

UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON COUNCIL

Minutes of the 89th meeting of Council held at 4pm on Monday 3 July 2023 in the Oak Suite, Elm Grove, Digby Stuart College

- Present:** Phil Walker (Chair), Mark Allen, Dr Aleata Alstad-Calkins, Dr Priscilla Chadwick, Janet Cooper, Jennifer Coupland, Prof Jean-Noël Ezingear, Dennis Hone, Amy Hopkins, Ruth Martin, Sunitha Narendran, Revd Canon Dr Jennifer Smith, Kevin Thomas
- Secretary:** Dr George Turner
- Notes:** Elaine Lentell
- Apologies:** Dr Christine Carpenter, Sr Christine Edwards, Prof Anna Gough-Yates, Revd Dr Tim Macquiban, Michael Pearson, Sheena Pindoria, David Sharkey
- In attendance:** Melanie Duhig, Liam Hurley, Baljit Kaur, Ian Pleace, Prof Leigh Robinson, Tom Rowson

Regular Business Matters, Minutes and Reports

1. Welcomes, introductions, apologies

1.1 The Chair welcomed all those present to the meeting, in particular:

- Professor Leigh Robinson, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Outcomes) who was attending on behalf of Professor Anna Gough-Yates.
- Ian Pleace, Interim Director of Finance, attending as an observer. Ian would be taking up the role from 1 August following Baljit Kaur's departure.
- Amy Hopkins, incoming RSU President, who was attending her first meeting.

2. Declarations of Interest

2.1 No declarations of interest were made.

3. Notification of Any Other Business

3.1 There was no other business.

4. Minutes

4.1 The minutes of the 88th meeting of Council, which was held on 13 March 2023 (Paper RUC89/1), were **confirmed** and Council **approved** the redactions for the published minutes as highlighted.

5. Chair's action/ Items approved by electronic circulation

- 5.1 Council noted the items approved by electronic circulation since the last meeting as detailed in Paper RUC89/2.

Strategic Reports and Items

6. Chair's Items

- 6.1 There were no items to report.

7. Vice-Chancellor's Report

- 7.1 Council received the Vice-Chancellor's Report (Paper RUC89/3), and noted the following points in particular:

Financial Sustainability

- a) That the University had seen a strong 2022-23 academic year and was currently in a good position. However, universities continued to face a number of strategic issues externally, such as government policy, high inflation, and changes to international student visas.

Minute exempt from publication under s.43 Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Strategic Plan

- b) That the University's new Strategic Plan was progressing as set out in the report. Minute exempt from publication under s.43 Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Student Outcomes

- a) Student outcomes continued to be a priority. Minute exempt from publication under s.43 Freedom of Information Act 2000.

Student Education

- a) That following a recent inspection, the University had been awarded an "Outstanding" rating from Ofsted for its initial teaching education (ITE) primary courses. The secondary age-phase courses were ranked as "Good". Council congratulated the School of Education and all the staff involved on the impressive achievement.

8. Year Highlights and Planning Insights

- 8.1 Council received the paper (Paper RUC89/4), and the following points were highlighted:
- 8.2 That the University had increased the student hardship fund by 50% in 2022-23 compared to the previous year, to address the impact of the rising cost of living on students.

- 8.3 The School of Continuing Education was launched in 2023, to support an emerging portfolio of Foundation, Higher Technical Education and CPD/ Short Courses, and to act as an Office for Students' funded pilot provider of Lifelong Learning awards. This would ensure that Roehampton both grows its reputation for addressing skills needs in London and provides more flexible educational routes.
- 8.4 That the University's free bus service had been expanded to include Wimbledon Station and Roehampton Asda, recognising the changing pattern of student commuting and in response to student feedback. The University also engaged Lime to bring eBikes to the campus and Barnes station.
- 8.5 That business planning for 2023-24 was focussed on continuing to improve student outcomes across the schools and faculties. This includes developing enhanced pre-entry modules to ease the transition to university, and tailored support for students likely be at higher risk of non-engagement and non-continuation.

9. Budget and Financial Forecast (incorporating the Director of Finance's Report)

- 9.1 Council received the draft budget for 2023-24, financial forecast to 2027-28, and quarter three forecast for 2022-23, all for approval. The papers also incorporated the Director of Finance's report for noting (Paper RUC89/5). The following points were noted in particular:
- 9.2 Minute exempt from publication under s.43 Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- 9.3 Council noted that the financial forecast would be updated in September 2023 and presented at Finance and Resources Committee in October and the Council meeting in December 2023.
- 9.4 Council **approved** the draft budget for 2023-24, financial forecast to 2027-28 and quarter three forecast for 2022-23, and thanked the Director of Finance and the Finance Team for their work on preparing the papers.

10. University Performance Dashboard

- 10.1 Council received the paper and dashboard (Paper RUC89/6). The following points were highlighted:
- 10.2 Minute exempt from publication under s.43 Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- 10.3 That since the development of the KPIs the HE sector had experienced unprecedented challenges which had impacted the University's trajectory towards the targets. Some KPIs had also become less relevant due to changes in policy, regulations and the recent changes in the structure of the University. These changes would be reflected accordingly in the development of KPIs in the new Strategic Plan.

10.4 That there was a lag between the activities to be measured and the availability of relevant metrics, which was compounded by the timing of the Office for Students and Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) data collection cycles. Therefore, where possible, the University would report on the leading indicators in addition to the latest metrics.

11. Students' Union Report

11.1 Council welcomed the President of the RSU to their first meeting and noted the contents of the Report (Paper RUC89/7).

11.2 Council noted that the President's focus for 2023-23 would be:

- Student engagement
- The cost-of-living crisis and its impact on Roehampton's students
- Mental health and wellbeing

Other items for discussion and/or approval

Committee reports

12. Council Committees

12.1 Audit Committee

- a) Council received a verbal update from the Chair of the Audit Committee.
- b) Council was advised that there were no changes to the strategic risk register to report following the extensive changes made in response to the 'blank sheet' exercise in January and reported to Council in March 2023.
- c) Council noted that the Committee had received and discussed updates on UKVI compliance and cyber security.
- d) Minute exempt from publication under s.43 Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- e) Minute exempt from publication under s.43 Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- f) Council was advised that the Committee had noted its disappointment at the external auditors' significant fee increase for 2023 (circa 76%).

12.2 Finance and Resources Committee

- a) Council received the Finance and Resources Committee report (Paper RUC89/8).

- b) Council noted that the Committee had considered and approved the draft budget. The paper highlighted any potential risks and the corresponding mitigations in place.
- c) Minute exempt from publication under s.43 Freedom of Information Act 2000.
- d) Minute exempt from publication under s.43 Freedom of Information Act 2000.

12.3 Health, Safety and Welfare Committee

- a) Council received a verbal update from the Chair of the Health, Safety and Welfare Committee.
- b) Council noted that the Committee had approved revisions to the Fire Safety Policy and that the Workplace Stress Policy would be further considered outside of the Committee for approval by circulation.

12.4 Nominations and Governance Committee

- a) Council received the Nominations and Governance Committee's Report (Paper RUC89/9).
- b) Council **approved** the Committee's recommendation to amend Paragraph 9.21.3 of the University Regulations concerning the Health, Safety and Welfare Committee's membership as detailed in the report.

Action: Governance Manager

13. University Senate

- 13.1 Council received the Senate report and noted the contents therein (Paper RUC89/10), from which Council received assurance that the University was continuing to deliver improvements to support student outcomes. Council noted that due consideration had been given to quality assurance when the Senate sub-group approved contingency measures relating to student assessment, in light of potential industrial action by academic staff. Council further noted that Senate had received a presentation from the Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Online Education), Professor Sunitha Narendran, on distance learning.

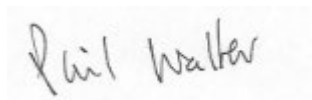
Other items for information

14. Any other business

- 14.1 Council bade a fond farewell to Baljit Kaur, outgoing Director of Finance, who was leaving the University on 31 July 2023. Council noted that Baljit had been a great servant to the University over her 22 years of service and

would be greatly missed by all. Council offered its best wishes to Baljit in her new role.

Signed:

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Phil Walker". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

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Phil Walker, Chair of Council

Date: 11.12.23

Minutes prepared by:
Elaine Lentell, Governance Manager, July 2023