

Council

Minutes

12 March 2019

Present: Mr M Draper (Chair)
Professor D Bowman
Mr D Carter
Professor J Friedland
Dr J Hammond
Professor S Harding
Professor J Higham (Principal)
Mr M Hijazi
Dr S Jackson
Mr J Joshi
Dr R Makarem
Mr K Morrison
Dr A O'Brien
Mr D Reid
Professor J Saffell
Professor S Spier
Ms C Swarbrick
Mr E Wooldridge

In attendance: Ms N Arnold, Director of Finance
Professor D Baines, Chair of the Safety Management Committee
Mr D Bannister, Director of Estates and Facilities
Ms J Leeming, Director of Planning
Ms S Marshall, Acting Clerk to Council & Deputy Director of GLAS
Mr P Ratcliffe, Chief Operating Officer
Ms J Winters, Director of Human Resources

Apologies for absence were received from Mr A Bicknell, Mrs G Norton and Ms S Rimmer.

63. Declarations of interest

Reported:

There were no declarations of interest.

That Dr Rima Makarem had been appointed as Non-Executive Director of the Hillingdon Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and the General Pharmaceutical Council. Dr Makarem's register of interest entry would be updated

64. Remarks from the Chair

(i) Council Member Roles

Reported:

That Mr Damian Reid had volunteered to represent Council on a group convened to review SGUL's image and reputation.

That Mr David Carter had commenced his appointment as Council Student Ambassador and would be meeting with a range of staff and students during the coming weeks.

The focus of the role would be on the student experience. In the first instance, Mr Carter wished to understand whether there was a shared perspective amongst staff and students on the priorities and actions required to improve the student experience.

(ii) Electronic papers

Reported:

That alternative mechanisms for providing electronic papers to Council had been reviewed by the Director and Deputy Director of Governance, Legal and Assurance Services (GLAS). Meeting paper software was available and had been implemented by other universities, which could provide improved access, functionality and flexibility to members. There were other potential benefits including a reduction in printing and postage costs and improved security. Members would retain the option of receiving hard copy papers if the software were introduced.

That members supported the implementation of meeting paper software. A number of members had used similar software in other roles and were positive about the accessibility and functionality provided.

(ii) Council Recruitment

Reported:

That the recruitment process for two new Council members to succeed Mr Anthony Bicknell and Dr Rima Makarem had begun. Details of the appointments would be circulated to Council to share with any suitable networks or connections.

65. Minutes

Received and approved:

Minutes of the meeting held on 5 February 2019.

Paper Council/4/A

66. Matters arising from the Minutes not on the agenda

(i) Minute 53: University Title

Reported:

That the stakeholder consultation closed on 4 March 2019. There had been one media enquiry during the consultation period, which had been made to all of the Member Institutes seeking University Title. The next steps would be the submission of the Scheme and Statutes to the Privy Council, and Office for Students (OfS) for approval, together with the OIA Data for 2018.

(ii) Minute 89 (2017-2018): Remuneration Committee

Received:

An oral report from the Chair of the Remuneration Committee.

Reported:

That the Remuneration Committee had undertaken a review of senior staff pay and would consider a proposal at its meeting during the following week to introduce a more transparent approach, including pay banding. If approved, the proposal would be phased in over a two to three year period. The Chair of the Remuneration Committee thanked the Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development for her work on the review.

67. Report from the Principal

Received:

A report from the Principal.

Paper Council/4/B

68. Report from the Students' Union

Received:

A report from the Students' Union President.

Reported:

That the focus of the Students' Union's work had been on improving its facilities and brand, including its website and signage, in order to improve the student experience. The Students' Union would be considering how to accommodate the increase in student numbers anticipated from 2019-20 and the value for money offered by the subscription to the NUS.

It was suggested that the President include more information in his reports about student views on how the university could improve the student experience.

Paper Council/4/C

Strategy

69 Key Performance Indicators

Received and considered:

The Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

Reported:

- (a) That the report provided an update on the twelve KPIs that were agreed by Council as a mechanism for measuring SGUL's achievement of its Strategic Plan. The Operational Plan Monitoring Group was responsible for reviewing progress with the KPIs and challenging the RAG ratings proposed. The report on the operational plan and the monitoring progress report had been provided in the papers to inform Council of the range of work being undertaken across the university.
- (b) That one new KPI and two changes to existing KPIs were proposed for approval by Council. It was proposed that the improvement in the Research Excellence Framework (REF) KPI (KPI 6) would be measured by the *quality of the REF submission as measured through an improvement of the % outputs and environment measured as 4**.
- (c) That the interim milestone for the Teaching Excellence Framework KPI (KPI 2) had been revised to 2021 owing to a change in the TEF5 timetable.
- (d) That the interim and final targets for KPI 10 (NSS score for learning resources) had been reduced by two per cent owing to a drop in the student satisfaction score of two per cent during the last NSS, which meant that the direction of travel was negative. The original target was not considered to be achievable given that limited funds were available for investment in further improvements.
- (e) That the access and participation KPI (KPI 8) would be brought to Council for approval at its meeting in May once the Access and Participation Plan had been developed.
- (f) That the RAG rating for KPI 12 (overall satisfaction in the NSS) had been changed to red in light of the feedback from Council at the last meeting that the KPI remained amber despite the drop in the score in the last NSS. Given the gap, the Operational Plan Monitoring Group has also revised the KPI 3 to RED. In both cases, the timescale for improvements made to have a positive impact on NSS scores meant that the trajectory for the KPIs would not be linear.

- (g) That there were limitations to using a series of KPIs as a measure of success for the organisation. It was suggested that identifying a single, headline target could be helpful in motivating and inspiring staff. It was noted that the achievement of a number of targets only 18 months into the Strategic Plan period could suggest that the targets were not sufficiently stretching.
- (h) That the focus of activity relating to KPI7 had moved to preparations for the new charter and to other aspects of equality, diversity and inclusion since SGUL had been awarded the silver Athena Swan award in April 2018.
- (i) That the impact case studies for REF had been collated and would be subject to a formal dry run using the REF methodology and templates prior to the final selection of case studies for submission. Opportunities for sharing best practice would be provided. It was not currently intended that case studies submitted during the previous REF would be updated and resubmitted. It was acknowledged that it would be a challenge to improve on SGUL's fourth place position for impact achieved in REF2014.

Agreed:

- (i) That the new and revised KPIs outlined in (b) – (d) above were approved.
- (ii) That additional information would be added to the monitoring progress section of the report to identify any changes in RAG ratings since the last iteration of the report.
- (iii) That Council would continue to receive the reports on the operational plan and the monitoring progress report. Council members could to request information on other areas if of interest.

Action: Director of Planning

Received for information:

- (i) Appendix 2: Operational Plan – December 2018
- (ii) Appendix 3: Monitoring Progress Report – March 2019

Paper Council/4/D

70. Brexit

Received:

A paper on issues relating to Brexit.

Reported:

- (a) That the report had been considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 13 February 2019. The Government had subsequently released [guidance on no deal preparations for higher education institutions](#) and alongside this, Universities UK (UUK) continued to [provide support and guidance to the sector](#). Further work was being undertaken to review the UUK Brexit risk register and to consider the suggested mitigating actions.
- (b) That communications had been sent out to reassure staff that the implications of Brexit were being considered and mitigated, where possible. Guidance had been provided to EU staff on the Government's settlement scheme and would be provided to students during the following week.
- (c) That SGUL was in a relatively strong position in the sector given that it is a specialist institution providing important education and research for the UK. It was not anticipated that Brexit would have a destabilising impact on SGUL, however, until the full extent of the impact was known it would not be possible to put in place a full range of measures to mitigate the impact.
- (d) That SGUL was currently in receipt of around £2m per annum of EU research funding and had recently secured a further grant success that would put the proportion of EU funding

at around 18%. Opportunities for diversifying the sources of research income were being considered.

- (e) That the Government had confirmed its intention to underwrite Erasmus Plus funding.
- (f) That the impact of Brexit on the arrangement with Ulster University was subject to ongoing discussion. The contract had been drafted to ensure that SGUL would be protected in the event of the new medical school not receiving sign off.
- (g) Council members thanked the Executive Officer for preparing a comprehensive and helpful report.

Paper Council/4/E

71. Council Away Day

Received and considered:

Proposals for topics for the Away Day on 17 May 2019 at the Law Society, including:

- Quality Assurance
- International
- Civic Universities
- Augur Review
- Risk Appetite
- Teaching Excellence Framework

Reported:

That Council members would welcome discussion on the following topics:

- (i) risk appetite, to focus on whether SGUL was sufficiently entrepreneurial and if there were opportunities that were not currently being considered;
- (ii) research and enterprise activity and priorities;
- (iii) image and reputation;
- (iv) a review of the range of new activities that were brought to Council's attention at the away day two years ago.

That suggestions for other topics should be sent to the Chair of Council.

Reports

72. Audit Committee Report

Received and considered:

A report of the Audit Committee meeting held on 13 February 2019.

Reported:

That the key issues discussed at the meeting had been risk management, including Brexit, and internal audit. The Committee would consider a further report at its next meeting on the proposed health and safety internal audit.

The Chair of Council thanked the Chair of the Audit Committee for identifying a process for the approval of the annual Letter of Engagement from the External Auditors.

Paper Council/4/F

73. Finance Report

Received:

The management accounts to 31 January 2019.

Reported:

That the Director of Finance was reviewing the forecast operating cash movement as part of the work to update the long term plan and the budget for next year. A dip in cash was currently forecast for the end of this year.

That there had been a further unrealised loss of £208k on investments to the end of January 2019.

Council members thanked the Director of Finance for the high quality report.

Paper Council/4/G

74. Estates Report

Received and considered:

A report from the Director of Estates and Facilities.

Reported:

- (a) That the refurbishment work on the ground floor and level six of Hunter Wing was progressing well with the majority of the demolition work now complete.
- (b) That the separation of the hot water supply between Hunter and Grosvenor Wings, as part of the water management strategy, was due for completion in early April.
- (c) That the Director of Estates and Facilities was working with the St George's University Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust Director of Estates to regularise the property agreements relating to the occupation of Jenner Wing.
- (d) That a letter had been received from the insurer, UMAL, regarding Horton Halls. UMAL had indicated that they remained willing to provide insurance cover for the halls of residence and acknowledged the steps taken by SGUL to improve fire safety. There was no requirement for the cladding to be removed but UMAL were unwilling to rescind this as a recommendation. UMAL had not addressed the question regarding the impact that the removal of the cladding would have on the premium. This matter was to be followed up with UMAL.
- (e) That Council members were satisfied that appropriate actions had been taken by SGUL to identify, understand and mitigate the fire safety risk. The halls of residence had been inspected by the Fire Brigade who had approved the works undertaken to address the recommendations from the inspection. The Fire Brigade had not deemed it necessary for the cladding to be removed.

Agreed:

That no further action was considered to be necessary in relation to the cladding on Horton Halls as all mitigating actions recommended by the Fire Brigade had been implemented. An update would be provided to Council on the outstanding information from UMAL only.

Action: Director of Estates and Facilities

Paper Council/4/H

75. Senate Report

Received and considered:

A report of the meeting of Senate held on 26 February 2019.

Reported:

- (a) That the Institute of Biomedical Science (IBMS) had decided not to re-accredit the BSc/MSci Biomedical Sciences programme following a reaccreditation visit. The programme's curriculum had been reviewed two years previously and had included a member of the IBMS on the panel in order to seek assurance that the programme would continue to meet accreditation requirements.

The reasons behind the decision remained unclear despite requests for further information from the IBMS and SGUL had decided to appeal the decision. The impact on students was expected to be minimal given that only one or two students per year progressed into a career in the NHS for which completion of an accredited programme was a requirement. It was noted that there were alternative mechanisms for meeting this requirement and SGUL would support any students affected by this decision in this process. The Students' Union President was working with the Course Director communicate and provide support to students.

- (b) The Quality Assurance and Enhancement Committee (QAEC) had commissioned a review of the increase in good degrees (1 and 2:1) awarded in light of the data provided by the OfS on degree classifications, which had indicated an 'unexplained increase' of 11.6 per cent. The OfS had not asked for a response to be provided but it was important for SGUL that the issues be understood and addressed if appropriate. It was expected that any issues relating to perceived grade inflation would need to be considered in the next TEF submission. Council members would be updated on the matter in due course.
- (c) That the statistics on the increase in good degrees suggested a devaluation of degrees across the sector. It was noted that sector league tables included metrics on good degrees and that this could have an impact on the systems put in place by institutions. However, it was acknowledged that the increase in good degrees could also be demonstrative of improvements in teaching rather than grade inflation.

Paper Council/4/1

76. Health and Safety

Received and considered:

- (i) A report on the Health and Safety Executive visit and outcome.

Reported:

- (a) That the outcome of the HSE visit had been received and had addressed the three main areas that had previously been notified to Council: risk assessments for work with Hazard Group 2 viruses; health and safety management arrangements; and hand washing facilities.
- (b) That a new scheme for assessing all risk assessments containing biological agents and TORCH (toxoplasma, rubella, CMV and HSV) had been developed. The annual audit to capture the use of biological hazards across the institution had been modified and risk assessments were being requested for each area. The Research Committee had agreed that Principal Investigators who failed to respond to requests for information could have their work suspended until they had done so. The review of TORCH activities would be completed by 29 March 2019 as requested by the HSE.
- (c) That it had been agreed that a safety committee would be established for each Institute, Professional Services and the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education with representation from staff of all levels, a safety advisor and students. A representative from the Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) Office would be available to attend to provide advice if required. The committees would meet on a quarterly basis and template agendas had been introduced to ensure all aspects of health, safety and wellbeing were considered. Formal minutes of each committee would be kept and would evidence compliance with the HSE recommendations.
- (d) That a contract had been agreed to provide non-perfumed soap to all research areas. The process for reordering the soap had been clearly signposted in handbooks and displayed behind sinks.
- (e) That the Pathogen Management and Genetic Modification Safety Committee had previously met only when there was business to consider. The Committee would now meet on a quarterly basis with its schedule aligned to other committees to ensure an appropriate flow of information.

- (f) That clarity around responsibilities for health and safety had been lost when SGUL was reorganised into its current structure but the visit from the HSE had resulted in robust mechanisms being established. It was noted there had been clear communication to all staff and students of their responsibilities in relation to health and safety, the reporting mechanisms and sources of further information available, which had led to a culture change. A communications plan had also been put in place to ensure regular reminders and a focus on a range of areas, which included a handbook for all staff and students. SGUL was satisfied that the actions taken would prevent any further issues arising in future.
- (g) That a review of the SHE Office had been undertaken and a number of recommendations had been included in the health and safety action plan to ensure appropriate resourcing and staff competency. It was noted the revised processes and governance arrangements were not expected to significantly increase the workload of safety advisors. It was also planned that an external company would be engaged to review policies in order to free up staff time from the SHE Office to implement the recommendations and to continue with their day-to-day responsibilities.
- (h) That the leadership of health and safety rested with the Chair of the Safety Management Committee for SGUL overall, with Institute Directors for their institutes and with line managers for their staff.
- (i) That an enhanced schedule of laboratory inspections had been introduced and would be rigorously enforced. Any staff identified as persistently failing to follow procedures would be referred to the Deputy Principal (Research and Enterprise).
- (j) The Audit Committee had received a request to include an internal audit into health and safety in the 2019-20 plan. The matter had been referred back to senior management to consider whether another planned audit would be replaced in the plan or if an additional audit would be funded. It was noted that the health and safety audit would require a number of extra internal audit days and the Committee wished to understand that the balance of risk and cost had been considered.

Paper Council/4/J

- (ii) A report from the Safety Management Committee following its meetings on 29 November 2018 and 20 February 2019.

Reported:

A new health and safety risk had been added to the Strategic Risk Register, which had been further refined following the meeting of the Committee on 20 February 2019.

Paper Council/4/K

77. CUC Review of HE Code of Governance

Received:

The call for evidence in relation to the CUC Review of the HE Code of Governance.

Reported:

That the CUC was reviewing the Higher Education Code of Governance and had released a call for evidence on the Code. Any comments on the call for evidence should be sent to the Chair of Council.

Paper Council/4/L

78. Teaching Excellence Framework

Received:

A copy of the response to the Teaching Excellence Framework consultation.

Paper Council/4/M

Matters for Report

79. OfS Letters and Consultations and other External Consultations for Information

Received:

A report on OfS letters and consultations and other external consultations, with responses to date.

Paper Council/4/N

80. Minutes of Meetings

Committee	Date of Meeting	
Audit Committee	13 February 2019	s.trubshaw@sgul.ac.uk
Risk Management & Efficiency Committee	30 January 2019	s.durkin@sgul.ac.uk
Finance Committee	23 January 2019	s.marshall@sgul.ac.uk
Executive Board	29 January 2019 27 February 2019	s.marshall@sgul.ac.uk
Senate	26 February 2019	s.marshall@sgul.ac.uk

81. Any other business

No further business was reported.

82. Dates of meetings 2019

All meetings take place in H2.5 and H2.6, Level 2 Hunter Wing at 2.00 pm

Friday 17 May 2019 Away Day – Law Society

Tuesday 2 July 2019

Tuesday 15 October 2019

Tuesday 19 November 2019

Proposed Dates for 2019-2020 and 2020-2021 – to be confirmed

Tuesday 4 February 2020

Tuesday 17 March 2020

Friday 22 May 2020

Tuesday 30 June 2020

Tuesday 20 October 2020

Tuesday 24 November 2020

Tuesday 9 February 2021

Tuesday 16 March 2021

Friday 14 May 2021

Tuesday 29 June 2021

SM/13 March 2019