

Council

Minutes

16 October 2018

Present: Mr M Draper (Chair)
Mr A Bicknell
Mr D Carter
Professor J Friedland
Mr J Hammond
Professor S Harding
Professor J Higham (Principal)
Mr M Hijazi
Mr Josh Joshi
Mr K Morrison
Mrs G Norton
Dr A O'Brien
Mr D Reid
Ms S Rimmer
Professor J Saffell
Professor S Spier
Ms C Swarbrick
Mr E Wooldridge

In attendance: Ms N Arnold, Director of Finance
Mr D Bannister, Director of Estates and Facilities
Mr C Briffa, student representative
Dr M Jackson, Associate Dean for Student Experience [minutes 10-11 only]
Dr J Leeming, Director of Strategic Planning [minutes 8-11 only]
Ms S Marshall, Clerk and Deputy Director of GLAS
Mr P Ratcliffe, Chief Operating Officer
Ms J Winters, Acting Director of Human Resources

Apologies for absence were received from Mr S Khavandi, Dr R Makarem, Dr S Jackson and Ms S Trubshaw

1. Declarations of interest

Reported:

There were no declarations of interest.

2. Remarks from the Chair

Reported:

The Chair welcomed:

- (i) Professor Jon Friedland, Deputy Principal (Research), who had joined St George's in September 2018;
- (ii) Ken Morrison, Director of Legal Services, who had been appointed as the support staff representative on Council following an election;
- (iii) Sian Marshall, Deputy Director of GLAS, who was acting clerk to Council in the absence of Susan Trubshaw;
- (iv) Corey Briffa who was attending in place of Sam Khavandi, student representative.

The Chair had attended the CUC autumn plenary during the previous week. The primary issues discussed were pensions and student mental health, both of which were items on today's agenda.

3. Minutes

Received and approved:

Minutes of the Meeting held on 3 July 2018.

Reported:

That Muhammad Omar Hijazi had been present at the meeting held on 3 July 2018.

Paper Council/1/A

4. Matters arising from the Minutes not on the agenda

(i) Minute 94: Effectiveness Review of Council

Reported:

That Council would consider the report on the effectiveness review at the November meeting due to the availability of the consultant who conducted the review.

(ii) Minute 91: Students' Union (SU) Constitution

Reported:

That the SU had provided confirmation that a number of changes had been made to its constitution without reference to the Council, including changes relating to its democratic operation.

Agreed:

The Council considered that the recent changes to the SU constitution were likely to be invalid but would defer its review of the SU constitution until the SU had completed its own constitutional review. The Council wished to receive regular reports on progress.

Action: SU President

5 Report from the Principal

Received:

A report from the Principal.

Reported:

The University and College Union (UCU) ballot for industrial action in relation to the national pay award would close during the current week. Last year the required threshold for strike action was reached only following the second ballot.

St George's staff were members of six different pension schemes but recent focus had been on the Universities Superannuation Scheme (USS). Consultations on the proposal from the Joint Expert Panel (JEP) and the cost sharing process would close in the coming weeks. The financial forecasts submitted to the Office for Students (OfS) had included the higher contribution based on the original valuation. Under the JEP proposal, contributions would be lower for both employers and employees than the original proposal but institutions would be subject to increased pension liabilities as part of the scheme would remain unfunded. There was concern that the next valuation would be due in 2020 and the current proposals would not resolve the scheme's funding in the long term. Higher employer contributions were also likely to be introduced for the NHS pension scheme; any savings from USS contributions could be used to fund this increase.

Paper Council/1/B

6. Report from the Students' Union

Received:

A report from the SU President.

Reported:

It had been a successful Freshers' fortnight with an increased focus on providing events for students who do not drink alcohol or who are not comfortable attending events where alcohol is provided.

The SU President's primary focus for the year was to improve the image of the SU and student engagement. There were certain groups of students that did not engage well, such as students in FHSCE, who did not always identify themselves as St George's students. Improving communication between the SU, students and the institution would be a key part of this work, in addition to fostering a greater sense of pride in the student body of being part of St George's.

The Deputy Principal (Education) reported that a campaign was to be launched to celebrate students and graduates and it was hoped the SU would contribute to this.

Paper Council/1/C

Strategic Issues

7. Registration with the Office for Students

Received and considered:

The outcome of St George's application for registration with the Office for Students.

Reported:

St George's had been notified of its successful registration with the OfS in July 2018. No specific conditions of registration were imposed by the OfS but St George's had been notified that it would be subject to enhanced monitoring in relation to condition A1: access and participation plan. Further information would be provided by the Director of Fair Access on the specific requirements in due course. The newly convened Access and Participation Steering Group would be responsible for taking forward the requirements of enhanced monitoring. The Group had considered the institution's response to the recent consultation on access and participation. The consultation included a requirement to report every five years instead of annually.

Work would be taken forward in the coming months to ensure St George's is able to meet the ongoing conditions of registration set out in the OfS regulatory framework. The OfS would publish its requirements for reporting once the transition period ended in August 2019.

Paper Council/1/D

8. Key performance indicators

Received and considered:

A report on progress with the KPIs from the Chief Operating Officer and the Director of Planning.

Reported:

There were two areas of the strategic plan for which KPIs were yet to be developed. The REF KPI would be set once the REF guidance was published, this was expected to be by the end of 2018. The attainment gap KPI would be set once the OfS guidance on access and participation was published and further information received on the requirements for enhanced monitoring were known. The next iteration of the report to the Council planned for March 2019 would include these new KPIs.

The RAG rating for the KPI relating to the National Student Survey (NSS) had been set as amber rather than red despite the recent drop in overall student satisfaction scores given that a robust plan was in place to enable St George's to achieve the target set. The latest NSS results were disappointing but it was anticipated that significant improvements would be seen by 2020.

The Council was satisfied that good progress was being made against the KPIs and welcomed the helpful format of the report.

Paper Council/1/E

Education

9. League Tables

Received and considered:

A report on League Tables.

Reported:

Performance in the 2018 Times/Sunday Times Good University Guide improved in five out the seven areas included in the subject rankings in contrast to the institutional ranking where St George's fell by five places to 80th out of 132nd place. Four of the five institutions that had moved above St George's had achieved large increases in the two NSS metrics that formed part of the league table ranking and good performance in a number of other metrics. One of the institutions was a new table entry. The League Tables Focus Group had reviewed the results in detail and would monitor progress against the actions agreed to enable improvements to be made.

The Council was disappointed with St George's league table position, which members felt did not reflect the quality and standing of the institution.

The Council thanked the Director of Planning for the excellent report which provided a detailed analysis of the areas where St George's was performing well and the areas for improvement.

Paper Council/1/F

10. National Student Survey and Student Experience Survey results

Received:

An analysis of the NSS/SES results from the Director of Planning.

Reported:

The 2018 NSS results were disappointing overall for St George's despite a number of programmes receiving very good scores for overall satisfaction. The decline in institutional NSS results would have a negative impact on the TEF. Currently three of the TEF metrics were based on NSS scores and the next TEF iteration would be based on the 2018 NSS results.

The Student Experience Survey was an internal survey of students in all years apart from final year conducted on an annual basis. The format had been refreshed to align with the NSS questions and to enable an improved response rate. The survey provided useful feedback on programme changes, such as the introduction of the new Biomedical Sciences' curriculum.

The Council thanked the Director of Planning for the informative paper.

Paper Council/1/G

11. Educational Quality and Student Experience (TEF)

Receive and considered:

A report on Educational Quality and Student Experience.

Reported:

Improving the student experience was a key priority for the institution with investment having been made in a number of staff appointments to support this activity. It was hoped that this work would have a positive impact on the NSS and TEF results in future.

The Student Experience Action Group (SEAG) oversees the mechanisms in place for seeking and responding to student feedback and holds programme teams to account for addressing the issues raised. A key part of this work is understanding the reasons why students give negative scores for particular areas and closing feedback loops to ensure students recognise the value in providing

feedback. This could be challenging to achieve given that not all students wished to engage with feedback mechanisms.

It was acknowledged that recurrent or systemic issues could have a significant impact on overall student satisfaction, such as issues with exam results and feedback. A new post of Head of Operational Excellence role had been created with a remit to review business processes and identify areas for improvement; one of the first areas for review would be the student lifecycle.

It was noted that there had been issues with student satisfaction on the former INTO programme, which would likely result in poor NSS scores in future for students currently in the later years of the programme. The issues affecting the programme had now been addressed and surveys of students who had joined the programme more recently indicated that levels of satisfaction had improved.

There were mechanisms in place to close programmes that were not performing well. Where issues were identified programme teams were invited to work with the Centre for Educational Development in order to make improvements. Staff were provided with a range of ongoing development opportunities but in some cases there was a need for more targeted support.

The Council welcomed the comprehensive report from the Deputy Principal (Education) and the Associate Dean (Student Experience) and acknowledged the wide range of actions being taken to address the issues raised in the report.

Paper Council/1/H

12. Welfare and Pastoral Support at SGUL

Received and considered:

A report on welfare and pastoral support.

Reported:

Provision of welfare and pastoral support at St George's was considered to be good but had evolved over time and lacked clarity and clear lines of governance. A review was undertaken by an external consultant to identify areas for improvement in relation to both provision and governance. Based on the recommendations, it was proposed that support services be consolidated into a Student Welfare and Support Unit. In addition, funding was being identified to create a student welfare advisor post in the SU to support the Vice-President for Education and Welfare who provides advocacy support to students.

A bid to the OfS would be made as part of the Challenge Competition aimed at improving mental health outcomes for students. If successful, it was planned that the funding would be used to develop a peer support scheme in the SU.

St George's did not currently have in place a policy for students to consent to their friends or parents being contacted in the event of their being in crisis, as had recently been introduced by other institutions in light of a series of suicides at other institutions. However, the need to contact students' families was considered on a case by case basis according to the circumstances of individual students. It was planned that the approach and procedures at St George's would be reviewed.

Personal tutors were provided with training to identify students in difficulty and on the sources of support available. A system would be introduced to enable more experienced personal tutors to provide support for new personal tutors.

The Council acknowledged the importance of the support provided by the SU and welcomed the proposals to enhance provision in this area.

Paper Council/1/I

Governance

13. Constitutional Review and University Title

Received:

An update on progress towards achieving University Title for the constituent colleges of the University of London, and other related matters.

Reported:

The University of London Bill was scheduled to have its second reading in the House of Commons on 16 October. In anticipation of the Bill receiving royal assent, advice had been sought from the Privy Council on St George's constitution. Feedback had been provided that the quorum of Council would need to be included within the Statutes, instead of the Standing Orders, and should include a requirement for a majority of independent members to be present.

Paper Council/1/J

14. Committees of Council – Terms of Reference

Received and considered:

The Terms of Reference for the following committees of Council:

- (a) Audit Committee
- (b) Finance Committee

Reported:

The Terms of Reference were to be reviewed following the meeting to ensure the responsibilities in relation to the Financial Statements were adequately represented.

Agreed:

The Terms of Reference would be presented to the next meeting of Council.

Action: Deputy Director of GLAS

Paper Council/1/K

Reports

15. Health and Safety

Received and considered:

- (i) A report from the Safety Management Committee, and any issues that have arisen since the meeting of Council held on 3 July 2018.

Reported:

St George's had been subject to a non-routine visit by an inspector from the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in light of a concern raised by a student about the general safety within a particular area of the institution. The concern had not been reported internally by the student. The inspector had identified that the COSHH risk assessment required immediate updating, which had now been completed, and had made a number of further, oral recommendations for improvement. An action plan had been developed to address the issues highlighted, which would be overseen by the Safety Management Committee.

The visit had identified the need to improve the governance of health and safety and there communication strategy was being developed to ensure that all staff were aware of their responsibilities in relation to health and safety, which would be championed by the Deputy Principal (Research). Regular internal inspections would be conducted to ensure compliance across the institution and the need for sanctions in the event of non-compliance would be considered.

It was anticipated that St George's would receive a formal letter from the HSE and could be subject to an enforcement notice and penalty for non-compliance. The matter had been reported to the Chair of Council immediately after the HSE visit.

It was noted that the matter would not have been reported to the HSE had the student reported the concerns internally as it did not meet the HSE requirement for reporting. However, the matter would have been investigated fully and the need to report it considered. The HSE inspector had not raised any concerns in relation to the training, guidance and support provided to staff and students. However, staff and student handbooks would be updated to ensure responsibilities were clearly described and students would be required to complete training prior to being given access to laboratories.

The Council expressed concern that the inspection had highlighted a need for culture change across the institution in relation to health and safety. In addition, it was felt that a more detailed report on the matter should have been provided given the seriousness of the issues raised.

Agreed:

The Council welcomed the actions being taken but requested that more detailed reports on health and safety be provided in future. Information on completion of training by both staff and students would be a welcome addition to future reports.

Paper Council/1/L

Action: Chair of the Safety Management Committee

(ii) The Safety Management Annual Report

Received:

The Safety Management Annual report.

Agreed:

The report provided was helpful but the Council would need to receive more detailed reports in future to enable members to discharge their responsibilities effectively.

Paper Council/1/M

Action: Chair of the Safety Management Committee

16. Estates Report

Received and considered:

A report from the Director of Estates and Facilities.

Reported:

The Halls of Residence had been subject to an inspection by the Fire Brigade soon after the fire at Grenfell Tower and remedial works were carried out by the Halls' constructor, Willmott Dixon, between November 2017 and March 2018. A fire engineering assessment had also taken place, conducted by an external consultant, which concluded that a range of measures should be put in place to reduce the fire risk but that it would not be necessary to remove the cladding from the Halls of Residence. These measures, which had been implemented, included CCTV monitoring and regular spot checks.

Estates and Facilities staff had robust mechanisms in place for fire safety protection, detection and prevention. An internal audit of student housing was conducted every three years in line with UUK guidance. Installation of sprinklers in the buildings was not recommended due to its construction.

The insurers for the Halls of Residence, UMAL, had separately inspected the buildings and had made a number of recommendations which included removing and replacing the cladding. The Director of Estates and Facilities would follow up with the insurers to confirm the measures that

had been undertaken by St George's already and to clarify whether the removal of cladding was still recommended.

The Council was satisfied that the institution had taken appropriate measures to assess and address the fire safety risks posed by the cladding on the Halls of Residence but acknowledged the potential reputational damage that could arise from appearing not to follow the advice of its insurers'.

Agreed:

The matter would be reviewed by the Finance Committee at its meeting on 31 October and a further report made to Council in November.

Paper Council/1/N

Action: Director of Estates and Facilities

17. Finance Reports

Received and considered:

The Financial Report to 31 July 2018.

Reported:

The year end turnout was higher than forecast with a statutory surplus of around £3.5m after accounting adjustments, which may enable additional funding to be made available this year for student welfare and other projects. The External Audit was in progress and no material issues had been raised thus far.

The Chair of Finance Committee said that the year end position was an extremely positive outcome for the institution and commended the Director of Finance and other staff for this achievement.

Paper Council/1/O

18 Human Resources

Received and considered:

A report on Human Resources matters.

Reported:

Staff welfare and pastoral support was an important issue for Council. Staff had access to a confidential employee assistance programme and the St George's Counselling Service. A range of learning and development opportunities were also provided, including sessions aimed at improving management skills, and staff in HR provided support for managers. The Chair thanked the Acting Director of Human Resources for the comprehensive report.

Paper Council/1/P

19. Audit Committee

Received and considered:

A report from Audit Committee following its meeting on 2 October 2018.

Reported:

The guidance from the OfS had not yet been received but work was underway to prepare the reports required as part of the Annual Accountability Return.

Agreed:

The Chair of Audit Committee would confirm that Committee's schedule of reviews included any necessary review of data policies in the light of the training which had been delivered immediately before the Council meeting.

Paper Council/1/Q

20. Risk Management

Received and considered:

The new Strategic Risk Register, which had been presented to Audit Committee on 2 October 2018.

Paper Council/1/R

Matters for Approval and Report

21. Student Cases

Reported:

- (i) A Student Appeals Committee was convened to consider an appeal against the decision of a Discretionary Panel to terminate the registration of a student enrolled on the MBBS programme: the Committee upheld the appeal and determined the student should be permitted a third and final attempt at the assessment;
- (ii) One student appeal was referred to the Chair of Council who determined a Student Appeals Committee should be convened to consider the appeal against the decision of the Discretionary Panel. A second case has been referred to the Deputy Chair (acting on behalf of the Chair);
- (iii) A Fitness to Study and Practise Hearing Committee was convened to consider the case of a student enrolled on the MSc Physician Associate programme and determined that the student should repeat the second year of the programme under specified conditions;
- (iv) A student on the BSc Biomedical Science Programme was considered under the Student Disciplinary Procedure. The student received a formal written admonishment for breaching St George's regulations on misconduct and a formal written warning.

22. Award of Title of Emeritus Professor

Approved:

The award of the honorary title of Emeritus Professor to Professor Alan John Camm, Emeritus Professor of Clinical Cardiology, to be held in the Molecular and Clinical Sciences Research Institute with effect from 1 November 2018.

23. Chair's Action

Reported:

That the Chair of Council has taken action, in accordance with the General Regulation section 18.2, to revoke the award and associated privileges of MBBS of a student who had been enrolled at the University of Nicosia.

24. Minutes of Meetings

Committee	Date of Meeting	
Audit Committee	2 October 2018	s.marshall@sgul.ac.uk
Executive Board	25 September 2018	s.marshall@sgul.ac.uk
Finance Committee	26 September 2018	s.marshall@sgul.ac.uk
Joint Implementation Board	26 June 2018	eramosar@sgul.ac.uk
Joint Strategic Executive Committee	08 June 2018	eramosar@sgul.ac.uk
Risk, Audit & Efficiency Committee	19 September 2018	s.durkin@sgul.ac.uk
Senate	5 June 2018	s.marshall@sgul.ac.uk

26. Dates of meetings 2018-2019

All meetings take place in H2.5 and H2.6, Level 2 Hunter Wing at 3.00 pm

Tuesday 20 November 2018 (Mills & Reeve Offices, Monument)

Tuesday 5 February 2019

Tuesday 12 March 2019

Friday 17 May 2018 Away Day (Venue to be confirmed)

Tuesday 2 July 2019

Tuesday 15 October 2019

Tuesday 19 November 2019