

# Council

8 February 2022

## Minutes

Present:	Christine Swabey Godfrey Allen Sandra Ashton Professor Jon Friedland Professor Sian Harding Professor Jenny Higham (Principal) Becky Kemp Arnold Gillian Norton Dr Aileen O'Brien 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 Student Member Independent Member of Council Ex officio Member 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 Rachel Allen Professor Debbie Baines [minute 66] Dr Julie Leeming Susan McPheat Sian Marshall Paul Ratcliffe Graham Schofield Emma Whitaker Jenny Winters	Academic Lead for Quality and Partnerships Chair of the Safety Management Committee Director of Planning Director of Finance Clerk to Council Chief Operating Officer Director of Estates and Facilities Senior Governance Officer Director of HR and Organisational Development
Apologies:	Jonathan Curtiss Dr Sally Jackson Sarah Jones Josh Joshi	Independent Member of Council Independent Member of Council Student Member Independent Member of Council

### 56. Declarations of interest

No declarations of interest were made.

### 57. Remarks from the Chair

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

### 58. Minutes

Considered and approved:

- (i) The minutes of the meeting held on 30 November 2021.

- (ii) *Minute 58 (ii) is confidential.*

Paper Council/7/A

### 59. Matters arising from the minutes not on the agenda

Received and noted: The actions and matters arising.

Paper Council/7/C

## 60. Report from the Principal

Received: A report from the Principal.

Paper Council/7/D

Reported:

The Principal reported that she had attended the Universities and Colleges Employers Association (UCEA) Board meeting where the considerable turbulence in the sector was highlighted, including the high UK inflation rate and the potential impact of the current pay offer.

Discussed:

There was currently no plan to raise home, undergraduate tuition fees above £9,250, which, with the current rate of inflation, would place significant financial pressure on universities. This would be particularly acutely felt by university medical schools, where the costs of delivering clinical programmes was high, and which also would be subject to changes to medical funding proposed by Health Education England from September 2022. The proposed changes would see a removal of the additional funding for Medicine placement provision in order to harmonise the level of funding with healthcare courses that currently do not receive the same level of funding,

The results of the Pulse Survey of staff held in December 2021 and associated action plan would be shared with Council. Members were also invited to attend a presentation on the results that would be delivered to staff later in the week.

**Action: Clerk to Council to share details of the Pulse Survey presentation**

## 61. Report from the Students' Union

Received: A report from the President of the Students' Union.

Paper Council/7/E

Reported:

The focus of the Students' Union was now on its long term priorities after a busy period of work in relation to the merger discussions. The Union was working with their existing partner AVA (Against Violence and Abuse) to provide timely access to Rape Crisis South London outreach support services for students who are survivors of sexual violence and training for staff in supporting students.

Other activities included:

- Raising and Giving week in aid of St George's Hospital charity, Ronald McDonald House in Tooting, Cancer Research UK and the International Refugee Trust;
- Antisemitism awareness week;
- Developing a societies handbook;
- Supporting conversations about the conversion therapy charter;
- Involvement in the Deputy Principal (Education) advisory group and briefings;
- LGBTQ+ History month.

Discussed:

The Students' Union had worked hard to support students in their return to site and the Sabbatical Officers were commended for their achievements.

The Dean for Students was working with the Students' Union to develop clearer governance arrangements with the university and to address a number of issues around data sharing, workforce structure and contracts. It was noted that the Students' Union was reliant on the hard work and energy of the students, which was a point of vulnerability for the university.

The funding of new minibuses through alumni donations would have a significant positive impact on clubs and societies. It was acknowledged that it was a priority to ensure the vehicles purchased were as environmentally friendly as possible.

There had been reports in the press of students being engaged in county lines activity. This was not an issue currently for St George's but students were given advice about drugs and alcohol at the beginning of their studies.

The university and Students' Union had policies on external speakers in the context of promoting freedom of speech, which enabled potentially controversial speakers to be moderated where necessary. Council members received training on the Prevent Duty and received the Prevent annual report each November.

The Council commended the Students' Union President and her team for the breadth of activities being taken forward to support students and the student experience.

Agreed:

That Council would be keen to receive further information in future on the governance arrangements between the university and the Students' Union and the university's approach to freedom of speech.

**Action: Dean for Students, Chief Operating Officer**

## Strategic Matters

62. *Minute 62 is confidential.*

### 63. Faculty of Health, Social Care and Education

Received and considered: A report from the Academic Lead for Quality and Partnerships on progress with the dissolution of the Joint-Faculty.

**Paper Council/7/G**

Negotiations had taken place to agree the Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) (TUPE) principles and the staff consultation would be launched later in February. A series of staff engagement activities would take place over the consultation period to provide further opportunities for staff to hear and discuss issues relevant to the consultation.

A joint task and finish group was established in October 2021 to identify options and potential risks for 'teach out' and transition arrangements for programmes with a shared contribution of teaching and academic support. Agreement had now been reached on a solution acceptable to both universities.

Progress had continued in other workstreams. A number of key activities within these workstreams were dependent on information arising from the TUPE proposals and teach out discussions and would be progressed in due course.

The Strategic Risk Register for the Joint Faculty had been superseded by a new risk register for the period to dissolution. This had been reviewed by the Risk, Audit and Efficiency Committee (RAEC) on 2 February 2022 and would be reviewed by the Audit Committee on 22 February 2022.

The Council thanked the Academic Lead for Quality and Partnerships and other staff for their hard work in ensuring the successful dissolution of the Joint Faculty.

## Academic Assurance

### 64. Quality Assurance Annual Report

Received and considered: A report on quality assurance, including outcomes from St George's educational programmes.

**Paper Council/7/H**

Reported:

The report provided data on student outcomes (progression from one year of a programme to the next; completion of programmes; degree classification profiles; and progression into employment and further study) for the university's three-year full-time undergraduate programmes. The timing of considering the data at programme and institutional level meant that limited information could be provided about the actions that would be taken in response to the report. It was planned that this work would be taken forward earlier in the year in future to enable a fuller report to Council.

Discussed:

The report provided useful information about undergraduate programme progression and completion. There was an appetite for more information to be provided on individual programmes, trends and comparisons with the sector, where this was possible. It was acknowledged that the usefulness of the report was limited by the lack of analysis of any trends, particularly in relation to potential grade inflation, and narrative around the areas of weakness and priorities for future action.

The report provided valuable data to inform the annual monitoring process and for other groups, such as the Inclusive Education Steering Group. The Data Improvement Group, set up by the Director of Quality and Partnerships and now chaired by the Associate Dean for Access and Participation, had worked hard to improve the quality of data in order to enable areas of weakness to be identified and addressed.

The drop in good degrees conferred for the BSc Diagnostic Radiography was being investigated but was thought to be attributable to students not having completed certain aspects of their placement requirements. It was noted that the programme comprised small numbers, which could affect the year-on-year outcomes.

Further information would be reported to Audit Committee and Council in due course regarding the internal audit recommendation to improve reporting on academic governance.

Agreed:

That the Chair of Council would meet with the Academic Lead for Quality and Partnerships and the Director of Quality and Partnerships to discuss the format of future reports, and that Damian Reid would be included in this conversation.

**Action: Chair of Council, Academic Lead for Quality and Partnerships**

#### **65. Senate**

Received and considered: The minutes of the meeting of Senate held on 25 January 2022.

**Paper Council/7/1**

Reported:

Council members were reminded that they were welcome to observe meetings of the Senate.

### **Reports from Committees**

#### **66. Health and Safety**

Received and considered:

- (i) *Minute 66(i) is confidential.*
- (ii) An oral update from the Chair of Council on the discussions around the governance of health and safety.

The Chair reported that a meeting had been held between the Chair of Council, Chair of Audit Committee, Chief Operating Officer and the Chair of Safety Management Committee to discuss the governance of health and safety. The meeting had been arranged following a discussion at Council in December 2021 regarding the delay in reporting to Council on the issue of fire safety at Horton Halls following the external fire assessment.

The health and safety policy was in the process of being reviewed and would be brought to Council before the end of the academic year. This review would consider governance arrangements, including reporting to Council and Audit Committee, and ensuring Council understood and was able to discharge its responsibilities effectively in relation to health and safety.

It was noted that the governance structure included a number of specialist committees which reported to the Safety Management Committee and which enabled assurance to be

provided to the Council. It was felt that there was scope to improve the current arrangements and to ensure clarity of roles and responsibilities.

Discussed:

There were challenges in ensuring staff engagement with health and safety and the progress made in raising awareness and increasing uptake of staff training had been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. It would be a priority to address these issues once the new policy was approved. The recently appointed Associate Director for Safety, Health and the Environment would take forward this activity.

There were a number of ongoing health and safety issues being progressed with the Trust, including in relation to South West London Pathology, and these would be monitored as part of the action plan arising from the merger discussions.

Agreed:

That a progress report would be made to the next meeting of Council on the policy review.

**Action: Chair of Safety Management Committee**

#### **67. Finance Committee**

Received and considered:

- (i) The minutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2022.
- (ii) An executive summary of the management accounts for December 2021.

**Paper Council/7/K1**

Reported:

The Investment Policy was in the process of being updated with a particular regard to environmental, social and governance factors.

An independent fire engineer had attended Horton Halls and had verbally confirmed that the only cladding that would require removal was the stair columns and top banding, and not the terracotta tiles. This meant that the work required could be carried out within the original budget set for the project, which was currently out to tender. However, since this verbal report was given the fire engineer had submitted written notification, which included a note stating that the remaining work should be carried out once the building was vacated and which called into question the original advice given. The Director of Estates and Facilities was seeking urgent clarification of the matter and Finance Committee would be updated once the position was known.

The professional indemnity contractor had agreed to inspect Horton Halls prior to the commencement of work to determine if a contribution could be made to the cladding replacement.

Universities UK (UUK) was consulting with universities on a proposal to defer the 2.5% inflation cap on USS benefits by increasing the contribution rate by 0.3%. Employers would pay 0.2% and the remaining 0.1% would be met through a modest extension to the recovery plan. The deferral of the cap would remain in place for three years until April 2025. The Finance Director recommended supporting the proposal as there was felt to be no other credible alternative proposal to ensure successful completion of the 2020 valuation exercise.

Agreed:

The Director of Estates and Facilities would update the Finance Committee regarding the replacement of the cladding at Horton Halls.

**Action: Director of Estates and Facilities**

#### **68. Considered and approved: The outcome of the security contract tender.**

**Paper Council/7/K2**

#### **69. Nominations and Honorary Awards Committee**

Received and considered: A report of the meeting held on 18 January 2022.

**Paper Council/7/L**

Reported:

The Committee had agreed to review the purpose and criteria for awards, which would be updated in the Honorary Awards Policy and would include a process for the revocation of Awards.

The Committee had reviewed the current membership of Council, which comprised 11 independent members of Council and two vacancies. Three members were reaching the end of their second term of office and the Chair was to discuss with each member their reappointment. The Committee would likely meet again in March or April to discuss succession planning once the position was known. The Committee had reviewed the diversity profile of Council and agreed to undertake a skills audit to inform succession planning.

Discussed:

An Honorary Degree had been awarded to Sir Joseph Hotung in September 2021 to recognise the impact that Sir Joseph's funding has had on research into molecular immunology and HIV/AIDS at the university and to celebrate his time serving on the Council. It was with great sadness that the Council noted that Sir Joseph had died on 16 December 2021.

Sir Joseph had funded the building of critical high containment laboratories for research into HIV at the university, along with existing laboratory refurbishments and support staff. Two Hotung Chairs in Molecular Immunology and Molecular Vaccinology were also endowed to the university for 10 years as part of the investment. Most recently, Sir Joseph had invested further into the Hotung Molecular Immunology Laboratory to develop plant-based manufacturing for antibodies to prevent Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV. This had helped cement the group's position as an international leader in the field of Plant Biotechnology for Human Health.

The Council acknowledged the significant contribution that Sir Joseph's support had had on research and education at St George's and the global impact that would be felt for years to come, through the students he had supported and the patients who would benefit from his research investments.

Agreed:

Further information about Sir Joseph Hotung's contributions would be shared with Council.

**Action: Clerk to Council**

70. Considered and approved: The nomination for an Honorary Fellowship on the recommendation of the Nominations and Honorary Awards Committee.

## Matters for Report

### 71. Student Cases

Reported:

- (i) A Student Appeal Committee was convened to consider the case of a student on the BSc Paramedic Science programme under the Procedure for consideration for a final discretionary attempt at an assessment and determined that the student should be permitted a final discretionary attempt at the assessment.
- (ii) A Fitness to Study or Practise Hearing Committee was convened to consider the case of a student on the BSc Diagnostic Radiography and determined that the student should be expelled.
- (iii) A Fitness to Study or Practise Hearing Committee was convened to consider the case of a student on the BSc Physiotherapy and determined that the student should receive a number of conditions.
- (iv) A Fitness to Study or Practise Hearing Committee was convened to consider the case of a student on the MSc Physiotherapy and determined that the student should receive a number of conditions.
- (v) A Fitness to Study or Practise Hearing Committee was convened to consider the case of a student on the BSc Paramedic Science and determined that the student should be expelled.

- (vi) A Fitness to Study or Practise Hearing Committee was convened to consider the case of a student on the MBBS programme and determined that the student should receive a formal written warning.
- (vii) Professor Sian Harding, acting as the Chair of Council's nominee, considered an appeal under the *Procedure for considering Allegations of Assessment Irregularity* from a student on the MSc Genomic Medicine. Professor Harding upheld the decision of the Board of Examiners and the student has received a range of penalties for plagiarism.
- (viii) Mr Godfrey Allen, acting as the Chair of Council's nominee, considered an appeal under the *Procedure for Consideration of Fitness to Study or Practise* from a student on the MBBS programme and determined that the student's case should be referred to a Student Appeal Committee.

**72. Agenda for the next meeting**

Received and noted: The draft agenda for the meeting of Council on 29 March 2022.

**Paper Council/7/M**

**73. Dates of Meetings 2021-22**

29 March 2022  
11 May 2022 – away day  
28 June 2022

**Any Other Business**

**74. Any other business**

There was no further business.

SM/16 February 2022

**Action Points**

Minute	Item	Action	Responsible
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60	Report from the Principal	The results of the Pulse Survey of staff held in December 2021 and associated action plan would be shared with Council.	Director of HR and OD
61	Report from the Students' Union	That Council would be keen to receive further information in future on the governance arrangements between the university and the Students' Union and the university's approach to freedom of speech.	Dean for Students, Chief Operating Officer
62	Lessons Learnt: reflections and ambitions for St. George's, University of London	<p>(i) That Council would review again the work undertaken by the Director of Planning to consider alternative merger partners.</p> <p>(ii) That the consolidated action plan would be reviewed at the next meeting of the Council.</p> <p>(iii) That a more detailed proposal on the joint working group with the Trust would be provided to the next meeting of the Council.</p>	<p>Director of Planning</p> <p>Chief Operating Officer</p> <p>Chief Operating Officer, Clerk to Council</p>
64	Quality Assurance Annual Report	That the Chair of Council would meet with the Academic Lead for Quality and Partnerships and the Director of Quality and Partnerships to discuss the format of future reports, and that Damian Reid would be included in this conversation.	Chair of Council, Academic Lead for Quality and Partnerships
66(i)	Health and Safety	That a report on the Dissection Room would be considered at the next meeting.	Chair of Safety Management Committee
66(ii)	Health and Safety	That a progress report would be made to the next meeting of Council on the policy review.	Chair of Safety Management Committee
67	Finance Committee	The Director of Estates and Facilities would update the Finance Committee regarding the replacement of the cladding at Horton Halls.	Director of Estates and Facilities
69	Nominations and Honorary Awards Committee	Further information about Sir Joseph Hotung's contributions would be shared with Council.	Clerk to Council