Health and Safety Matters**

Although the Council of the School discussed measures relevant to the COVID situation, such as reopening buildings no decisions relevant to Health and Safety matters were made.

## **4.3 Risk Assessment**

Although the Council of the School discussed measures relevant to the COVID situation, such as reopening buildings no decisions were made that would require updating of the Risk Register.

## **4.4 \*\*\*Minutes of Other Committees**

Strategy and Planning Committee	28 April 2020	<b>T/20/27</b>
Research Committee	18 February 2020	<b>T/20/28</b>

## **5. Any Other Business**

Professor Beresford introduced an additional item on online teaching under Any Other Business. Although adequate online teaching and assessment had successfully been set up by all departments in a short space of time during the Covid 19 lockdown, these were primarily based on traditional teaching. In the longer term, these might not meet the educational standards expected of the University, or students' and external expectations of a Cambridge course. As online teaching would have to continue for the 2020-21 academic year high quality teaching and assessment materials would be required for courses as of the Michaelmas Term 2020.

The Council of the School discussed the resources required in order to produce online content of a sufficient standard to meet expectations. Professor Wells indicated that technical support would be required to assist academics with recording lectures, editing them (both sound and video) and getting the final product onto a good platform. It was estimated that a part time specialist would be sufficient.

It was generally agreed that investing in appropriately skilled technicians, as well as appropriate technologies, is required to enable the production of high quality materials due to the reputational risk if online teaching quality fails to meet expectations. The main challenge is finding people with appropriate skills, rather than the funding for these roles. Recruitment of new roles and sharing of resources between departments was discussed.

Departments across the School vary in their current level of ability to provide online teaching; the Judge Business School and the Cambridge Institute for Sustainability Leadership have existing staff skilled in, as well as facilities for, recording and editing technologies. These staff are all working at full capacity,

and production facilities are unavailable as buildings have been shut. The Department of Engineering has some facilities, as well as staff who can increase their current skills and expertise in these areas. Computer Science and Technology and Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology are keen to increase their resources and expertise in producing high quality online content but they would value guidance on the technologies that would best meet their needs. The Judge Business School would be happy to run a workshop to share its knowledge on required specifications for recording facilities.

A School level meeting to discuss remote teaching and share knowledge was convened by Professor Wells which Directors of Teaching found very helpful. A similar workshop could be usefully held, the focus and format of which would need to be identified, to identify existing staff in departments who could be upskilled, which departmental resources could be shared, a potential cross-departmental booking system of facilities, as well as further equipment required. The University would like to understand more as to the resources required to produce high quality online materials, in terms of human, hardware, software, as well as the information to enable use of technologies, which could be fed back to the relevant University Administration. The University could also help fund resources required for generating online content.

Both the Judge Business School and Department of Engineering have recording facilities that are currently inaccessible due to building closure. It would be useful to prioritise opening of the buildings which contain these in order to assist in the production of high quality online teaching materials. A case could be made for prioritising reopening of the Judge Business School in order to enable access to its recording facilities as well as act as a pilot for the return of a limited number of students to the building to test safety protocols.

As an aside, the School Research Committee was proposed as a good forum for the sharing of departmental concerns, lessons learned and good practice regarding the phased reopening of research facilities.

## **6. Dates of Future Meetings 2019-20 and 2020-21**

2.00 p.m. in FW11, Computer Laboratory:  
Friday, 12 June 2020

2.00 p.m. in Board Room, Department of Engineering:  
Friday, 23 October 2020

2.00 p.m. in Large Meeting Room (West Cambridge site), Department of Chemical Engineering and Biotechnology:  
Friday, 27 November 2020

2.00 p.m. room tbc, in Department of Engineering (West Cambridge site):  
Friday, 5 February 2021

2.00 p.m. in Room W2.01, Judge Business School:  
Friday, 12 March 2021

2.00 p.m. in Board Room, Department of Engineering:  
Friday, 14 May 2021

2.00 p.m. in FW11, Computer Laboratory:  
Friday, 18 June 2021