

**University of Bristol  
Minutes of Council**

**30 September 2011**

- Present: Mr Denis Burn (Chair), Mr Josh Alford, Mr Gus Baker, Ms Sophie Bennett, Professor Tim Bond, Professor David Clarke, Councillor Simon Cooke, Mr Roy Cowap, Professor Gary Foster, Professor Sally Heslop, Ms Pru Lawrence-Archer, Professor Nick Lieven, Dr John Manley, Mr Robert Massie, Mr Bob Morton, Ms Dinah Moore, Professor Guy Orpen, Mrs Cindy Peck, Mr Bill Ray, Mr Mohammed Saddiq (session 1 and 2 only) Ms Vikki Stace, Ms Anne Stephenson, Professor Eric Thomas, Dr Trevor Thompson, Mrs Cathy Waithe (session 1 only), and Mr James Wetz.
- In Attendance: Dr Tony Rich, Mr Patrick Finch, Mr Andy Nield, Ms Fiona Ford, Ms Helen Galbraith, Ms Lynn Robinson, Ms Jane Bridgwater, Sir James Tismarsh, Dr Alison Bernays (session 3 only) and Ms Kelly Archer.
- Apologies: Mr Colin Green, Dr Moira Hamlin, Mr David Ord and Sir Ronald Kerr

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**Session 1: Presentations**

**Presentation from the Dean of Faculty of Social Sciences and Law**

Professor Judith Squires gave a presentation on the Faculty's key achievements, challenges and objectives. The Chair of Council thanked Professor Squires for her informative and frank presentation and asked that Council's congratulations be passed on to her team for what had been an extremely successful year for the Faculty.

**Presentation on Student Issues**

The three Students' Union Sabbatical Officers presented their team's vision and objectives for the Students' Union for the coming year. One of the key issues that the sabbatical team wished to focus on was the student support package that Bristol offered its students. As the cost of living in Bristol was relatively high, there was concern that the University's decision to offer fee waivers instead of bursaries might make living and studying in Bristol unaffordable for some students. Council noted the Sabbatical Officers' concern and the Chair confirmed that the executive team would take these concerns into consideration when planning future student support packages.

## **Session 2: Formal Meeting of Council**

### **1. Apologies for Absence / Announcements**

- 1.1 The Chair welcomed colleagues to the first meeting of the 2011/12 academic session.
- 1.2 The Chair introduced the following new members of Council and University officers and welcomed them to their first Council meeting:
- (i) The new Union Sabbatical Officers: Gus Baker, Josh Alford and Sophie Bennett.
  - (ii) Dr Tony Rich, Registrar and Chief Operating Officer.
  - (iii) Professor Nick Lieven, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Students).
  - (iv) Two new academic staff representatives: Professor Gary Foster (School of Biological Sciences) and Dr Trevor Thompson (School of Social and Community Medicine).
  - (v) Councillor Simon Cooke, Bristol City Council's representative.
  - (vi) Ms Fiona Ford, Deputy Human Resources Director, who was deputising for Mr Guy Gregory.

### **2. Minutes of the Last Meeting**

- 2.1 CONFIRMED: The minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2011.

### **3. Matters Arising and Action Register**

#### Action Register

- 3.1 Members had previously received a copy of the Action Register which had been updated to incorporate actions agreed at the 7 July 2011 Council meeting.
- 3.2 NOTED: The following updates in relation to outstanding actions:
- (i) Minute 7.15 - The Chairs of the Audit and the Student Affairs Committee (SAC) would liaise with the Registrar and the Students' Union's executive team to review the formal health and safety arrangements in the Students' Union building and to clarify the respective responsibilities of the University and the Students' Union. If appropriate, an internal audit review would be commissioned. A further report would be made to the November 2011 Audit Committee meeting and to Council as appropriate.
  - (ii) Minute 7.16 – The Head of the Accommodation Office had met with the Director of Health and Safety to review arrangements for tenants in University accommodation. The Head of the Accommodation Office was content that her concerns/queries had now been resolved.

### Matters Arising

- 3.3 There were no matters arising that would not be covered elsewhere on the agenda.

## **4. Election of Chair and Vice-Chair of Council**

- 4.1 In accordance with the provisions of Statute 16, Council was required each year to elect a Chair and Vice-Chair. The Vice-Chancellor nominated Mr Denis Burn as Chair and Mr Bob Morton as Vice-Chair, both for a further year.
- 4.2 APPROVED: The election of Mr Denis Burn as Chair and Mr Bob Morton as Vice-Chair of Council for a further year.

## **5. Chairman's Report, Council Matters and Correspondence**

### (i) Important Dates

- 5.1 The Chair reminded members of the following key dates: (i) a dinner would be held for Council members on the evening of 22 March 2011; and (ii) graduation ceremonies would be held on 14<sup>th</sup> - 16<sup>th</sup> of February and 13<sup>th</sup> - 20<sup>th</sup> July 2012. Council members were encouraged to note these dates in their diaries.

### (ii) Action Taken by the use of Chair's Powers

- 5.2 RECEIVED: A report outlining powers exercised by the Chair of Council on behalf of Council between 8 July and 29 September 2011, reference **CN/11/080** (previously circulated, copy in the minute book).
- 5.3 NOTED: That the Chair of Council had used vacation powers on behalf of Council to approve the following:
- (i) New academic programmes:
- a. MSc in Meat Science and Technology (Distance Learning), Faculty of Medical and Veterinary Sciences.
  - b. MSc in Advanced Engineering Robotics (a joint award with the University of the West of England), Faculty of Engineering.
  - c. A new MA in Christian Theology (Trinity and Bristol Baptist Colleges), Faculty of Arts (to replace their existing MAs in Biblical Studies, Mission Studies and Theological Studies).
  - d. Four new interdisciplinary MRes programmes in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law:
    - i. Environment, Energy and Resilience (to be delivered in partnership with Bath and Exeter).
    - ii. Global Political Economy (to be delivered in partnership with Bath).
    - iii. Health and Wellbeing (to be delivered in partnership with Bath and Exeter).
    - iv. Security, Conflict and Justice (to be delivered in partnership with Bath and Exeter).

- (ii) A programme title change from MSc in Inclusive Theory and Practice to MSc in Disability Studies: Inclusive Theory and Research.
- (iii) Revisions to section 11 of the Exam Regulations (detailed amendments had been attached at CN/11/080/Annex A).
- (iv) Minor amendments to sections 4 and 5 of the Postgraduate Research Students Regulations and Code of Practice, regarding supervisors. (detailed amendments had been attached at CN/11/080/Annex B)
- (v) The final report of the Appeal Committee which had heard the appeal of a University of Medical Student (the final report had been attached at CN/11/085 – Reserved Business).
- (vi) Minor amendments to the regulations that govern the University's academic and official costume. The changes aim to clarify the distinction between "other" doctorates (ie those which are not PhDs) and "higher" doctorates (detailed amendments set out in paragraph 6 of CN/11/080).

(iii) Estates Committee Membership

- 5.4 APPROVED: The co-option of Professor Gary Foster onto the Estates Committee for an initial period of one year, in view of his knowledge of the Life Sciences Building capital programme.

**6. Vice-Chancellor's Report**

- 6.1 RECEIVED: The Vice-Chancellor's report, reference **CN/11/081** (previously circulated, copy in the minute book).

*(i) Fair Access, Fees and Finances*

- 6.2 Council, at its meeting on 7 July 2011, had received a copy of the Government White Paper, *Students at the Heart of the System*. The University had provided a written response to the consultation on these proposals (attached at Annex A1) and had also provided input into the responses from Universities UK and the Russell Group. The University's response had focussed on three particular areas of concern: widening participation and access, the impact of increased competition, and the pace of change.
- 6.3 There were three other detailed consultations relating to aspects of the White Paper, to which the University already had or would be providing input. The first had been a Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE) consultation on the future allocation of mainstream teaching funding, and on the method of implementing the removal of students achieving AAB+ or higher at A-level (or equivalent) from existing student number controls. Bristol's response to the consultation had emphasised the importance of continuing to provide additional funding for high-cost and vulnerable subjects, and also the

need to ensure that the loosening of student number controls did not impact adversely on widening participation.

- 6.4 The second consultation, by the Department for Business, Innovation and Skills (BIS) focussed on early repayment mechanism for student loans. Bristol's response had stressed that there should not be a disincentive for graduates to pay off their loans as quickly as they were able to. It also highlighted concerns about the effect that any early repayment penalties might have on alumni relations and associated fundraising activities.
- 6.5 Finally, BIS had launched a detailed consultation on the regulatory framework for Higher Education, including the future of HEFCE. The University would emphasise its support for a risk-based approach to quality assurance and regulation, and also the need to protect the overall brand and reputation of UK HE.

*(ii) Admissions Report*

Undergraduate Admissions

- 6.6 During the current cycle, 33,713 home (the same as last year) and 6,335 overseas applications (an increase of 11% on last year) had been received. On 9 September 2011, the University was expecting to over-shoot its home target of 3,236 by 52 applicants and its overseas target of 485 by 165 applicants, with no individual faculty being significantly above or below target. Although the final numbers were not yet known, there were no major concerns about either meeting the HEFCE target or about accommodation capacity.

Postgraduate Admissions

- 6.7 As the University moved towards the end of the current admissions cycle, applications for postgraduate programmes were 17% higher than 2010 (set against the context of a trend of declining applications amongst the Russell Group). Overall, the number of offers made were comparable with 2010, although the number of acceptances had been significantly higher (up by 25% overall). It was thought that the increases were largely due to the new admissions system and the introduction of offer acceptance deadlines.

Intake Projection

- 6.8 The intake projections were comparable with 2010. A particularly healthy intake level was anticipated for postgraduate taught programmes in the Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Engineering, and for Postgraduate Research programmes in the Faculty of Science and the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law.

*(iii) First Degree Awards 2010/11*

- 6.9 NOTED: The data for first degrees awarded at the University during 2010/11.

*(iv) National Students Survey (NSS) 2011*

- 6.10 Full data relating to the NSS had been appended at Annexes A-D. The 2011 NSS results had shown an improvement on overall satisfaction of 3% (up to 87%); the institutional improvement for this question meant that Bristol's position against other HEIs had improved from 52<sup>nd</sup> to 34<sup>th</sup>. At an institutional level, Bristol's results had improved across the board in all seven question categories. The overall improvement in our results had meant that Bristol had risen from 11<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> position in The Sunday Times University League Table.
- 6.11 Although the results had generally been encouraging, the University wished to continue to improve its performance. The specific actions that it would take with immediate effect were:
- (i) All students and staff would be reminded of the University's commitments on providing feedback, with recourse to the Pro Vice-Chancellor for Education if these were not being met.
  - (ii) A review of Schools in which performance over the last three years had either declined or showed no signs of improvement.

*(v) University League Tables September 2011*

- 6.12 In the QS World Subject Rankings for the Social Sciences, there were notable performances for Bristol in the subjects of Law, and Politics and International Studies, where those schools ranked 44<sup>th</sup> and 47<sup>th</sup> in the world, respectively.
- 6.13 In the Shanghai Jiao Tong Academic Rankings of World Universities (ARWU) for 2011, Bristol is ranked 70<sup>th</sup> in the world, 21<sup>st</sup> in Europe, and 8<sup>th</sup> in the UK. (In 2010, Bristol ranked 66<sup>th</sup> in the world, 18<sup>th</sup> in Europe and 8<sup>th</sup> in the UK).
- 6.14 Bristol had dropped three places to 30<sup>th</sup> overall in the QS World Rankings 2011, dropping to 8<sup>th</sup> out of the UK universities featured in the list. Bristol also ranked 9<sup>th</sup> in Europe. Bristol made the top 50 in only one specialist field this year, Natural Sciences.
- 6.15 Bristol had moved up to 10<sup>th</sup> place from 11<sup>th</sup> in the Sunday Times University Guide 2012 and placed 6<sup>th</sup> out of all Russell Group institutions. Bristol ranked 3<sup>rd</sup> in the "most competition for places" table, behind the London School of Economics and Edinburgh, with an average of 10.2 applications per place.

*(vi) Human Resources Matters*

Voluntary Severance/Early Retirement (VS/ER) Update

- 6.16 The review of staff expenditure in faculties had now been completed and the required £9m saving had been achieved with only one compulsory redundancy. Up to eight compulsory redundancies were anticipated as part of the Support Process Review (SPR). All other reductions so far had been dealt with through VS/ER.

National Pay Talks

- 6.17 The employer's side had made a final offer of a £150 increase on all pay spine points to be effective from 1 August 2011. This would add ca. 0.4% to the pay bill. The Trade Unions had consulted their members and Unison,

GMB and Unite had rejected the offer and entered the national dispute resolution process. UCU had accepted the offer.

#### Pensions

- 6.18 Following protracted negotiations, changes to the structure of the USS pension scheme would come into effect on 1 October 2011. These changes had been the subject of industrial action last year. UCU had balloted its members over the summer about continued industrial action and members had voted in favour of both strike action and action short of a strike.
- 6.19 The nature of any industrial action by University staff was not yet known. The University would liaise with managers where appropriate to identify and mitigate the impact of any industrial action.

#### Support Process Review

- 6.20 All of the new process structures were now operational. The transition period over the next few months would be challenging although the University would invest considerable effort in supporting the training and development of new faculty and divisional teams and in ensuring that communication and feedback mechanisms were working effectively, so that problems could be identified and resolved quickly. A range of further initiatives were planned over the coming year to make further improvements to both processes and systems. A progress report would be made to Council in due course.
- 6.21 The various Trades Union representatives had reported that although a significant level of concern remained about the pressure that the SPR changes were placing upon staff during the transitional phase, they had received helpful advice from Helen Galbraith, SPR Programme Director, and her team and furthermore, they felt assured that their concerns and feedback had been taken into account.

#### *(vii) National Composites Centre (NCC)*

- 6.22 The formal opening of the NCC had been scheduled for 8 November 2011. Negotiations over the formation of the High Value Manufacturing Technology and Innovation Centre (HVM/TIC) were progressing, with a formal launch of the HVM/TIC planned for 1 October 2011. The NCC would be a member of the HVM/TIC and it was anticipated that this would generate an annual grant income in the order of £3-5m p.a.

#### *(viii) Life Sciences Building Update*

- 6.23 During the summer, the University had sought legal advice in relation to the start of the demolition phase of the new Life Sciences building programme. The University was working with the Trust and its own legal advisors to resolve the issue.

#### *(ix) Health and Safety Matters*

- 6.24 There were no significant health and safety matters to bring to Council's attention.

*(x) Recent Grants and Awards*

- 6.25 NOTED: The list of grants and awards secured by University Staff and Students since July 2011, as outlined in paragraph 10 of the report.

**7. Financial Report**

- 7.1 RECEIVED: A report from the Finance Director, reference **CN/11/082** (previously circulated, copy in the minute book).

*Financial Performance/Prospects*

- 7.2 The financial accounts for 2010/11 were currently being finalised and would be reviewed by Finance Committee in October and Audit Committee in November prior to being presented for approval to the November 2011 meeting of Council. The draft results showed an operating surplus for the year (pre-exceptional items) of £16.8m, £11.8m better than budget. The main driver for the improvement in the pre-exceptional result had been the increase in overseas student numbers, particularly the overseas postgraduate taught student numbers. An exceptional charge of £2m had been made, this related to the fundamental restructuring costs associated with the SPR and the academic restructuring programmes. The provisional surplus, post exceptional items, was therefore £14.8m. [part of minute removed as 'commercial in confidence'].

*Treasury*

- 7.3 The University had agreed a wording change to one of the covenant provisions within its Barclays loan agreements. The change clarified the University's compliance with HEFCE's borrowing consents and would be signed under the general authority agreed by Council at its July 2011 meeting.
- 7.4 The potential implications of renewed turbulence in the financial markets had been noted as a concern by the Finance Director. The University was continually reviewing its investment portfolios with its investment managers and would continue to monitor the situation closely.
- 7.5 Cambridge Associates had completed a review of the University's endowment investment strategy and concluded that the University's current strategy remained appropriate. The Finance Committee would review the detail of Cambridge Associates' report in October 2011.

*Pensions*

- 7.6 In July 2011, the University had made a further advance payment of £6m towards the UBPAS deficit recovery plan. This brought total deficit-related payments to date to £15m. In the light of legal advice provided by the UBPAS Trustees' pension advisors, UBPAS would continue to use Pension Increase Orders for the indexation of pensions in payment. This meant that from 2011 onwards, indexation for pensions in payment would be based on CPI instead of RPI. The University had reflected CPI for pensions in payment within the FRS17 calculations in its 2010/11 final accounts. The Committee noted that this change would have a significant positive effect upon the overall UBPAS deficit reducing it by as much as £18m.

- 7.7 The UBPAS Trustees had commissioned a review of the Scheme rules and Deed, the main objective being to ensure that the Scheme documents complied with current legislation and to consolidate a series of changes made over recent years. The review was nearing completion and the majority of changes were minor and uncontentious. Significant changes included:
- (i) a change to the reference point for the indexation of pensions in payment – the current rules incorporated a reference to an obsolete Pension Act which had complicated the review process but, after due diligence, the University and Trustees had both concluded that this was a simple mistake. The rules would be amended to incorporate the correct reference and, in line with this, pensions in payment would now be indexed in line with CPI.
  - (ii) a change to allow members to continue to accrue benefits after the age of 65, this would allow the University to deal with the combined impacts of the removal of the default retirement age and pension auto enrolment legislation.
- 7.8 AGREED: That Finance and Human Resources Directors be authorised to agree with the UBPAS Trustees the final amendments to the UBPAS Rules and Deed as outlined in minute 7.7 above.
- 7.9 Following the decision of the provider (Threadneedle) of the University's new defined contribution pension scheme, UBGPP, to withdraw from the market, the University had appointed Legal and General as a replacement provider.

*Bank Account Signatories*

- 7.10 APPROVED: The addition of Dr Tony Rich, Registrar and Chief Operating Officer, and Professor Nick Lieven, Pro Vice-Chancellor, as authorised signatories on the University's bank accounts.

**8. Matters for Discussion and/or Approval**

(i) Draft Annual Review from Council to Court

- 8.1 RECEIVED and NOTED: The draft Review of the Year 2010/11, reference **CN/11/83** (previously circulated, copy in the minute book).
- 8.2 Council members were asked to send any comments on the draft Review to David Alder, Communications Director, by 7 October 2011.
- (ii) Temporary Addition to Ordinance 17: Assessment of Academic Awards
- 8.3 RECEIVED: A report from the Registrar setting out a proposed temporary addition to Ordinance 17 which would provide maximum flexibility for the University to act in the interests of students in the event of industrial action by Trade Union members, reference **CN/11/084** (previously circulated, copy in the minute book).
- 8.4 Council, at its meeting on 11 February 2011, had agreed to delegate powers to the Chair of Council to ratify the same temporary addition to Ordinance 17, in the event that it was required. Senate, at its meeting on 28 February 2011 also approved the temporary addition to Ordinance 17. The Chair of Council

ratified the change on 23 March 2011. The temporary addition would expire on 31 October 2011. In view of the current risk of industrial action with regard to pay, pensions and job security, the University wished to extend the temporary Ordinance for a further year to 31 October 2012, subject to Senate's approval at its meeting in October 2011.

- 8.5 APPROVED BY SPECIAL RESOLUTION: The following amendment to Ordinance 17:

*Notwithstanding anything contained to the contrary in the Ordinances, Regulations and Standing Orders of the University, in the event that any act or omission on the part of a member or members of the academic staff or any other persons appointed to deal with examinations or assessment within the University shall in the view of the Council disable the University from conducting examinations and assessment in the normal way, Council (acting in accordance with the provisions of Statute 17.1 and Statute 21.1) may order that the Vice-Chancellor representing Senate as its Chairman and acting in his absolute discretion in what he considers to be in the best interests of the University and its students shall (subject always to the provisions of the Charter and Statutes of the University) have the power (after consulting with such members of Senate as he considers appropriate) to determine what methods of examination and assessment of a student's ability or proficiency shall be adopted by any relevant internal examiners and the relevant external examiners of the University for the purpose of:*

- i. the award of any degree, diploma or certificate of the University*
- ii. the classification of any degree of the University*
- iii. the assessment of satisfactory performance or proficiency before any student is allowed to pass from one part of a programme of study or one University year to another;*

*and similarly have the power to exercise the authorities of University examination boards to approve the award of any degree, diploma or certificate so examined or assessed.*

- 8.6 NOTED: That Council would be asked at a later meeting during the 2011/12 academic year to consider whether it would be desirable to recommend to Senate the making of a permanent amendment to Ordinance 17 along the same lines, to ensure that the University was at all times able to act in the interests of students where individual members of staff were unable for any reason to perform their normal functions in relation to examinations and assessment.

*(iii) Student Appeals, Complaints and Disciplinary Matters\**

- 8.7 RECEIVED: The progress report on Student Appeals, Complaints and Disciplinary Matters, reference **CN/11/085**, (previously circulated, copy in the minute book) (reserved business).

- 8.8 RESERVED BUSINESS

- (iv) Staff Grievances and Appeals against Dismissal\**
- 8.9 RECEIVED and NOTED: The progress report relating to current Employment Tribunal cases, reference **CN/11/086**, (previously circulated, copy in the minute book) (reserved business).

- (v) Chair Appointments*
- 8.10 RECEIVED and NOTED: an update report on Chair appointment activity, reference **CN/11/087** (previously circulated, copy in the minute book).

**9. Committee Reports**

*Audit Committee*

- 9.1 RECEIVED: A report from the Secretary outlining the key business discussed at the previous Audit Committee meeting on 6 September 2011, reference **CN/11/088** (previously circulated, copy in the minute book).

*Student Affairs Committee (SAC)*

- 9.2 NOTED: The Student Affairs Committee had met on 26 September 2011. The Chair, Cindy Peck, reported that the Students' Union Sabbatical Officers had presented a paper detailing their main objectives for the coming year. This had been well received. Ms Peck commended the Union on the progress it had made in bringing a greater level of rigour and control to the management of the Union's finances. It would no longer be necessary to convene regular meetings of the SAC's Finance Sub-Committee as oversight of the Union's finances would now be undertaken by the Union Trustee's Finance Committee.

**10. Annual Report of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law**

- 10.1 RECEIVED: The Annual Report of the Faculty of Social Sciences and Law, reference **CN/11/089** (previously circulated, copy in the minute book). The report set out the Faculty's key achievements, challenges and objectives.

**11. Dates of next meetings**

Friday, 25 November 2011  
Friday, 10 February 2012  
Thursday, 22 March 2012  
Friday, 23 March 2012  
Friday, 25 May 2012  
Friday, 6 July 2012

\* Reserved Business