

Council

12 October 2022

2.00pm – 4.00pm, H2.5/2.6, 2nd Floor, Hunter Wing

Minutes

Present:	Christine Swabey Godfrey Allen Sandra Ashton Dr Jane Cronin-Davis Jonathan Curtiss Professor Jon Friedland Professor Jenny Higham (Vice-Chancellor) Josh Joshi Ayesha Patel Damian Reid Sue Rimmer Professor Jane Saffell Dr Baba Sheba Sarah Wilton Ewart Wooldridge	Chair of Council Independent Member of Council Elected Professional Services Staff Member Ex officio Member Independent Member of Council Ex officio Member Ex officio Member Independent Member of Council Student Union President Independent Member of Council Independent Member of Council Ex officio Member Elected Academic Staff Member Independent Member of Council Independent Member of Council
In attendance:	Professor Deborah Baines [minute 139] Dr Anna Dulic-Sills Dr Julie Leeming Charlotte Martin (Clerk) Susan McPheat Paul Ratcliffe Graham Schofield Emma Whitaker Jenny Winters	Chair of Safety Management Committee Director of Research Operations / Deputy Chief Operating Officer Director of Planning Director of GLAS and Clerk to Council Director of Finance Chief Operating Officer Director of Estates Senior Governance Officer Director of HR and Organisational Development / Deputy Chief Operating Officer
Apologies:	Dr Sally Jackson Becky Kemp-Arnold Gillian Norton	Independent Member of Council Ex-Student Union President Independent Member of Council

126. Apologies for absence

Apologies were noted, as above.

127. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

128. Quoracy

It was noted that the quorum required, as set out in the Standing Orders of Council had been met, namely that at least nine members of Council were present, of whom at least five were independent members.

129. Remarks from the Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone at the beginning of the new academic year, especially Dr Jane Cronin-Davis, a new ex officio member in her capacity as Dean for Student Welfare and Support, Ayesha Patel, the Student Union President for the 2022/23 academic year and Charlotte Martin, newly-appointed Clerk to Council and Director of Governance, Legal and Assurance Services.

The Chair noted that the agenda had been arranged with a focus on the important issues for debate, with some items starred for noting without discussion.

The Chair reminded all present that all matters discussed were confidential to the meeting.

Standing Items

130. Minutes

Considered and approved: the minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2022, subject to two changes:

- minute 102: 'long-term forecast' to be changed to 'long-term plan' and to be used as the terminology going forward.
- minute 103: 'the budget' (rather than 'a draft budget') was approved, although it was noted that an updated forecast was subsequently provided.

Paper Council/1/A

131. Matters arising from the minutes not on the agenda

Received and considered: a report on actions and matters arising.

Reported:

The action tracker had been updated to use a colour-coded format.

Action (minute) Number	Update
90(i) (20/21)	Marked as 'overdue' and goes back to 2021. It is part of the ongoing Finance Committee work on the Long-term plan and the updated version will be presented to Finance Committee and then Council in November 2022.
33	BSc Biomedical Sciences: currently in the last year of Clinical Transfer. Two new workstreams, one focused on science and one focused on healthcare as a graduate, are in the curriculum advisory phase. There will be a further update at the February 2023 meeting.
46	Sustainability now included in the strategy and action can be closed.
53	Long-term plan presented to Finance Committee and then Council in November 2022, action can then be closed.
55	Chair of Audit, COO and Director of GLAS meeting to discuss deep dives and will report back to Audit Committee in November 2022.
61	SGUL-SU task and finish group due to report to Council in November 2022.
79(iii), (iv); 107	Due diligence action plan reported to Audit Committee in October and final report of SGUL/SGHT task and finish group to be reported to Council in November 2022.
82	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise) due to meet with architects and will then submit an options report to Council.
86; 114	Health & Safety Policy to be approved by Audit Committee in November 2022 and then recommended to Council for approval. SMC now reports to Audit Committee who in turn give assurance to Council. Training on Council's H&S responsibilities to be undertaken in January 2023.
109	Report on well-being and student support to be brought to February 2023 Council.
111	Ofsted action plan to be brought to November 2022 Council.

Agreed:

Closed items would be moved to a closed tab after the meeting. Updates on the items still in progress would be brought to the next meeting.

Action: Clerk

Paper Council/1/B

Strategic Matters

132. Strategic Partnership: Draft Joint Vision Statement and Update (Strictly confidential)

[This minute is confidential]

133. Report from the Vice-Chancellor

Received: a report from the Vice-Chancellor.

Reported:

The Vice-Chancellor discussed the cost of living crisis which is affecting all members of the community. Much work is being done on ensuring that a range of help is offered to students,

including ensuring students have warm space available to use at all times, access to cheap hot food, help with budgeting and economic recipes. Additional funds have been made available for the Hardship Fund and its regulations have been amended to reflect current costs. Funds will not meet every need and a national increase in both the student maintenance loans and level of the NHS bursary is supported.

In addition to the paper, the Vice-Chancellor reported the very positive news that the significant capital bid made to the OfS had been successful, although this remained strictly confidential until a public announcement was made in November 2022. She extended her thanks to the small team responsible for delivering this. The bid was for specific projects, restricted to education.

The Vice-Chancellor also welcomed the former Joint Faculty staff who, since the dissolution, are now SGUL staff. The dissolution, which was completed in July 2022, had been a 14 month process but a positive move, with staff already having a feeling of belonging to SGUL.

Paper Council/1/D

134. SGUL Strategy

Considered and approved: SGUL Strategy 2022-2030.

Reported:

The updated strategy is a result of collaborative work with much staff input and in response to Council feedback. Following Council approval, work on strategic implementation plans, the operational plan and associated KPIs and timescales for their delivery will progress. Internal KPIs will go to Executive Board and Council-level KPIs will be presented to Council in March 2023.

Discussed:

The Strategy gives a balance between ambition and realism but must be deliverable and will need to be prioritised over time and phasing within the implementation plan will be important. Other strategies, particularly an estates strategy, should also be developed in support of the main Strategy and financial plan. The Strategy sets out the goals, but the delineation of resources to meet these is not yet complete and costings need to be worked into the 5 year forecast. More detail on the finances will be discussed at Finance Committee and reported to Council in March 2023.

The importance of focusing on student experience was discussed, noting that this is not just as a part of education, but their experience of the University as a whole and that a better sense from students of the impact that their education is needed. The strategy focuses on the need for change, where SGUL needs to be different. The capital funding secured will also enhance the student experience.

The proposed 50% increase in research volume was discussed and it was agreed that this was desirable and ambitious but should be achievable, particularly given the aim to increase FTE by 15%.

It was noted that the timeline to March 2023 is the same as for a number of other major projects and careful work would need to be done to ensure there was sufficient time and resource for all these concurrent activities. The proposed partnership should enable SGUL to deliver the strategy and the capital work funding going towards education transformation, for the students, will make SGUL a better partnership option.

Agreed:

Council approved the strategy on the understanding that greater clarity on the financial plan will be brought to the November 2022 Council meeting and further discussion will take place in March 2023.

Action: Vice-Chancellor, COO

Paper Council/1/E

Education and Students

135. Report from the Students' Union

Received: ad oral update from the President of the Students' Union.

Reported:

Freshers' Fortnight had been both successful and busy, with students looking forward to starting work towards their careers and being very supportive of each other. Work being done on more inclusive events is welcomed by students, with a focus on opening up the community to all students. Alumni support was gratefully acknowledged as funds had recently been pledged for a dinner for international students, staff and alumni.

It was noted that students hadn't engaged so well with more expensive events which was deemed to be the effect of the cost of living crisis. A task group is looking at what can be done to support students with the cost of living and much activity is underway, including events with hot food provided, events timed so that commuter students can attend and an increase to the Hardship Fund. It was noted that it is important to hear from students directly as to what they need. Students are currently using shower facilities in gyms in order to save money and it was suggested that free sanitary products could be introduced along with the need for easily available and good quality shower facilities on site.

The election period for year representatives to liaise with the University is underway and now includes postgraduate taught and research positions in order to engage with all sections of the community.

Discussed:

The pressures, financial and otherwise, on students were noted along with the need to do as much as possible to alleviate these.

Agreed:

The SU President would report to the November 2022 meeting on student experience in the confines of a cost of living crisis, alongside a brief summary of actions taken.

Action: SU President

136. Report on NSS results

Received: a report on the NSS results.

Reported:

The report was an expansion on the summary received by Council on the day of the results. A fuller report and action plan will be brought to Council in February 2023, having been discussed first at Senate and related committees. NSS is currently under consultation and whilst the broad areas will remain the same, welcome changes will be made to the way in which the questions are asked, making them easier for students to understand and give answers which best fit with their experience.

Extensive work is being done to understand the sources of dissatisfaction to include other year surveys and workshops. Communication with students is key and a shared understanding with students of the issues is needed. From 2022/23, formal student-staff committees are standardised across all programmes.

Discussed:

The results do not always reflect SGUL's own assessment of the quality of its courses. NSS describes student perception and student satisfaction. Council gets assurance on the quality of the education in other ways too. Some local issues have been identified and resolved and the dissolution of the Joint Faculty should lead to improvements as all staff are now employed by SGUL.

NSS results for individual courses can change rapidly as the result of one-off matters which affect satisfaction but not necessarily the quality of education. Small cohorts can also have a disproportionate effect on results. Different solutions are needed for different problems and a strategy for change is needed to ensure that the right things are being done in order to see improvements in the results. Student facing staff are key and experiences can be varied. Teacher surveys are now in place which will help identify issues.

It was noted that the results were disappointing, could not be solely linked to Covid, and notwithstanding the amount of work done to improve the results, there is an urgent need to bring the improved performance seen elsewhere to this area. It was noted that ongoing work with the SU to review their governance structures and roles and responsibilities would hopefully support the articulation of student voice. It was agreed that a plan is needed in order to enhance the

student experience and that should be brought in February when Council would have a focussed meeting on Student experience matters.

Agreed:

Fuller report and action plan to be brought to Council in February 2023.

Action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education)

Paper Council/1/F

Research

137. REF 2021 submission, results and income

Received and considered: A report on the REF 2021 submission, results and income (*previously discussed by Research Committee*).

Reported:

The REF 2021 had had a very good result and increased research funding by 59% (significantly above the national average) and income had increased by £980k for 2022/23. Double the number of staff had been returned compared to REF 2014 but there had also been improved quality. SGUL was 8th in country for impact (120th in size). The weakest area is environment and this is being tackled as part of the new Strategy.

Discussed:

Council congratulated those involved on the excellent result. It was noted that the work done with Trust clinical groups and reports to the strategic board had helped with the REF impacts, not least as some of these were international.

Agreed:

Short presentations from key researchers would be set up for a future Council meeting.

Action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Enterprise), Clerk to Council

Paper Council/1/G

Sub-Committee Reports

138. Finance Committee Report

Received and considered: Finance Committee report including long-term planning and new forecast for 2022/23.

Reported:

The Task & Finish group set up to improve communications with the Trust had resolved the energy centre dispute, a particularly good outcome in the light of the current energy crisis. More data on the costs and stability of energy costs were being presented to the next meeting of Finance Committee.

Finance Committee had discussed the long-term plan and updated forecast for 2022/23 as more income than planned had been received which had allowed increased investments in the estates terrier, the Rob Lowe Sports Centre and the Hardship Fund. Further detail will be presented to the next meeting of the Finance Committee and the long-term plan will be presented to Council for approval in November 2022, prior to submission to the OfS.

The Estates masterplan is being produced in line with rest of the full Strategy and underlying strategies. Further detail underpinning the Estates strategy and the operational plan will be discussed by Finance Committee and presented to Council in March 2023.

The dissolution of the Joint Faculty had completed and the Director of Finance was thanked for the work done on the balance sheet separation and agreement of the outcomes on pension liabilities.

Paper Council/1/H

139. Audit Committee Report

Received and considered: Audit Committee reporting, including a report from Safety Management Committee (SMC).

Reported:

Following the recommendations of an internal audit, changes had been made to the governance of Health & Safety. SMC oversees Health & Safety risks, gaining assurance from the four sub-

committees which report to it and then reports directly in to Audit Committee. By scrutiny and challenge of SMC, Audit Committee provides assurance to Council on Health & Safety Management.

SMC reports were evolving and would in future provide more clarity on key issues, mitigations, risks being considered and any concerns of which Audit Committee and Council should be aware. Current such issues include the need for more fire marshals for Jenner and Hunter wings (although this had since been raised at Research Committee and with Institute Directors) and the shortage of resources in SHE team which had led to some policy updating still being outstanding.

The finalised updated Health & Safety policy would be considered at the next meeting of the Audit Committee and then presented to Council in November 2022 for approval.

Discussed:

Council's specific responsibilities are detailed in the Health & Safety policy and will be signposted, but it was agreed that Council's wider legal responsibilities should be made clearer with training at a future Council meeting, to ensure that there are being properly discharged.

Agreed:

Training session on Council's specific responsibilities for Health & Safety to be arranged.

Action: Clerk to Council.

Paper Council/1/I

Matters for Report

140. *Academic Promotions

Noted: Academic Promotions.

Paper Council/1/J

141. *HR Excellence in Research Award (HREiR) – Eight Year Review 2022

Noted: the Annual Report and action plan of the HREiR.

Paper Council/1/K

142. *Reportable Events to the Office for Students Received and considered:

Noted: reportable events submitted to the Office for Students

Paper Council/1/L

143. *Draft Agenda for Next Meeting

Noted: draft agenda for the next meeting to be held on 29 November 2022.

Paper Council/1/M

144. *Dates of Meetings 2022/23

Noted: dates for meeting for 2022/23. All meetings start at 2.00pm, in H2.5/6 unless otherwise stated.

29 November 2022

11 January 2023 – Council seminar

22 February 2023

28 March 2023

17 May 2023 – away day

27 June 2023

145. Any Other Business

There was no other business.