

Council

25/46 A meeting of the Council was held on Monday 30 June 2025, in Room 201 Carrington Building Whiteknights.

Present at the meeting:

The President	(In the Chair)
The Vice Presidents	(Mr Kevin Corrigan & Ms Kate Owen)
The Vice-Chancellor	(Professor R Van de Noort)
The Deputy Vice-Chancellor	(Professor P Yaqoob)
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor	(Dr C Baylon)
The Pro-Vice-Chancellor	(Professor E McCrum)

Mr S. Alexander	Mr. J Liu
Mr S Ali	Mrs S. Maple
Mrs S. Butler	Mr. A. McCallum
Professor. E Beleska-Spasova	Mr P. Milhofer
Professor R. Frazier	Mr P Milner
Professor J Gibbins	Mrs S Peck
Ms. M Hudson	Professor K Strohfeldt
Mrs. T Koravand	Dr J Young
Mr. J Jack	

In attendance:

The Chief Strategy Officer and University Secretary (Dr R Messer)
The Chief Financial Officer (Mr V Wijeratne)
Mrs E Murphy-Boyce (minute secretary)

Apologies received from Ms Sally Plank and Professor Dominik Zaum.

25/47 Disclosure of Interests

The Disclosure of Interests was received and noted.

25/48 Reappointment of members of Council, including the President

It was explained to Council Members that Item 9 on the agenda would be considered first, as this pertained to the reappointment of a number of Council members.

Ms Owen the Chair of the Appointments Committee notified Council that both the President of Council (Ms Helen Gordon) and the Vice-President of Council (Mr Keven Corrigan) had agreed to re-stand for their positions. It was noted that the Appointments Committee had written to all members and that there had been a very strong endorsement for both individuals.

Ms Owen sought comments on the re-appointment of the President and Vice-President and then approval to reappoint Ms Helen Gordon to the role of President for a further period of 4 years, and Mr Keven Corrigan to the role of Vice-President for a further period of 3 years.

Council Members approved the reappointment of both the President and Vice-President of Council.

The Council also approved the reappointment of a number of other Council members as set out in the Appointment Committee papers.

The appointments approved by the Council were:

- 1) To reappoint Helen Gordon as President of the Council for a further and final period of four years to 31 July 2029
- 2) To reappoint Kevin Corrigan as Vice-President of the Council for a further and final period of three years to 31 July 2028
- 3) To reappoint the following lay members (Class 2) for a further term of three years to 31 July 2028:
 - Sue Maple
 - Peter Milhofer
 - Shamshad Ali
 - Angus McCallum
 - Steve Alexander
 - Janet Young

Resolved:

1. 'That the proposal to extend the term of certain lay members of Council, including the President, so submitted, be approved

It was noted that a number of Council Members' terms were coming to an end. The President personally thanked Dr Chris Shaw, and noted that there had been a mutual agreement that his term on Council would come to an end. The President paid credit to the tenacity and passion with which Dr Shaw had considered important issues. It was noted that colleagues would ensure Dr Shaw was invited to the University's centenary celebrations next year.

25/49 President's opening remarks

The President noted that the new Reading Students' Union sabbatical officers were now in role. She congratulated them on their appointments and welcomed them to Council. She noted that there were lots of further conversations to be had, and encouraged them to speak out and be honest on important issues. She reiterated that the student voice was vital and always welcome.

The President welcomed Vin Wijeratne the University's new Chief Financial Officer, to his first meeting of Council.

It was noted that Erin Murphy-Boyce, the minute secretary of Council, would be relinquishing her duties after this meeting owing to workload, and the Council thanked her for her excellent

minuting of meetings. Council noted that Tasha Easton, Executive and Governance Manager, would be taking over from September.

The President noted that Ann Morgan, the Vice-Chancellor's Executive Assistant would be leaving her role [redacted, section 40]. The President paid credit to Ann's work and especially to her amazing support not only the Vice-Chancellor but to the President herself and the Vice-Presidents of Council.

[Redacted, section 40].

It was noted that two University colleagues had been named in the King's Birthday Honours for their respective contributions to higher education and climate education nationwide. Dr Karen Henderson, Head of the Research and Innovation Directorate, was appointed a Member of the Order of the British Empire (MBE) for services to higher education. Professor Andrew Charlton-Perez, Head of the School of Mathematical, Physical and Computational Sciences, was appointed an Officer of the Order of the British Empire (OBE) for his contributions to climate science and education.

The President noted that it remained a challenging time for higher education and that as a result governing bodies were being looked at in how they work with the executive to support change while remaining a critical but supportive friend. The President noted that she had attended a CUC plenary session in May to discuss what 'good' governance looks like. It was noted that the current Governance Review that was taking place within the University would involve looking at Council performance but it would be sensible to wait until the new CUC code was published, which was taking longer than expected.

The President noted that she had visited RUMAL and had been very impressed with the efforts of the new Provost there in growing student numbers and revising programmes.

Vice-Chancellor's opening remarks

The Vice-Chancellor informed Council that due to there being a number of bigger issues to discuss, he had been allocated around an hour for his opening remarks.

The Vice-Chancellor presented Council with a UUK graph setting out the impact of recent Government policy decisions from 2025/26. He caveated that he did not believe the graph to be wholly correct, but that it effectively demonstrated the financial impact of a number of recent Government decisions and announcements, which were: the uplift in tuition fees; the uplift in NI contributions which accounted to a £4 million annual cost to the University; the International study levy which was forecast to have a £5 million impact, although it was noted that this was only a white paper at this stage and that any impact was likely from 2026/27; a cut in the strategic priorities grant; a change to how much could be charged for foundation year fees in the arts, humanities and social sciences; and the removal of funding for level 7 degree apprenticeships (although this was not yet in force). He noted that all but the uplift in tuition fees represented a negative impact as a result of Government policy. It was clear that the Government did not have an agreed direction for HE and there was no plan to create financial sustainability as there did not appear to be any politically palatable solutions.

In response to questions from Council Members on potential future fee increases, the Vice-Chancellor clarified:

- If there was to be a further uplift in tuition fees, universities would need an announcement imminently to allow them to operationalise for 2026 entrants. He confirmed that the University had made changes to its student contract to allow for future increases in tuition fees for already enrolled students, but so far there had been nothing from the Government on this. He reminded Council members that the Secretary of State had set out the measures that universities would have to meet in order to be eligible for further tuition fee increases, which included: excellence in education; driving social mobility; driving economic growth; and being a civic university. The Vice-Chancellor felt that in general the University was meeting these tests, although there was more to do in some areas, for example our relationship with the wider Reading community.

The Vice-Chancellor informed Council that Professor Parveen Yaqoob (Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation) had been involved in a taskforce on transformation and efficiency. Professor Yaqoob explained to Council that the Taskforce had identified 7 opportunities:

- Innovative collaboration structures including opportunities for mergers. The emphasis had been on looking for examples where universities can learn from others. It was clear that there were no obvious candidates for mergers with UoR.
- Sharing services and infrastructure. It had been noted that there were bespoke services at all universities but that using shared services would involve significant standardisation which would be a huge amount of work. There had also been VAT issues that had caused significant barriers in the past but the CMA had indicated that these would not be insurmountable. JISC were working on a strategic outline case' which would be coming to the taskforce for review. Professor Yaqoob noted that where there are already shared services universities were only making savings of around 6-10% and so shared services were not the whole answer. Professor Yaqoob noted that the University had made a few attempts to share services, for example sharing an MRI scanner facility. There were also discussions ongoing about sharing the University's statistics service but initial efforts had identified some potential difficulties.
- Leveraging sector buying power, for example in contract management. JISC were in the process of outlining a strategic case in this area and Professor Yaqoob agreed that this was something the University should be involved with.
- Digital transformation
- Efficiency maturity framework – AHUA were developing a maturity model and the University would benefit from engagement in this area.
- Leadership skills – in areas mandated to do change. The CUC is reviewing governance at HEIs.
- Regulatory Environment Professor Yaqoob noted that the Government strategy for higher education was not joined up and that there required a more clear and coherent vision in order to reduce the regulatory burden.
- Professor Yaqoob explained that the taskforce was looking at collaboration in the areas of infrastructure and digital but it needed government funding to do this

properly. Lots of activity would follow as part of phase 2 of the taskforce's work which would involve an implementation group and support for the sector.

In response to questions on the work of the taskforce, Professor Yaqoob and the Vice-Chancellor confirmed:

- Although there are some models for transformation that may not require further consideration by the Government (for example sharing resources and leveraging collaboration that already exists), which are included in the outline case from the taskforce, there are further issues to be ironed out before any action could be taken in these areas, including capacity and who would lead on each project.
- The opportunities were broad and complex and it may be sensible to focus on one or two through a University lens initially
- Generally shared services are notoriously difficult to set up and manage, and almost impossible where a business is attempting to keep the services in the UK. It was noted that the Police in the UK were in the process of unwinding some of their shared services provision as it was not working.
- Use of the University's global hubs is already being explored in terms of efficiencies and the sector is already looking at where it can leverage buying power, i.e. Microsoft contracts.
- It was confirmed that the University is a part of the Southern Universities procurement consortium (SUPC).

The Vice-Chancellor reminded Council that they had agreed a plan at the November 2024 meeting to eliminate the University's financial deficit by 2028/29. He provided an update to Council on the 6 areas of mitigation the Council had agreed to, in order to tackle the deficit for the 2024/25 academic year:

- The Global Sustainable Leaders scholarship – the University had made 167/300 offers for the scholarship to high achieving applicants
- Learning analytics – the Vice-Chancellor noted that the project was working against tight timelines but was progressing to plan
- The work to make further savings in the academic schools was on track
- The work to make savings in the Directorates was underway – work was currently being completed on the governance review and the transformation programme
- Henley Strategy – Professor Beleska-Spasova would be speaking to Council on this matter later in the meeting. It was noted that the Tianjin Strategic Project had been delayed by one academic year.
- Internationalisation and global engagement

On undergraduate student applications, the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that he had confidence that the numbers were progressing well. He noted that every university in the S10 group had seen a reduction in students applying, with the exception of City University and the University of Reading, which made it near-impossible to deal with financial deficits. At the University, there had seen a growth in applications year on year since 2019, when there were just over 18,000 applicants. The University had currently received [redacted, section 43] applications with a [redacted, section 43] on open day attendance. [redacted, section 43].

The Vice-Chancellor noted that improvements in application numbers did seem to translate to acceptance. There had been a [redacted, section 43] in students choosing UoR as 'Conditional Firm' but large numbers of students were still choosing the University as their conditional insurance choice. In the last application cycle, the Russell Group as a whole dramatically

lowered their tariffs and took students who had not met the requirements of their offers. This impacted on clearing and the overall student numbers were vastly different from that forecasted. It was hoped that the Global Sustainability Leaders scholarships would put the University in a better position of attracting more of the higher achievers. The Vice-Chancellor noted that recruitment targets had been reduced in order to account for similar behaviour from the Russell Group happening again in the 2025 confirmation and clearing round.

The Vice-Chancellor informed Council that UEB was considering a plan B in the event that the mitigations put in place did not work and/or student numbers were significantly lower than predicted. [Redacted, section 43]. It was noted that maintaining the budget was of paramount importance and UEB would look to make further savings in Professional Services or in the Academic Schools if necessary.

In response to questions from Council members, the Vice-Chancellor clarified:

- [Redacted, section 43].
- [Redacted, section 43].

On the new University strategy, UEB would commence work on this in September once they had a clear idea of student numbers and the success of the GSL scholarship. UEB would look for approval of the new strategy by the September 2026 Council. The new strategy would:

- [Redacted, section 43].
- [Redacted, section 43].
- [Redacted, section 43].
- [Redacted, section 43].

The Vice-Chancellor informed Council of the work being undertaken to prepare for the University's centenary celebrations, including work to review the University's archives, 33 projects that had been proposed by students and colleagues, and a plan to turn the dilapidated walled garden into an education park.

Items of particular strategic importance

25/50 Budget 2025-26

The President reminded Council that the Budget being presented for approval was a reflection of that approved in November 2024. She noted that there was a sense of unease about setting another deficit budget but that this was in line with that agreed with Council in November. Council would be reviewing the situation again in Autumn 2025. The full Budget papers had been provided to members in advance of the meeting and had been given due scrutiny by the Scrutiny and Finance Committee, the minutes of which were included in the papers.

[Redacted, section 43].

[Redacted, section 43].

[Redacted, section 43].

In response to questions from Council members, the Director of Finance confirmed that:

- References to savings in 2024/25 had already been identified in this year's budget through strategic restructuring and other non-staff spend initiatives. There were still

money-saving projects that needed scoping before savings could be realised.

- Funds from NIRD are only being used to fund activities that it is permitted to under the relevant trust deeds; it is not being used to fund the general deficit of the University. The Council was the trustee of NIRD and took very seriously its responsibility to ensure the deployment of NIRD funds were being used appropriately
- The University's planned growth in student numbers was [Redacted, section 43] for international UG students, [Redacted, section 43] for UK UG students, with the Global Sustainability Leaders scholarships delivering 300 students. The University expected a reduction in PGT numbers.
- In future financial reports Finance colleagues would split movement in the budget into those factors in control of the University vs
- those outside its control to allow Council to identify how far management actions have contributed to any savings made. A third category relating to account changes would also be welcome.
- It was noted that Scrutiny and Finance committee had discussed the budget, and that there had been discomfort about approving another deficit budget. There had been discussion about whether the University was being transformative enough in its thinking and whether Council clearly understood how affordable the plans put forward to it really were.

In relation to a question from Council members related to the course of action should the Government make further policy decisions that squeeze universities in the Autumn, the Vice-Chancellor informed Council that there were always ways to accelerate savings if necessary, but these were likely to affect the quality of experience, education and research at the University, and so such measures would be avoided unless necessary due to the inherent risks.

The Chief Financial Officer assured Council that he undertook to deliver on all commitments made. He noted that concerns had been raised and that they had been heard. In terms of reporting and engagement, the Chief Financial Officer confirmed that it would be as transparent and timely as possible. He noted Council's comments in terms of categorising factors and would take it forward.

The President noted that many members of Council had made clear their discomfort with approving a deficit budget, but UEB had plans in place to continue to make savings in line with the plan approved by Council in November. The President noted that Council would like the opportunity to further review the financial position once student numbers were known and that it would like further analysis and reporting on the position. The President noted that UEB had been working on a plan B in case the student numbers did not meet those forecasted but there was a need to accommodate the relationship between quality and financial sustainability. The President asked Council members whether they were content to approve the 2025/26 budget which reflected a deficit with manageable cash position.

Resolved:

1. 'That having regard to the background papers and the S&FC minute, the Budget for 2025-26, so submitted, be approved.'

25/51 Sustainable Governance and Professional Services

Council received a presentation from the Director of University Corporate Services, the Chief Digital and Information Officer and the Director of Student Experience and Education on the

work that had been undertaken on the Professional Services Programme and the Governance Review.

The Director of Student Experience and Education confirmed that lots of work was already underway in the Professional Services Programme. She explained that the Heads of Directorate had been working with SUMS Consulting to identify ways to work more collaboratively and assess areas to work on that would have the biggest impact. She noted that today she would provide an update on the scoping phase of the project, with a full business case to come to Council in the Autumn. A project specific Programme Director was working with the Heads of Directorate on the project.

The Director of Student Experience and Education set out the programme aims which included making savings on a per year and cumulative basis and introducing a culture of continuous improvement. She confirmed that the full Professional Services Design, would be presented to Council in Autumn.

Council were informed that, to date, the programme had turned around the deficit in Campus Commerce, completed a review of Health and Safety Services which resulted in the creation of a single centralised team, reviewed the University's endowment portfolio to identify ways to use it more effectively and free up funding for other purposes, and were conducting a review of non-pay spend, including subscription costs.

The Director of University Corporate Services provided an update on the Governance Review Project. She confirmed that it was designed to look at how the University governs itself and ensure the governance is effectively supporting the delivery of the University strategy. The Director of University Corporate Services noted that project had been looking for quick wins that would make an impact immediately. The review had so far recommended the closure of four committees which had resulted in the equivalent of 10 weeks of staff time being saved. She confirmed that the project framework would be coming back to Council in the Autumn for a decision.

The Director of Corporate Services set out the risks to the scoping phase of the project. These were:

- External factors
- Dependent University initiatives
- Requiring buy-in from all colleagues
- Having sufficient resource and capacity to manage competing priorities
- An urgent need for UEB sponsorship on the basis that the new CEO would support from next year.

The Chief Digital and Information Officer set out the design principles and explained that the benefit realisation for the project would be in 2028/29. A programme board had been set up which was being temporarily chaired by Professor Zaum until the new COO was in place next year.

In response to questions from Council members, the following was clarified by the Director of Corporate Services, the Chief Digital and Information Officer and the Director of Student Experience and Education:

- Although the remit of Council was not included in the initial phase of work carried out in Governance Review, it was intended that Council would be considered as part of the

process. It was sensible to wait until the new CUC code was published before designing the review of Council

- The Council supported the aims of the Governance review in removing layers of governance that were not required and encouraging individuals to make informed decisions, but it was noted that this was likely to be a change in culture amongst staff and a move away from 'how things had always been done'. It was noted that UEB buy-in was vital in this respect. There was a misunderstanding in some areas of the University that heavier governance meant better risk management and this was not the case, often risks were being under or over managed. Council members were keen to understand how the staff time saved from removing layers of committees would be spent. Council was informed that this would form part of a wider plan looking at increasing productivity.
- The Council acknowledged the amount of work carried out so far and thanked the Director of Corporate Services, the Chief Digital and Information Officer and the Director of Student Experience and Education. It was noted that it was helpful to see the 'quick wins' that had already been achieved alongside the longer term goals and how these fit in with other University priorities.
- It was noted that the University had a schedule of delegations that was drafted as part of the Statute Reform Project 13 years ago. This needed reviewing as part of the Governance Review and would provide a list of all relevant decisions and who was responsible for making them within the University.
- It was noted that AI was being considered as part of the Professional Services Programme initially in terms of where AI automation could improve process efficiency.
- It was noted that there was a plan once the scoping phase was complete and under the continuous improvement principle to make sure that people were making the decisions they were supposed to be making and that the decisions were good and well informed.

The President noted that Council were being asked to agree the Governance Principles today. She commented that Council was very interested in this work and happy to be sounding boards as the projects progressed. The President thanked the Director of Corporate Services, the Chief Digital and Information Officer and the Director of Student Experience and Education for all their work so far.

Resolved :

1. 'That the principles of the Governance Review, so submitted, be approved
2. That the activity to date and direction of travel on the Head of Directorates Professional Services Programme, and as part of that, and at the specific request of Council, the University's approach to the use of automation and AI for Professional Services, be noted.'

25/52 Digital and Estates Strategies

Revised Digital Strategy

The Chief Digital and Information Officer provided a short update to Council on the revised Digital Strategy. He noted that currently in terms of spend, the budget was coming in £2.5 million under the £47 million budget. There had been a slight underspend on operational expenditure and a slight overspend on capital expenditure.

[Redacted, section 43]. The current strategy would end in 2027.

In terms of questions from Council members, the Chief Digital and Information Officer confirmed:

- In terms of prioritising, nothing was more important than cyber security and that this would never be compromised.
- All projects set out in the 5-year strategy (starting in 2022) would be completed by 2027.
- There was an opportunity for a broad review of IT use across the institution in the future in order to simply and standardise the University's capabilities in this area and its digital infrastructure.
- Successfully procuring contractors had kept projects on track. Moving forwards there would be attempts to identify and make the most of untapped talent in different areas of the University.

The President noted and acknowledged support for the Chief Digital and Information Officer and the strategy moving forwards. Council approved the Digital strategy Subject to specific key projects -going-live in Autumn.

Revised Estates Strategy

The Director of Estates gave a brief update to Council on the revised Estates Strategy. He noted the key points as follows:

- Good progress had been made on the strategy so far
- The strategy had had to be recast following the Council's decision to reduce the annual capital budget from 40m to 30m, meaning that a number of projects intended for the period 2027-32 could not now proceed as originally conceived
- There had been operational budget cuts which had in part created substantial risks
- There was a need to avoid short term thinking when considering the University Estate
- There remained good opportunities for the University to take advantage of [Redacted, section 43].
- Lots of work was ongoing looking at space utilisation and repurposing so the University is fit for the future.

The Director of Estates set out his key priorities in terms of a revised strategy and asked for Council approval for the Estates Directorate to focus on the following:

1. Maximise Assets
 1. [Redacted, section 43].
 2. [Redacted, section 43].
 3. [Redacted, section 43].
 4. [Redacted, section 43].
 5. [Redacted, section 43].

2. Education & Research
 1. URS project
 2. Agrifood / Farms project
 3. Edith Morley project
 4. Research funded projects
 5. Study and Teaching Spaces
3. Risk & Compliance
 1. Backlog Maintenance Programme
 2. Critical Infrastructure Projects
 3. Legislative Compliance Programme
 4. Chancellors Building (and URS)
 5. CCTV, ANPR & Access Control
4. Optimise Operations
 1. Space Utilisation projects
 2. CAFM System
 3. Net Zero Carbon Plan
 4. Smart Campus
 5. Accessibility Projects

The Director of Estates noted that the key priorities were a rejig of the Estates strategy that was set in 2022. The President noted that Council were being asked to approve a revised strategy on the basis of a reduced budget.

In response to questions from Council members, the Director of Estates confirmed that:

- Legal compliance would be assured by focussing on set priorities. This would involve a focus on programmes of work rather than individual projects.
- Long term, the Estate would not be affordable if space utilisation was not reconsidered.

It was noted that as there was a significant change to the risk profile for the Estate Strategy, and this should feed into the relevant risk register.

The President reminded Council that they were being asked to agree a recast Estates strategy and that members should be mindful that some of the work included in the initial

2022 strategy would now not be completed. The President asked for regular updates on programmes and assurance on compliance.

Resolved:

1. 'That, having regard to the minute on this item from the Scrutiny and Finance Committee, the revised Digital Strategy, so submitted, be considered and approved
2. That, having regard to the minute on this item from the Scrutiny and Finance Committee, the revised Estates Strategy, so submitted, be considered and approved.'

25/53 Strategy for Henley Business School

Professor Beleska-Spasova, Dean of the Business School provided an update to Council on the outline strategy for the Business School.

She informed Council that Henley would play a critical role in overcoming the institutional deficit. They were in the process of developing a large international partnership with Tianjin University in China as well as reshaping the business school as part of a transformation project.

The new strategy would run between 2025 and 2030. Henley had been working on the strategy for the past 6 months, engaging in lots of consultation and scrutiny on the proposals to identify strengths and weaknesses. The Business School had developed confidence from considering the current major world challenges, including food security, international trade and investment, advanced technology and geo-politics and identifying that UoR produces world-class research and teaching in at least three of these areas. [Redacted, section 43].

Professor Beleska-Spasova set out principles that would form the basis of the new strategy. [Redacted, section 43].

It was recognised that implementation would now need to be thought through, and that it would need to be set against delivery of other University priorities.

In response to questions from Council Members, Professor Beleska-Spasova clarified:

- [Redacted, section 43].
- [Redacted, section 43].
- [Redacted, section 43].

The President thanked Professor Beleska-Spasova and asked Council members to confirm whether they were happy to endorse broadly the direction of travel with regard to the new HBS strategy. The President noted that she looked forward to seeing more detailed proposals by the end of the year.

Resolved:

1. 'That, the Strategy for Henley Business School, so submitted, be considered

2. That, the direction of travel in relation to the Strategy for Henley Business School, be endorsed'

25/54 Research Income

Professor Yaqoob gave a presentation to Council on research income.

She noted that the benefits of being a research intensive University included enhanced reputation and global standing, however currently it was not possible to recover the full cost of research. Professor Yaqoob explained that the large research intensive universities in the UK were able to recover around 78% of costs, whereas at UoR the figure was around [Redacted, section 43]. The UKRI had produced a paper on under-recovery in the sector and had noted that the current position was not sustainable for institutions.

Professor Yaqoob set out the actions the UoR was taking to help combat the research recovery deficit. These were :

- [Redacted, section 43].
- [Redacted, section 43].
- [Redacted, section 43].

The University was considering the UUK blueprint recommendations, and looking to fund research to align with the Government's five missions. [Redacted, section 43].

[Redacted, section 43].

The President thanked Professor Yaqoob for a fantastic presentation and discussion which had ensured Council had a better understanding on research position.

Resolved:

1. That, the matter of how research income into the University works and how the University is taking action to improve cost recovery in this area, be noted'

25/55 Report of the Senate

It was noted that although Senate was responsible for maintaining the academic integrity of the University, the OfS now required Council to approve the Annual Statement on Research Integrity. Council members were encouraged to read the minutes of Senate on this item which were included in the Council papers.

Resolved :

1. 'That the Annual Statement on Research Integrity, so submitted, be approved'

25/56 Report of the Appointments Committee

It was noted that the Council had already dealt with reappointments.

Tasha Easton would forward the report on appraisal to Council members for their review. It was noted that the role of Council would be revisited next year, in light of the new CUC code, which was due to be published presently.

Resolved:

2. 'That the proposal to extend the term of certain lay members of Council, including the President, so submitted, be approved
3. That the summary of this years' appraisal process, be noted'

25/57 Report of the Audit Committee

[Redacted]

Resolved:

1. 'That the Risk Register for 2025-26, and the Annual Report from the Risk Management Group, so submitted, be approved'
2. [Redacted]

25/58 Report of the Investment and Development Committee

[Redacted, section 43].

Council was asked to note the content of the cover sheet for this item, as included in the papers.

Resolved:

1. 'That, having regard to the recommendation from the Investments and Development Committee, the Investment Policy, so submitted, be approved'

25/59 Financial Regulations

Council was asked to approve the amended financial regulations and add the new Chief Financial Officer into the document.

Resolved:

1. 'That, noting the endorsement of them by the Scrutiny and Finance Committee, the amended Financial Regulations, so submitted, be approved.'

25/60 Report of the Honorary Degrees Committee

Council was asked to approve the list of individuals to whom the University wanted to award honorary degrees. 26 candidates had been nominated this year.

Resolved:

1. 'That the recommendations for the award of Honorary Degrees, so submitted, be approved'

Items for report

25/61 Report of the Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor noted two further issues that he wanted to discuss with Council, these were:

- The enactment of parts of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 (HEFSA) from the 1 August 2025
- The University's change to policy following the Supreme Court Judgement in the For Women Scotland case

HEFSA

From the 1 August certain parts of HEFSA would be introduced, requiring universities to protect freedom of speech and academic freedom. The Vice-Chancellor explained that the legislation had been paused when the Labour Government had come into power. The OfS had issued initial draft guidance and sought responses, but had then taken 400 days to respond and provide final guidance with only 41 days to implement it. The University had made a principle decision to amend its policies in line with HEFSA notwithstanding the pause.

The Vice-Chancellor noted that it was important for Council to understand how the University was implementing HEFSA and support the University's commitment to protect freedom of speech and academic freedom on campus. It was noted that universities were awaiting further advice from the OfS on how to promote freedom of speech.

The Vice-Chancellor clarified that the new Freedom of Speech Code of Practice had been approved by the University Executive Board, as it was responsible for policy setting under the delegation of authority policy. In the University of Sussex case, it was unclear where policy was made. It was noted that the Vice-Chancellor and the President of Council already discussed any significant issues relating to freedom of speech or academic freedom, but that they would further consider how Council could be involved in this area further, without affected the University's ability to be agile in relation to any matters arising.

Supreme Court Judgment

The Vice-Chancellor noted that there were significant consequences as a result of the judgment. The University had received legal advice and as a result had updated some of its policies relating to the use of single-sex facilities. He clarified that the University's position was now that toilets that are designated single sex, should only be used by individuals of that biological sex. The EHRC had issued interim guidance setting out that transgender individuals should use the toilets of their biological sex or mixed-sex provision. There had been a significant response from transgender students and staff as a result of the policy change.

The University had determined that currently there were less than 5 buildings on campus where there were no unisex/mixed sex facilities. The University was looking at whether any existing facilities in these buildings could be changed to mixed sex over the summer. The Vice-Chancellor assured Council that the University would continue to support transgender staff and students while working within the law.

The Vice-Chancellor acknowledged that the legal framework was complicated, with the University having specific obligations to staff under the Workplace Regulations (1992) Act, and broader obligations under the Equality Act. It was noted that the University was clear that it needed to preserve its single sex spaces and that the legal advice it had received underpinned this. The University's Chief Legal Office was working closely on this matter with the University Executive Board.

It was noted that RSU was responding to the EHRC consultation. The Union had been providing support to transgender students and was reaching out to relevant societies that may be impacted.

Professor Yaqoob noted that a working group was being established within the University, including trans students in order to produce a new policy for transgender staff and students at the University, which was in-line with the law as clarified by the Supreme Court Judgment.

The President noted that this was a very difficult topic but thanked colleagues for all their work so far. She noted that it was very important to keep the dialogue going with colleagues and with RSU on this matter.

Resolved:

1. 'That the Report of the Vice-Chancellor, so submitted, be received'

25/62 Report of the Scrutiny and Finance Committee

Resolved:

1. 'That the report of the Scrutiny and Finance Committee, so submitted, be received'

25/63 Report of the People and Remuneration Committee

Council members were asked to note the staff survey results and the minutes of the relevant discussion that took place at the People and Remuneration Committee on this topic.

Resolved:

1. 'That the Report of the People and Remuneration Committee, so submitted, be received'

25/64 Report of the Student Experience Committee

Resolved:

1. 'That, the Report of the Student Experience Committee, so submitted, be received.'

25/65 Suggested items for future Council meetings

Resolved:

1. That, the paper on Suggested items for future Council meetings, so submitted, be received'

Items for note

25/66 Minutes (25/20-25/45) of the meeting held on 10 March 2025

It was noted that Minutes 25/20-25/45) of the meeting held on 10 March 2025 were accurate.

25/67 Matters not arising elsewhere on the agenda, if any

None.

25/68 Decisions taken by the President on behalf of the Council

It was noted that three decisions had been taken by the President and that Council members should contact the President for more information if required.

25/69 Documents sealed and to be sealed

The Seal report was received and noted.

25/70 Any Other Business

None.

25/71 Dates of meetings of the Council for the Session 2025/26:

- Thursday 25 September 2025 (10am-5pm)
- Tuesday 18 November 2025 (starting at 5pm and ending with dinner)
- Wednesday 19 November 2025 (10am – 1pm)

- Tuesday 20 January 2026 (10am – 5pm)
- Monday 9 March 2026 (10am -5pm)
- Wednesday 1 July 2026 (10am – 5pm)

25/72 President to lead on brief reflections on the meeting of Council that has just concluded