



University Council

Paper no: 2023-11-27-03

Paper title: Minutes of previous meeting

Minutes of the Council meeting held on 25 October 2023 in SC1, Stafford Cripps, Cranfield

Present:

Ferguson, Iain (Chair)	Hubble, Jane
Atkinson, Helen	Hynes, Alice
Carter, Caroline	Imafidon, Ehizuelen
Chen Davison, Lesley	Price, Jo
Day, Colin	Rowlands, Simon
Greening, Connie	Saggu, Jaz
Hill, James (<i>by Teams</i>)	Stokes, Claire
Hart, Ian	Watkins, Peter
Holford, Karen	Zeidler, Phil

Apologies: None

Attending:

- Aspinall, Philip, Chief Operating Officer
- Douglas, Gregor, University Secretary
- Ford, David, Director of IT (*for item 8*)
- Morrow, Benedicta (*for item 6*)
- Pleasants, Emma, Executive Officer
- Pollard, Simon, Chair of CU H&S Committee (*for item 4*)
- Sibbald, Ian, Director of Finance (*for item 7*)

1. Introduction

The Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council welcomed members and attendees to the meeting.

2. Disclosure of interest

None.

3. Minutes of previous meeting and matters arising

Received: Paper 2023-10-25-03 being the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2023, incorporating some amendments which were tabled.

Resolved: Council agreed the amendments and approved the minutes of the Council meeting held on 19 July 2023.

4. Health and Safety report 1 June 2023 to 30 September 2023 Health and Safety annual report 1 August 2022 to 31 July 2023

Simon Pollard joined for this item

Received: Papers 2023-10-25-04a and 2023-10-25-04b being the health and safety quarterly report and annual report to Council.

Noted: a) The HSE had confirmed that the University had complied with the improvement notices for x-ray equipment which had been

transferred from Shrivenham to Cranfield. Whilst resolved, these would remain on public record.

- b) ISO 45001 surveillance audit was conducted in July 2023 and although several weaknesses remained open, the management system was delivering its objectives.
- c) Newly appointed H&S staff were now in post at Cranfield and Shrivenham sites.
- d) H&S areas of focus for the 2023/24 academic year would include awareness raising campaigns for staff and students and further consideration of the challenges of hybrid working. Emphasis would continue to move to preventative action beyond compliance.
- e) There was a concerted information campaign for road safety awareness for new students.

Resolved: Council thanked health and safety colleagues for their reports and for Professor Pollard being in attendance for this item.

Simon Pollard withdrew from the meeting

5. Chief Executive Report

Received: Paper 2023-10-25-6 being the Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor's report.

Noted: The CEVC highlighted the following points in discussion:

- a) The Times Higher Education Awards short listings for the *Research Project of the Year* and *Outstanding Estates Team*.
- b) The ongoing research work around Hydrogen Technology, noting that Cranfield was well positioned to lead the sector and that the University's recent RPIF capital investment bid was through to the second stage of the process.
- c) The achievements in recent rankings (Bloomberg MBA rankings and 2023 Financial Times rankings).
- d) Individual support had been offered in the light of the situation in Israel and Gaza. There had been no disturbance on campus. Protocols were in place to manage any concerns.
- e) The political environment including: government funding and undergraduate fees; Cranfield's position in the region with regards to the Cambridge to Oxford ARC; levelling up re UKRI; and the Thames Estuary Group.

Resolved: Council thanked the CEVC for her report.

6. Report from University Executive

Benedicta Morrow joined for this item

Received: Paper 2023-010-25-06 being the quarterly report from the University Executive.

- Noted:
- (a) The Chief Executive and Vice-Chancellor took the report as read.
 - (b) The Director of Alumni Relations and Development provided a briefing to Council on the alumni relations and development activities being undertaken in support of the Corporate Plan as outlined in the report.
 - (c) Input from the Cranfield Student Association might add value.

- (d) There were challenges accessing alumni data from Shrivenham.

Resolved: Council thanked the University Executive for its report and the Alumni Relations and Development briefing document. Council endorsed the important work of Alumni Relations and Development and encouraged further work to facilitate the use of Alumni events to strengthen student recruitment initiatives.

Benedicta Morrow withdrew from the meeting.

7. Update from Council Committees

Ian Sibbald joined for this item

JFAC

7.1 Budget update 2023/24

Received: Oral update from the Chair of JFAC.

Noted: The budget for 2023/2024 had been discussed in detail at JFAC. Council noted the following:

- (a) The reduction in student numbers in the autumn intake and consequent scale of actions required to meet budget for the year.
- (b) The arrangements around the pausing of non-essential spend and the recruitment pause.
- (c) The new short- and longer-term revenue streams identified, such as consultancy and CPD courses.
- (d) The reduction in USS pension contributions for the University from early 2024, which would save the University c£5m per annum.

Resolved: Council noted the update provided by the Chair of JFAC.

7.2 MK:U update

Received: Oral update from the Chair of the MK:U board.

Noted:

- (a) MKCC had advised that they had been in discussions with the Open University about the development of the land in Milton Keynes which had been provisionally designated for MK:U (subject to funding). MKCC priorities were yet to be agreed at a forthcoming meeting.
- (b) MK:U would reflect on implications for its plans for student capacity in the light of lease arrangements for Bouverie House.
- (c) Recruitment of apprentices to MK:U remained strong.
- (d) There would be active communications and discussions with key stakeholders, while options for the future were refined and considered.

Resolved: Council agreed that while the developments with the B4 site were disappointing, the University should nonetheless consider the long-term plans and next steps for MK:U.

Council emphasised the importance of appropriate communications, including the recommendation of a joint press release with MKCC without reference to OfS registration.

University Executive was invited to develop options for future direction of MK:U.

Finance Committee

7.3 & 7.4 Management Accounts and Pension update

Received: A brief oral update from the Director of Finance confirmed the update already provided at the meeting by the Chair of JFAC.

Noted: The initiatives and longer-term revenue streams; the reduction in USS pension contributions, which were expected from early 2024.

Resolved: Council thanked the Director of Finance for his attendance at the meeting.

Ian Sibbald withdrew from the meeting

Audit Committee

7.5 Received: Oral update from the Chair of Audit Committee.

Noted: The Chair of Audit Committee reported that:

- (a) the Committee welcomed the assurance it has received from the annual reports from the National Security Committee and the Information Assurance Committee. Discussion of Senate's Annual Academic and Skills Report had included questions about student metrics and relative performance in national student surveys.
- (b) there had been consideration of the risk register, and in particular the risks associated with student/staff recruitment and resilience of the University.
- (c) two audit reports had been received: tuition fee income and debtors (limited assurance); and payroll (reasonable assurance). There had been robust discussion on culture, systems and process generally as well as on progress completing actions arising from internal audit recommendations. Audit Committee was seeking further assurance in cases of management disagreement with internal audit recommendations.
- (d) Internal Audit plans had been endorsed for 2023-24
- (e) Agreement had been reached by Audit Committee not to go to tender for external audit services. A new price would be negotiated with existing auditors. This would return to Council for formal approval.

Resolved: Council thanked the Chair of Audit Committee for the update.

Remuneration Committee

7.6 Received: Oral update.

Noted: The Chair of Remuneration Committee reported to Council that a meeting of Remuneration Committee was taking place after the Council meeting. Sector wide issues would be included in discussions alongside senior pay review.

Resolved: Council noted the focus of discussions and looked forward to receiving an update in due course.

CADS

7.7 Council Advisory Group on Defence and Security (CADS)

Received: Oral report from the Chair of CADS

- Noted:
- (a) CADS had met on 24 October 2023.
 - (b) Cranfield was part of a consortium with King's College London and RAND Europe on staff training. This could form the basis for thinking about working as part of a consortium for the next tender of the AP contract.
 - (c) Defence and Security were growing markets in which Cranfield was well established, presenting growth opportunities for the University. Strategies for both these areas had been discussed in depth by CADS. There were new revenue stream and collaborative opportunities across the whole of the University, not just confined to CDS.
 - (d) CADS would meet again in April 2024 and discuss the progress being made with the implementation of the strategies.

Resolved: Council noted the oral update provided by the Chair of CADS.

8. Briefing: AI at Cranfield

David Ford joined for this item

Received: Presentation from the Director of IT on Generative AI.

Noted: Council noted the following points:

- (a) The range of debate across the sector on generative AI and the Russell Group principles.
- (b) Cranfield's position statement on teaching and assessment adaptation, whilst maintaining academic rigour and integrity.
- (c) There were currently no technology systems developed for generative AI detection.
- (d) The importance of preparing students conversant with AI for the workplace.
- (e) The opportunities and risk areas associated with generate AI.
- (f) The momentum of using generative AI for research purposes such as literacy reviews.
- (g) The improvements in productivity and innovation with the use of AI and effective joining together of the human and AI, that was beginning to outperform some tasks.
- (h) Cranfield activities undertaken, along with future initiatives.

Resolved: Council engaged in broad discussion of the opportunities and threats of generative AI; its application in the workplace; the pace of change; student perception; accessibility issues.

The Chair of Council thanked David Ford for a stimulating presentation.

David Ford withdrew from the meeting

9. Update from Senate

9.1 Emeritus Professor appointment

Received: Paper 2023-10-25-09a being a recommendation from Senate to approve the title of Emeritus Professor for Prof Tim Hess.

Noted: The case from Senate for the appointment.

Resolved: Council approved the Emeritus Professor title for Prof Tim Hess.

9.2 Senate Effectiveness Review

Received: Paper 2023-10-25-09b being the Senate Effectiveness Review report (SER).

Noted: (a) The SER Report had been presented to Senate in September 2023, together with recommendations.
(b) Senate would be presented with an action plan arising from the recommendations to work through.

Resolved: Council noted the SER report, noting that an update on actions would be references in the 2023/24 Annual Academic and Skills report.

10. Any Other Business

10.1 It was noted that events which may be of interest to Council members were highlighted in the Secretary's Report. Council members to advise Julie Morris if they wished to attend any of the events outlined in the paper.

10.2 The meeting scheduled for Monday 27 November 2023 was agreed to be held on Teams.

Emma Pleasants
Executive Officer
October 2023