

Minutes of the Meeting of Cardiff University Council held on 14 May 2025 at 11.00 in rooms 0.01 and 0.02 of the Translational Research Hub

Present: Patrick Younge (Chair), Vice-Chancellor, Beth Button, Louise Casella, Judith Fabian, Madison Hutchinson, Christopher Jones [Minutes 2331-2339], Professor Urfan Khaliq, Jeremy Lewis, Stephen Mann, Micaela Panes, Dr Juan Pereiro Viterbo, Suzanne Rankin [Minutes 2331-2345], John Shakeshaft, Professor Katherine Shelton, Professor Damian Walford Davies, Dr Robert Weaver, Dr Catrin Wood, and Jennifer Wood.

Attendees: Katy Dale [Minute taker], Tom Hay [Minutes 2331-2338], Professor Nicola Innes [Minutes 2343-2344], Siân Marshall, Tukiya Mutupa, Melanie Rimmer [Minute 2340], Dr Paula Sanderson and Darren Xiberras.

2331 Welcome and Preliminaries

All were welcomed to the meeting.

2332 Apologies for Absence

Apologies were received from Dr Siân Rees, David Selway and Agnes Xavier-Phillips.

2333 Declarations of Interest

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

NOTED

2333.1 Suzanne Rankin declared an interest in relation to the Dental School risk contained in the Risk Management Report [Minute 2341] given her employment in the NHS;

2333.2 Dr Paula Sanderson declared an interest in relation to the Maintaining the Independence of the Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary item [Minute 2350].

2334 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 06 February 2025 (24/503C), 14 March 2025 Special Meeting (24/504C), and 03 April 2025 Special Meeting (24/505C) were confirmed as a true and accurate record and were approved by the Committee on 14 May 2025.

2335 Matters Arising

Received and considered paper 24/508C, 'Matters Arising'. The Chair spoke to this item.

NOTED

2335.1 that in regards to Minute 2307.10, regular communications with students on Academic Futures matters were now being issued and regular meetings were being held between the executive and Students' Union; it was noted that some lifelong learning students had not received these communications as these were on separate distribution lists;

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2335.2 [Minute 2316.4] that it was likely the Student View for 2025 would include focus on completion of actions from previous Student Views.

2336 Items from the Chair

Received and considered paper 24/502C, 'Chair's Action'.

NOTED

2336.1 that consideration was being given to the possibility of appointing a further Pro-Chancellor in the future; further detail on the role would be shared with Council once drafted, for proposals of possible candidates.

2337 Vice-Chancellor's Report to Council

Received and considered paper 24/546HC, 'VC Report to Council'. The Vice-Chancellor spoke to this item.

NOTED

2337.1 that it had been agreed with the Trade Unions to suspend industrial action in light of agreement to no compulsory redundancies in 2025 and this was pleasing;

2337.2 that there were a number of good news stories across the University including roll out of the Future Research Service, improvements in HR data, work on health and wellbeing for staff and students, and a continued stable Moody's Credit Rating; there were also a number of subjects that remained within the QS 100 and these should be celebrated more widely;

2337.3 that in relation to Moody's Credit Rating, the imperative of the current work being undertaken was noted given the University's moderately weaker operating performance compared to its peers; a discussion was held on the impact to the University, should the University be downgraded in future years; this had been identified as an action from Investment & Banking Sub-Committee; it was noted that the rating was based on the assumption that government support would be provided should a university require financial assistance and this was a sectorial issue;

2337.4 that it had been agreed to increase the rent levels for University accommodation; it was noted this was not popular with students and highlighted that the University still remained lower than its peers in its rent levels and competitive with the private sector; there were concerns sabbatical officers had not been involved in discussions on the increase and the impact this raise would have on students, given the current cost of living and the poor standards of accommodation; the University was progressing plans for its residence provision and the Vice-Chancellor committed to ensuring student involvement in discussions on residence fee levels in future years;

2337.5 that international student numbers for 2025/26 continued to look very challenging and highlighted the importance of work on TNE; although this was seen across the sector, this offered little consolation; the University continued to work hard on attracting students to Cardiff and was committed to maintaining tariff;

2337.6 that current international student recruitment and the proposed legislation changes highlighted the importance of setting a budget that was prudent and realistic, in terms of what the University could achieve and control, and the

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impact of external factors; any assumptions included within the budget would be detailed and scenario planning was being undertaken;

2337.7 that at present the graduate levy was only proposed to be applied to be England, however, Wales may also introduce this in the future; the University planned to lobby against the proposals for the Graduate Route and it was suggested students also lobby; future plans for alumni discount on PGR courses was to be determined; it was highlighted that these proposed changes would impact on recruitment for both international students and staff and the Vice-Chancellor was planning to issue communications on this, which would also be good to share with students;

2337.8 that a revised Academic Promotions scheme was planned to be launched in January 2026, with decisions implemented from 01 August.

RESOLVED

2337.9 to confirm the peer institutions used for Moody's Credit Rating.

2338 Academic Futures

Received an oral update from the Provost & Deputy Vice-Chancellor.

NOTED

2338.1 that compulsory redundancies had been ruled out for 2025 only and may need to be reviewed in future years;

2338.2 that dates for submission of alternative proposals and for applications to the Voluntary Redundancy Scheme had now closed; the Academic Futures group had reviewed all proposals for availability and were now moving from modelling proposals to creating recommendations for review;

2338.3 that an update was provided to Council on those Schools currently out of scope and those that remained; the initially proposed target of 400 FTE had now reduced to 138 FTE, through both uptake of the voluntary redundancy and severance schemes, and alternate proposals;

2338.4 that the timeline for recommendation of the final proposals was UEB on 03 June, Finance & Resources Committee and Senate on 11 June, and then Council on 17 June for final approval;

2338.5 that this was a process and work would not complete on 17 June, with further work needed to embed and deliver the proposals;

2338.6 that further actions post Council in June would be dependent on the final agreed proposals, however providing clarity to staff (and especially those still within scope) would be central; it was important to ensure there was a clear communication plan prepared for staff and students, and this included actions should information be leaked (which was predicted once the final business case was issued); there would be a need to rebuild trust with staff and students and maintain the level of engagement;

2338.7 that engagement with Trade Unions would continue until the end of June, in case further information was requested;

2338.8 that the quality and rigour of the work undertaken was clear and determining the future academic footprint was key to delivery of the University's strategy

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and its future sustainability; it would be of benefit for the final business case to clearly show how proposals would help delivery of the strategy;

2338.9 that there had been genuine consultation and the emphasis on staff wellbeing was welcomed; thanks were extended to the Director of People and Culture for their work here;

2338.10 that good discussions had been held with other Welsh HE providers on specific areas;

2338.11 Council extended its thanks to all involved with progressing the project.

2339 Colleges & Schools

Received and considered a presentation from the Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary.

NOTED

2339.1 that the current Colleges & Schools structure had been introduced around a decade ago and had developed organically with many areas functioning independently;

2339.2 that there were a number of key drivers for the Colleges & Schools project:

- .1 that differing ways of working were resulting in inconsistencies; this was reflected in NSS results with students were frustrated at differing responses and treatment;
- .2 that, although the university was not expensive in its Professional Services (PS) activity when compared to its peers, it was much more heavily devolved [PART-REDACTED];
- .3 that there was a large variance of PS roles within these structures and therefore a lack of clarity over roles and responsibilities;
- .4 that career progression was limited due to non-standardised and siloed roles;

2339.3 that the current focus was on the research and academic services areas; the corporate functions would be reviewed in the coming 12-18 months, although some work within Finance was already underway;

2339.4 that focus was on doing things once, in the right place, by the right people, at the right time;

Student Hubs

2339.5 that work on Student Hubs was a key element of the project and would look at physical infrastructure, people, processes and digital innovation;

2339.6 that in regards to the physical infrastructure of the Hubs:

- .1 the location had been carefully considered to ensure areas of high student footfall, direct access to Academics and key PS teams, and co-location of teams within the same College;

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- .2 that the Hubs would feature an enquiry desk, office space for key teams, meeting and study spaces (including private wellbeing spaces), and a café or self-service provision;
 - .3 that teaching space would not be used for the Hubs and this would likely make use of existing PS office space;
- 2339.7 that Hubs provision was not a replacement for the residential life support offering and this would be unaffected by the project;
- 2339.8 that there had been engagement on proposals and formal change consultation would commence in July;
- 2339.9 that estates work would be undertaken over the summer, with a view to launching the Hubs in October, in time for the new academic year; existing staff would also move to these spaces from October, with additional services transitioning from October onwards;

Academic Leadership

- 2339.10 that the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor provided an oral update on the Academic Leadership workstream;
- 2339.11 this would identify what work was undertaken within an academic and PS role, and what academic activities should be undertaken at a College and School level;
- 2339.12 consultation and engagement had been undertaken, including with students;
- 2339.13 it was aimed to have a definition of roles for July 2025; these would then be implemented from 2026/27, to allow for recruitment and training to the new roles.

Chris Jones left the meeting.

2340 University Success Measures

Received and considered paper 24/442C, 'University Success Measures'. The Director of Strategic Planning and Insight joined the meeting to speak to this item.

NOTED

- 2340.1 that the paper included the first insight report, focused on the Welsh Medium; these reports provided further data and qualitative narrative from the Executive Sponsor; a data insight report for each measure would be provided across a set timetable;
- 2340.2 work was being undertaken to align the measures with the transition roadmap and identify any possible gaps; a review of the measures at school and departmental level was also being undertaken to provide more granular data;
- 2340.3 that the measures provided a good indication of achievement of the University strategy;
- 2340.4 that thanks were extended to the Director of Strategic Planning and Insight and their team for the work undertaken in this area.

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

2341 Risk Management Report

Received and considered paper 24/533HC, 'Risk Management Report'. The Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary spoke to this item.

NOTED

2341.1 [REDACTED]

2341.2 [REDACTED]

2341.3 [REDACTED]

2341.4 [REDACTED]

2341.5 [REDACTED]

RESOLVED

2341.6 to approve the Risk Management Report and Risk Register update;

2341.7 for future iterations of the report to include an indication of which risks were within appetite, and to delineate between financial, strategic and operational risks;

2341.8 to review whether a statement on risk appetite should be included at the start of the paper;

2341.9 to review whether a separate risk on Moody's Credit Rating was required.

2342 Students' Union President's Report

Received and considered paper 24/534, 'Students' Union President's Report'. The Students' Union President spoke to this item.

NOTED

2342.1 that Spring Elections had been held and the new sabbatical team would commence in post on 01 July; over 25% of the student population had voted; a by-election for the Vice-President Heath Park had been called as no candidate had been appointed;

2342.2 the Enriching Student Life Awards had been held, along with the Athletic Awards and the Societies and Volunteering awards;

2342.3 that the Student View 2025 was being drafted and current areas were International Student Experience, Student Support and Wellbeing, Academic Futures, and closure of outstanding actions from previous Views;

2342.4 that Welsh Varsity had been very well attended and Cardiff had won;

2342.5 that the Union had celebrated 50 years in its current building;

2342.6 that the Students' Union was considering the future funding model of the "Feed Your Flat" initiative, as Medr funding for this would cease at the end of the academic year;

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2342.7 that there was an encampment at Main Building; this seemed to be formed of mainly individuals external to the University (with some students) and the University was taking legal advice in regards to a notice to vacate; demands had been issued but were not achievable;

2342.8 that thanks were extended to the Students' Union President and Vice-President Postgraduate Students who were attending their last in-person meeting of Council, for their contributions and hard work in the role.

2343 Student Experience Update

Received and considered paper 24/531, 'PVC Report to Council'. The Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience joined the meeting to speak to this item.

NOTED

2343.1 that a new Dean structure around Education and Student Experience had been introduced and was now in place.

2344 Annual Enhancement Report

Received and considered paper 24/404, 'Annual Enhancement Report (AER)'. The Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience spoke to this item.

NOTED

2344.1 that the Education and Student Experience Portfolio (part of the Education & Student Sub-Strategy) had formally closed in summer 2024 and centred on three key themes: Student Success, Inspiring Teachers, and an Inclusive and Innovative Environment;

2344.2 that a number of key highlights from the Portfolio were identified:

- .1 development of a Student Voice framework and an increase in engagement;
- .2 a new framework for assessments and introduction of a new Marking and Moderation Policy;
- .3 good progress around successful student futures, which had resulted in an improved ranking for student employability in the Guardian league table;
- .4 significant improvements in the digital learning environment;
- .5 development of a framework for inclusive education to detail the vision for this across the University;

2344.3 that next steps would focus on continuing the implementation of projects, partnership working with the Students' Union and staff development;

2344.4 that there had been good engagement and interaction with staff on these projects, although there had been a high volume of activity, which was noted in the lessons learnt;

2344.5 that the results of NSS 2024 had resulted in 6 subject plans and 3 questions plans submitted to Medr, reflecting a significant improvement from the

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monitoring required from the 2023 survey; Medr had confirmed there was no further follow-up required for the 2024 survey; the 2025 survey results would be issued on 9 July and there had been an overall response rate of 69%; it was expected there would be an impact from Academic Futures activities and possible industrial action reflected in the results;

- 2344.6 that the approach for the Student View had been amended, to allow for the University response and associated actions to be agreed more quickly; a closure report for the 2024 Student View would be issued to Council in the Autumn;
- 2344.7 that inclusive education could be considered as a value adding activity for students, rather than purely on its impact on outcomes;
- 2344.8 that in relation to the Timetabling Project, there had been some issues due to uncertainty over staff availability in 2025/26 and a high level of staff illness; an internal Audit had been undertaken and work was underway to progress the recommendations;
- 2344.9 that the good progress and improvements seen in this area were noted.

RESOLVED

- 2344.10 for the executive to review whether missing HESA data had impacted on Access and Retention Premium funding.

2345 Finance Report

Received and considered papers 24/443C, 'Quarterly Finance Report – January 2025' and 24/451C, 'Q2 Forecast'. The Chief Financial Officer spoke to this item.

NOTED

- 2345.1 [REDACTED]
- 2345.2 [REDACTED]
- 2345.3 [REDACTED] the Investment & Banking Sub-Committee were undertaking a review of the strategic asset allocation and this would reflect the increased volatility and risks in investment markets;
- 2345.4 that there was a better understanding of the true financial position of the University within the senior leadership of the University, although this was not seen across the whole community.

Suzanne Rankin left the meeting.

2346 Report from Redundancy Committee to Council

Received and considered paper 24/532C, 'Redundancy Committee Report to Council'. The Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor spoke to this item.

NOTED

- 2346.1 that Council were asked to note the actions taken by Redundancy Committee under delegation from Council and that recommendations had been approved by the Chair of Council;

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2346.2 that the review of Statutes and Ordinances would include a review of the Redundancy Committee and this work was likely to come in the 2025/26 academic year.

RESOLVED

2346.3 to approve the business case contained in section B of the report [PART-REDACTED].

2347 Students' Union Block Grant 25/26

Received and considered paper 24/545C, 'SU Block Grant Request 2025-26'. The Chair spoke to this item.

NOTED

2347.1 that the Finance & Resources Committee had recommended the repayments on the loan be deferred for one year, to commence in 2026/27; this would also enable further exploration of commercial and income opportunities for the Students' Union.

RESOLVED

2347.2 to approve that the Students' Union receives a one-off loan payment of c£3.1M to clear the Students' Union's Section 75 pension debt (and associated legal costs), to be repaid over a 12-year period commencing in 2026/27 (deferred for a year);

2347.3 to approve the Block Grant 2025/26 Grant allocation of £3,326,975.

2348 Any Other Business

NOTED

2348.1 that Council received an oral update from the Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary on Cardiff University Kazakhstan and the final Heads of Terms had been shared in advance (paper 24/547HC); the final contract was being developed, with an aim to sign by the end of May; a detailed risk register was being maintained and updated and any significant risks would be shared with Council as early as possible; it was suggested that the status of the University was clearly included and that plans were communicated to staff involved with the project as soon as possible, to enable planning;

2348.2 that Council members were reminded of the sensitivity of discussions and the need to ensure this was maintained during the next phase of activity.

2349 Council and Committee Membership

Received and considered paper 24/544C, 'Council and Committee Membership'.

RESOLVED

2349.1 to approve the appointment of Mario Gualano, Liz Mckenzie, Ana Oliveira and Craig Watkins as independent members of Council for a term of four years commencing 01 August 2025;

2349.2 to approve the appointment of Jonathan Marlow as an independent member of Council for a term of four years commencing 01 August 2026.

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2350 Maintaining the Independence of the Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary

Received and considered paper 24/507, 'Maintaining the Independence of the Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary'.

RESOLVED

2350.1 to approve that sufficient safeguards have been built into arrangements to ensure that the independence of the Chief Operating Officer and University Secretary as Secretary of Council is maintained.

2351 Report from Senate

Received and considered paper 24/501, 'Senate report to Council'.

RESOLVED

2351.1 to approve the academic year dates for 2026/27.

2352 Items Received for Information

24/499C Report from Chair of Audit and Risk Committee
24/506C F&RC Chair's Report to Council
24/444C HR Dashboard Summary
24/448 Taith update
24/500C Report from Chair of Governance Committee
24/382 Strategic Equality Plan Annual Monitoring Report 2023-2024
24/409C Annual Report from the Academic Promotions Committee
24/405 Students' Union Charter & Relationship Agreement 2024-25
24/509 Sealing Transactions
24/431HC Major and Serious Incidents Update (on Director's Desk)

The minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2025 were confirmed as a true and accurate record and were approved by Council on 09 July 2025.