

**Minutes of the meeting of Cardiff University Council held on 6 February 2025 at 10.00 in room 0.12 of the Doctoral Academy**

Present: Patrick Younge (Chair), Vice-Chancellor, Beth Button, Judith Fabian, Madison Hutchinson, Christopher Jones, Stephen Mann, Micaela Panes, Dr Juan Pereiro Viterbo, Dr Siân Rees, John Shakeshaft, Professor Katherine Shelton, Professor Damian Walford Davies [Minutes 2300-2310], Dr Robert Weaver, Dr Catrin Wood, Jennifer Wood, and Agnes Xavier-Phillips.

Attendees: Professor Rudolf Allemann [Minutes 2300-2313], Katy Dale [Minute taker], Laura Davies, Ruth Davies [Minutes 2300-2313], Sally-Ann Estifanou [Minutes 2300-2317], Tom Hay, Professor Nicola Innes [Minutes 2313-2319], Dr David Langley, Daniel Lawrence, Siân Marshall, Anne Morgan [Minute 2311], Tukiya Mutupa, Professor Stephen Riley [Minutes 2300-2310], Melanie Rimmer [Minute 2315], Dr Paula Sanderson, Professor Gavin Shaddick, Helen Spittle [Minute 2309], Professor Roger Whitaker [Minutes 2311-2319], and Darren Xiberras.

**2300 Welcome and preliminaries**

All were welcomed to the meeting.

**2301 Apologies for absence**

Apologies were received from Professor Dame Janet Finch, Jeremy Lewis, Suzanne Rankin, and David Selway.

**2302 Declarations of Interest**

The Chair reminded the Committee members of their duty to disclose any potential conflicts of interest.

Noted

2302.1 that all staff were affected by the recent Academic Futures proposals and this was noted as an interest for all staff members; as no decisions would be made at this meeting, all were welcomed to contribute to discussions.

**2303 Minutes of previous meeting**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 26 November 2024 (24/329C) were confirmed as a true and accurate record and were approved by the Committee on 6 February 2025.

**2304 Matters Arising**

Received and noted paper 24/331C, 'Matters Arising'.

**2305 Items from the Chair**

Received and noted paper 24/332C, 'Chair's Action'. The Chair spoke to this item.

Noted

2305.1 with sadness the passing of Baroness Jenny Randerson who had been a great friend to the University; Council placed on record its thanks for her contribution to the University and its mission;

2305.2 that recent weeks had been hard for the University, especially senior staff who were receiving significant media attention.

### **2306 Vice-Chancellor's Report to Council**

Received and considered paper 24/335C, 'Vice-Chancellor's Report to Council'. The Vice-Chancellor spoke to this item.

Noted

2306.1 [Redacted];

2306.2 that a new Dean for PGR Students had been appointed (Dr Liz Wren-Owens) and would focus on an enhanced student experience for PGR students and building community;

2306.3 that recent applications data was not positive; [Redacted];

2306.4 that it was queried why there had been a downturn in the number of successful research applications;

2306.5 that January starts had been positive (c.60 starts) although the conversion rate was lower than desired; this reflected a success story in moving quickly to access a growing market; there had been less interest from PGTI students which reflected the drop in this market, although there had been greater interest from home students than expected.

Resolved

2306.6 for the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research, Innovation and Enterprise to provide detail on the reasoning for the downturn in successful research applications.

### **2307 Academic Futures**

Received and considered an oral update from the Vice-Chancellor.

Noted

2307.1 that the process to develop the proposal had been robust and academically led; data and benchmark information had been used, but had not provided a clear answer; it had become clear that moving to a higher student staff ratio (SSR) as seen elsewhere in the sector and aiming for a small UG intake whilst maintaining quality, were the two key aspects that would provide financial and academic sustainability; it would be of benefit to share the data with staff and students;

2307.2 that the scale of the proposals had proved shocking for many and reflected the scale of the challenge;

2307.3 that it was emphasised the proposals were not agreed or decided on at this time, that there was a process of consultation and input was to be encouraged and welcomed;

2307.4 that there had been a misconception the consultation was only open for two weeks; the deadline was 6 May 2025;

2307.5 that competition law had prohibited the University from discussing collaboration and provision with other providers before it released its proposals and was a challenge; conversations were being held with Vice-Chancellors of other Cardiff

- institutions and others on potential mitigations to the reductions in provision where possible; it was highlighted that these were collective issues to solve, not solely the responsibility of the University alone;
- 2307.6 that the proposals had been leaked during a briefing to Senior Staff and this was very disappointing; this had resulted in staff and students learning of the proposals from the media and being approached for comment before they had been formally briefed by members of UEB; the leak had created a feeling of animosity;
- 2307.7 that there had been a communication plan agreed in advance and leaks had been accounted for; however, the leaking of proposals had added pressure, especially around financial messaging as this was not widely understood; there was confidence in the Communications team and its plan, although it was noted this was a small team and under a large amount of pressure; there may be opportunities to look at other forms of communication to access wider groups (e.g. social media influencers); there was a need to ensure certainty in how staff and students fed into the consultation and to include different forms (e.g. workshops, clinics etc.);
- 2307.8 that it was requested the use of the phrases “affected” and “unaffected” in regards to schools were reviewed, as all were impacted in some way;
- 2307.9 that the level of attention and coverage of the University was much greater than other institutions, despite a number having proposals of a similar size and scale;
- 2307.10 the Students’ Union explained they were aiming to counter mis-information where possible and needed further support from the University in this regard; that it had also been a challenging time for students, especially as information had come from the media and staff at risk; there was a concern the planned communications with students were not as regular, as clear or as detailed as for staff and this was very disappointing; there was a feeling among students that the consultation was merely tokenistic; the Vice-Chancellor provided assurance that the University would work with the Students’ Union on this and ensure communication with students;
- 2307.11 the Vice-Chancellor and Chair of Council had met with Cardiff MPs to discuss the proposals and dispel some areas of misinformation; briefings to Medr, the Welsh Government and Cabinet Secretary for Health had also taken place; further briefings had been scheduled;
- 2307.12 that the University had a different legal responsibility to its staff as regards employment law, and this needed to be remembered; that although there was a desire to provide certainty now on the proposals to limit stress and worry for staff, there was a legal requirement to consult and therefore definitive answers could not be given;
- 2307.13 [Redacted]; TUs had been included in monthly briefings and the proposals had been shared in confidence in advance to enable them to support their staff; the University had also issued a S188 letter in October to allow TUs to prepare for supporting members; the first Institutional-wide collective consultation meeting with the Trade Unions, due to be held the previous day, had been postponed as UCU negotiators were not available;
- 2307.14 that there was a mis-representation that the proposed job losses were already determined as compulsory redundancies; the University would avoid compulsory redundancies wherever possible;

- 2307.15 that should members be approached for a view or comment, individuals should be directed to the formal consultation route ([newid-change@cardiff.ac.uk](mailto:newid-change@cardiff.ac.uk)); it would be of benefit to have guidance on the consistent messaging to use;
- 2307.16 that an update was provided on discussions being held with partners on the future provision of nursing and it was hoped a new proposal could be created, ensuring nursing requirements were delivered;
- 2307.17 that this process would take time to embed and the University needed to remain agile for the future;
- 2307.18 that, at present, there was no impact seen in the data on student interest (e.g. attendance at open days); this would be monitored.

Resolved

- 2307.19 for the data used to be shared with staff and students;
- 2307.20 for guidance on messaging to be provided to Council members, should they be contacted.

### **2308 Transformation update**

Received and considered a presentation from the Chief Transformation Officer.

Noted

- 2308.1 that there were three horizons within the Roadmap to ensure achievement of the strategy;
- 2308.2 that good progress had been made on Horizon 1 'Fixing the Fundamentals', including creation of the Research Service, completion of the first phase of Functional Alignment for PS staff, and reviewing the estate;
- 2308.3 that Horizon 2 'Growth and Innovation' would focus on areas such as TNE, Flexible Lifelong Learning, Cardiff Futures and the Global Civic;
- 2308.4 that key initiatives underpinning the transformation were also being reviewed, such as Finance Transformation, embedding University Success Measures, and enhanced integrated analysis and reporting; a lessons learnt on Academic Futures was also planned;
- 2308.5 that the University was working with other institutions in this area;
- 2308.6 that the scale, pace and impact of transformation has been unfamiliar to many and it was a complex and emotional time; digital enablement would be key;
- 2308.7 the external environment required the University to move quickly whilst still delivering BAU; prioritisation would be key but difficult;
- 2308.8 that work was planned to develop networks of champions and experts across the University via the Continuous Improvement Hub and Council would welcome an update on this;
- 2308.9 [Redacted];
- 2308.10 that there was a need to continue to move forward with this work at pace and to keep staff updated on the next planned elements.

Resolved

2308.11 for an update on the Continuous Improvement Hub to be provided to Council.

### **2309 Flexible Lifelong Learning**

Received and considered an oral report from the Pro Vice-Chancellor International and Director of the Learning and Teaching Academy, who joined the meeting to present this item.

Noted

2309.1 that a full review of CPE provision and a scoping exercise had been undertaken in 2023/24; this had identified there was no cross-institutional strategy and that c.80% of CPD was located within the College of Biomedical and Life Sciences with limited support;

2309.2 the new system looked to offer a professional, scalable provision which complemented the campus provision; there were large opportunities in this area and an ability to move at pace; currently the University was c.2 years behind the sector;

2309.3 an Institute for Flexible Lifelong Learning would be established, to act as an enabler to this activity within Colleges and Schools, harnessing expertise to drive forward the pipeline of provision; a Director would be recruited to report to the Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary and Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor; this was a working title and alternatives were welcomed;

2309.4 [Redacted];

2309.5 the Institute would be launched in September 2025 and a three-year process was planned to bring in the new system;

2309.6 that there would be a mix of accredited and non-accredited modules offered;

2309.7 that academic resourcing had been discussed and models would be developed over time;

2309.8 that if delivered well, this would act as an enabler and help with agility in the wider University;

2309.9 that a discussion was held on the inclusion of this project within the wider Academic Framework activity and this would be considered;

2309.10 that thanks were extended to the Director of the Learning and Teaching Academy and their team for the work in this area.

Helen Spittle (Director of the Learning and Teaching Academy) left the meeting.

### **2310 Horizon 1 Strategy Implementation Case**

Received paper 24/300HC, 'Horizon 1 Strategy Implementation Case'. The Chief Transformation Officer spoke to this item.

Resolved

2310.1 to approve the Horizon 1 Strategy Implementation Case, namely the investment of £1.454m of revenue funding to support Horizon 1 delivery through to July 2026.

Professor Damian Walford Davies (Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor) and Professor Stephen Riley (Pro Vice-Chancellor College of Biomedical and Life Sciences) left the meeting.

### **2311 Transnational Education (TNE)**

Received and considered a presentation from the Pro Vice-Chancellor International and Director of International, who joined the meeting to present this item.

Noted

2311.1 the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research, Innovation and Enterprise joined the meeting;

2311.2 that international students brought more than just financial income to the University;

2311.3 that a number of areas were being considered, with Kazakhstan the most progressed at present; [Redacted];

#### Kazakhstan

2311.4 that the University had been a first-mover in this space and other Russell Group institutions were now expressing interest;

2311.5 that this was an emerging geopolitical region, looking to upskill for the future, move away from mining and minerals and increase its digital prowess and research activity;

2311.6 that there was a desire to connect with Cardiff and Wales more widely and a similarity in the use of multiple languages;

2311.7 that there were a number of risks being explored:

- .1 reputational;
- .2 quality; academic standards and quality would be run by the University, ensuring these were maintained;
- .3 financial; [Redacted];
- .4 legal advice was being sought;
- .5 there had been criticism of the regime in Kazakhstan; changes were proposed and Kazakhstan was a signatory to the Declaration of Human Rights;
- .6 [Redacted];

2311.8 the University had made significant progress in a short period of time; work towards an Institutional License Agreement was underway;

2311.9 that a large amount of due diligence had been undertaken and no significant issues raised; this had included a fuller report with Prism Strategic intelligence;

- 2311.10 [Redacted];
- 2311.11 that new fraud legislation had been introduced and this should be reviewed by the legal team in this context;
- 2311.12 that it may be of benefit to include governance expertise on the working group;
- 2311.13 that there was a possible risk around Russian expansion; however there had been encouragement from the UK government to work with Kazakhstan;
- 2311.14 [Redacted];
- 2311.15 [Redacted];
- 2311.16 that awards would be of the Cardiff standard and would not be a poorer version of this;
- 2311.17 that there was need to ensure clear exit strategies in case of world events or catastrophes and clear agreed liabilities in advance;
- 2311.18 that the business case should be seen by Council before any advertising was made public;
- 2311.19 [Redacted];
- 2311.20 [Redacted].
- Resolved
- 2311.21 for the TNE Group to review the new fraud legislation.

Anne Morgan (Director of International) left the meeting.

## **2312 Finance Report**

Received and considered paper 24/293C, 'Quarterly Finance Report'. The Chief Financial Officer spoke to this item.

Noted

- 2312.1 that the paper included results as at 31 October 2024; [Redacted];
- 2312.2 that the majority of the variances to forecast were due to timing differences on estates activity and Agency Fees; future forecasts would be reviewed to minimise this in future reporting;
- 2312.3 [Redacted];
- 2312.4 [Redacted];
- 2312.5 that to date the Revolving Credit Facility had not been used;
- 2312.6 that endowments could only be used for purpose of which they gifted;
- 2312.7 [Redacted];
- 2312.8 [Redacted];

2312.9 that the University needed to ensure it remained a going concern.

Resolved

2312.10 to develop a clear set of words on the ability to use reserves.

**2313 Pro Vice-Chancellor Presentation (Research, Innovation and Enterprise)**

Received and considered a presentation from the Pro Vice-Chancellor Research, Innovation and Enterprise.

Noted

2313.1 the Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience joined the meeting;

2313.2 that the University had undertaken a survey on research culture for the first time and had c.1400 respondents which was ahead of comparators; from this, the focus had been on improving systems and job security and reviewing the career pathways for technicians;

2313.3 that the new Research Service had been launched, which aimed to provide one University-service and improve systems and processes, including a new digital system "Worktribe";

2313.4 a business case had been developed around research commercialisation, to deliver real change in this area and align with the new strategy;

2313.5 that Cardiff was part of an Investment Zone and this provided opportunities to accelerate growth and activity and build stronger relationships across the region;

2313.6 that there was an opportunity to detail the future research identity of the University;

2313.7 that a new Dean for PGR had been appointed and would look into the journey of these students;

2313.8 that work was underway for REF2029 and a risk-based approach had been taken from the 2024 results;

2313.9 that a large amount of work was underway to review rankings, especially in relation to QS; the dip following Covid was more extreme for the University than at comparator institutions and as QS data reflected the previous 5 years, this was having a significant impact; there was also a need to review use of citations;

2313.10 that there was headroom to develop the University's spinout activities and involvement with alumni and research.

Professor Rudolf Allemann (Pro Vice-Chancellor International) and Ruth Davies (Head of Corporate Governance) left the meeting.

**2314 Report from Redundancy Committee to Council**

Received and considered paper 24/349C, 'The Proposed Cessation or Reduction of School Activities Report to Council on Redundancy Committee under delegations of July 2024'. The Director of People and Culture spoke to this item.

Noted

2314.1 that two business cases were included in the paper;

2314.2 [Redacted];

2314.3 [Redacted];

2314.4 [Redacted].

Resolved

2314.5 to approve the cessation of activity outlined in the business case contained in Section B, namely:

.1 [Redacted];

.2 [Redacted];

.3 [Redacted];

2314.6 to approve the restructure outlined in the business case contained in Section C, namely:

.1 [Redacted];

.2 [Redacted];

.3 [Redacted].

### **2315 University Success Measures**

Received and considered paper 24/302C, 'University Success Measures'. The Director of Strategic Planning and Insight joined the meeting to present this item.

Noted

2315.1 it was noted the University had been awarded the Bronze Race Equality Charter Mark and this was pleasing;

2315.2 that an additional measure had been added in relation to PG satisfaction, following feedback from the Students' Union; that no measure had been included on PGR and a wider discussion would be held on what this may look like;

2315.3 that a dashboard had been created and included in the paper;

2315.4 that future iterations would include an insight report and deep dive on individual measures;

2315.5 work had progressed on contributory measures, especially where the main measure was only reported on once a year (e.g. the awarding gap), to enable updates to be provided throughout the year;

2315.6 that it would be useful to see a confidence outlook, as well as a status update, to understand the likelihood of measures being achieved;

- 2315.7 that it would be of benefit to receive an update on the Target Operating Model; the Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary would consider how to visualise progress on the Corporate Services and Student Experience operating models;
- 2315.8 that the status reflected an aggregate in achieving the measure, even if there were individual assessments to reach this;
- 2315.9 that a discussion was held on EBIDA, [Part Redacted]; the Chief Financial Officer would review this.
- Resolved
- 2315.10 to determine whether a measure on PGR students should be included;
- 2315.11 for Council to receive an update on the Target Operating Model and progress on the Corporate Services and Student Experience operating models;
- 2315.12 for the Chief Financial Officer to review the EBIDA target and how it was communicated.

Melanie Rimmer (Director of Strategic Planning and Insight) left the meeting.

### **2316 Students' Union President's Report**

Received and considered paper 24/350, 'Students' Union President's Report'. The Students' Union President spoke to this item.

Noted

- 2316.1 that the recent AGM had been very positive;
- 2316.2 that there had been over 1000 volunteers for student academic reps which was very positive;
- 2316.3 that Speak Week had focussed on what one thing students would keep and one thing they would change if they ran the University; the results would inform the 2025 Student View;
- 2316.4 [Redacted]; it was believed many actions had not been progressed due to no available funding; follow-up meetings were scheduled in the coming weeks and an update would be provided to Council; in regards to the Student View on placements, a working group had been established and there was a complication that this involved partner health boards;
- 2316.5 that nominations for the Spring Elections were now open;
- 2316.6 that campaigns run by the Students' Union had focussed on cost-of-living and community-creating initiatives; the cost-of-living crisis was having a big impact on international students, especially as there was a fear this would impact on visa eligibility;
- 2316.7 that the Students' Union had been focussing on the proposed removal of student parking in the city; thanks were extended to the Vice-Chancellor for the recent meeting with members of Cardiff Council on this issue; should it be pursued, legal action would be taken on the basis this was discriminatory;

2316.8 that work was underway with Estates to review a 24-hour space for PG students, as currently there were none;

2316.9 that it would be useful to see if there were trends in student advice a key area was disparity in extenuating circumstances and this would be reviewed under the Continuous Improvement Hub.

Resolved

2316.10 for an update to be provided to Council on the progress in completing actions from the 2024 Student View.

### **2317 Student Experience update**

Received and considered paper 24/351, 'Education and Student Experience Update'. The Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience spoke to this item.

Noted

2317.1 that the meeting with Medr scheduled for April had been bought forward, to enable discussion on the Academic Futures proposals;

2317.2 that although the University was familiar with the process for discontinuing programmes, plans were being discussed for an oversight group (to include students) that would review changes to programmes and modules arising from the final agreed outcomes of the Academic Futures work, given this would be on a larger scale;

2317.3 that meetings were being arranged with students to discuss the Academic Futures proposals and work on co-creation;

2317.4 that it was expected there would be an increase in the net risk around student experience, given future academic changes;

2317.5 that it was believed the increase in mental health and disability referrals were due to greater visibility and access to services, including the launch of the report+support app; [Redacted];

2317.6 that the Education and Student Experience portfolio had been reviewed and a service excellence model was being developed for this area; it was suggested this come to a future meeting of Council;

2317.7 that it was hoped the revised Dean structure would provide better leadership and continuity for project work across schools and colleges;

2317.8 that it was difficult to harness measurable data on the barriers felt by students when accessing support, as there was often a sense of embarrassment; attempts to harness data anonymously had not proved successful;

2317.9 that the affordability of Cardiff for students had changed in recent years and student accommodation was a key area.

Resolved

2317.10 for an update on the Education and Student Experience portfolio service excellence model to come to a future meeting.

**2318 Any Other Business**

Noted

- 2318.1 that the shorter meeting book was welcomed;
- 2318.2 that thanks were extended to Ruth Davies (Head of Corporate Governance) who was leaving the University;
- 2318.3 that there was support from Council for the Vice-Chancellor and UEB with no dissenting voices in the room;
- 2318.4 that there was a collective responsibility from Council, UEB and the whole University to deliver the new strategy and for the future;
- 2318.5 that Council members were reminded of the importance of confidentiality.

**2319 Items received for information**

24/330C Finance and Resources Committee Chair's Report to Council  
24/294C HR Dashboard Summary  
24/334C Report from Chair of Remuneration Committee to Council  
24/333 Sealing Transactions