

**UNIVERSITY OF ROEHAMPTON
COUNCIL
AUDIT COMMITTEE**

**Minutes of the 71st meeting held on Monday 27 September 2021
Meeting held remotely via Zoom**

Present: Kevin Thomas (Chair), Vince Paine, David Sharkey

Secretary: George Turner

In attendance: Stephen Driver,¹ Jean-Noël Ezingear, Baljit Kaur, Stuart Kemp (KCG), Andy Lamb,² Tom Rowson

Apologies: Sheena Pindoria, Laura Ward (BDO), Paula Willock (BDO)

MINUTES AND BUSINESS MATTERS

RAC71.1 Welcomes, introductions, apologies, conflicts of interest

No conflicts of interest were declared by those present.

It was noted that Item RAC71.8 would be taken at the end of the meeting.

RAC71.2 Minutes

Approved: The minutes of the 70th meeting as set out in Paper RAC71/1.

RAC71.3 Matters arising

Noted: The matters arising as set out in Paper RAC71/2.

The Committee noted that good progress had been made in improving mandatory training completion rates across the institution (a 10-20% increase across all training modules), however there was considerable work left to do. It was agreed that the Chief Operating Officer would work with the Director of Human Resources to produce a timetable for reaching the 85% completion threshold.

Action: Chief Operating Officer

It was agreed that the Secretary would circulate an update on actions completed over the summer after the informal meeting of Committee members in July.

Action: Secretary

RAC71.4 Additional Business

¹ For items 1 – 5 only

² For items 1 – 5 only

Noted: Other than those items already listed on the agenda, no additional business had been declared.

MATTERS FOR DECISION AND RATIFICATION

RAC71.5 Risk management

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

University risk register

The Committee received the latest versions of the University risk registers (Paper RAC71/4) and noted the proposed addition of two new risks (E8 and A9). In relation to risk S4, the Committee noted that the University was in the process of refreshing its business continuity plans which would incorporate any relevant outcomes from the COVID-19 response lessons learned audit.

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

The Committee noted the update and considered that the risk was appropriately captured on the risk register. The Committee also asked KCG to consider the latest developments when drawing up the terms of reference for the next phase of their audit of the system implementation, and whether the outstanding internal audit recommendations from 2018-19 relating to the SRS project could be closed as they had been overtaken by events.

Approved: Subject to the above, the Committee **approved** the risk registers for submission to Council.

Action: KCG, Secretary

MATTERS FOR DISCUSSION

RAC71.6 Internal Audit Update

Noted: *Internal Audit Progress Report*

The Committee noted the update from the Internal Auditors provided in Paper RAC71/5. The Committee reviewed the outstanding historic internal audit actions (pp. 45 – 52 in the pack). The Committee noted that a sub-group of the University Executive Board had been convened to review outstanding internal audit actions. The outstanding recommendation relating to maintenance service contracts from 2015-16 was discussed. It was noted that the University's maintenance provision is complex and that there were some outstanding matters relating to the cleaning and catering contracts. The Chief Operating Officer agreed to provide an update to the Committee via email.

Action: Chief Operating Officer

The Committee asked about the delays to the Student Entry Qualifications Audit. It was noted that there had been some staffing issues in the Admissions Team, but that these had now been resolved. The Committee noted that the timescales to complete the audit before the Internal Audit Annual Report was finalised were tight, but that the audit was unlikely to affect the overall internal audit opinion.

The Committee discussed the School of Arts Internal Audit Report and the comments of the auditors about the financial forecast provided as part of the business case for the Sir David Bell building. The Committee noted the assurance of Management that the forecast was correct based on assumptions at the time. It was agreed that a copy of the internal audit report would be provided to the Finance and Resources Committee for information.

Action: Director of Finance

Strategic Internal Audit Plan

Approved: The Committee received the Strategic Internal Audit Plan (Paper RAC71/5a). The Committee queried whether there should be greater coverage of risk E1 (reductions to government funding) in the plan. It was agreed that the University planning processes audit should be designed to consider E1. It was also agreed that the Internal Auditors would consider whether any other planned audits would include further coverage of E1. It was agreed that it would be helpful for the Secretary to circulate Appendix A (which maps the strategic risk register to areas covered by the audit plan) to the report (p. 72) on a regular basis as part of the Committee papers. Subject to the comments above, the Committee **approved** the plan.

Action: Internal Auditors, Secretary

Internal Audit of COVID-19 response: lessons learned

Noted:

The Committee noted the contents of Paper RAC71/5b. The Committee queried whether minutes or notes of Gold and Silver Team meetings existed and it was confirmed that they did. The Committee also queried the finding about the out-of-date password policy and whether this was indicative of a wider problem, but was assured that the University had robust processes in place. The Committee asked how the recommendations would be taken forward and it was noted that they would be incorporated into the regular review of emergency management procedures.

RAC71.7

Internal Audit Annual Report

Noted:

The Committee noted the draft Internal Audit Annual Report, which indicated that the Internal Auditors planned to give satisfactory assurance to the Committee that the University maintained adequately designed and effective arrangements for risk management, control and governance, and for economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

The Committee noted Paragraph 5 of Appendix A to the report (p. 104 in the pack) which referred to the CUC HE Code of Governance (2020) in suggesting that the Audit Committee should include in its annual report a statement about the University's sustainability, which included financial, social and environmental sustainability. It was agreed that sustainability as broadly defined was likely to be given attention on behalf of Council across the governance structure as a whole, including via the Finance and Resources Committee. It was agreed that the Committee should be explicit about the level of assurance that it was able to give. It was agreed that the Secretary should review the Committee's terms of reference to understand how assurance is given to Council in relation to the HE Code of Governance.

Action: Secretary

RAC71.8 Annual Review of Internal Auditor Performance³

Noted: The Committee noted the email circulated by the Secretary in advance of the meeting regarding the annual review of Internal Auditor performance. The Committee discussed the Internal Audit performance and agreed that the following would be fed back to KCG:

- That the Committee considered the Internal Auditors to be effective in providing assurance, but would like to explore ways in which they could provide further added-value to the University's operations, including by leveraging their knowledge of sector practice. As part of this, the Committee considered that reports could be more succinct, which would free up time for more added-value activities.
- That the Internal Auditors should be encouraged to make greater use of technology, such as SharePoint.
- That the Committee would like to understand more about KCG's rotation policy for the Head of Internal Audit.
- That the Committee would like to understand more about KCG's customer feedback process.

The Committee agreed that the Chair would feedback to the Head of Internal Audit outside of the meeting. The Committee further agreed that the informal, discursive approach to the review, including greater opportunity for Management input, was an effective method and should be reused in the future, including for the self-assessment and external audit assessment exercises.

RAC71.9 Value for money update 2021-22

Noted: The contents of Paper RAC71/7, including the following:

- Institutional objectives
- The higher education regulatory framework

³ Stuart Kemp (KCG) left the meeting for this item, which was taken at the end of the meeting

- Linkage to the University's enabling strategies
- Internal governance arrangements
- Principles and plans for 2021-22

The Committee considered that the paper represented excellent progress in the area for value for money management. It was queried whether more could be done to incorporate the Office for Students' priorities into the framework. However, it was also noted that the Office for Students had not yet published its own value for money strategy for the sector.

MATTERS FOR INFORMATION

RAC71.10 Terms of reference, composition and membership for 2021-22 (including officers in attendance)

Noted: The contents of Paper RAC71/8, including the minor amendment proposed to the Committee's terms of reference, which would be submitted to Council for approval. It was noted that the Secretary would conduct a review of the Terms of Reference to ensure that the annual schedule of business provided appropriate coverage of all areas.

Action: Secretary

RAC71.11 Minutes and reports from Council

Noted: The contents of Paper RAC71/9.

RAC71.12 Minute exempt from publication under s.43 Freedom of Information Act 2000.

RAC71.13 Office for Student Compliance Risk Register

Noted: The contents of Paper RAC71/11.

RAC70.14 Standing Item: Public Interest Disclosures and Reportable Events

Noted: The contents of Paper RAC71/12, which confirmed that there had been one reportable event to the OfS since the last meeting, relating to changes arising from the governance review, and no public interest disclosures received.

Date of next meeting: Monday 1 November 2021

*Dr George Turner
Clerk to Council
September 2021*