



University of Exeter  
**COUNCIL**

**MINUTES AND ACTIONS – APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

18 October 2023

10.30am-5.30pm

Reed Hall and SWIoT AI Arena

NB text in BLACK for publication; text in BLUE has been redacted for publication

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Council Meeting

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| 23.04 | Faculty of Environment, Science and Economy (ESE): Strategic Update Session <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Introduction to the Faculty Team and Faculty Performance</li></ul>  |
| 23.05 | Spotlight on Research in the Greener theme of Strategy 2030: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Global Systems Institute (GSI)</li><li>- Exeter Centre for Circular Economy (ECCE)</li><li>- CREWW (Centre for Resilience in Environment, Water and Waste)</li><li>- Land, Environment and Economics Policy Institute (LEEP)</li></ul> |
| 23.06 | ESE Faculty Roadmap: Major Initiatives delivering Strategy 2030 <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Accelerating Data Science and AI</li><li>- Business 2030</li><li>- Exeter Engineering</li></ul>   |
| 23.07 | Tours of the Faculty of Environment, Science and Economy  |

**Attendees:**

**MEMBERS PRESENT**

**Class I – Officers**

Quentin Woodley	Pro-Chancellor and Chair
Professor Lisa Roberts	President and Vice-Chancellor
Sir Richard Atkins	Pro-Chancellor and Deputy Chair of Council
Sally Cabrini	Pro-Chancellor and Senior Independent Governor
Professor Dan Charman	Senior Vice-President and Provost
Professor Tim Quine	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience)

**Class II – Members Appointed by Council**

Damaris Anderson-Supple	Independent Member
Nicholas Cheffings	Independent Member
Andrew Greenway	Independent Member
Karime Hassan	Independent Member
Salam Katbi	Independent Member
Sarah Matthews De-Mers	Independent Member
Alison Reed	Independent Member
Malcom Skingle	Independent Member
Tim Weller	Independent Member
Glenn Woodcock	Independent Member

**Class III – Members Appointed by Senate**

Professor Barrie Cooper	Senate Representative
Professor Karen Knapp	Senate Representative
Professor Sue Prince	Senate Representative

**Class IV – Members of Staff other than Academic Staff**

Shades Chaudhary	Professional Services Representative
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**Class V – Student Members**

Connie Chilcott	President, Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union
Alex Stanley	Education Officer, Representative of Exeter Students' Guild

**SECRETARY**

Mike Shore-Nye	Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary
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**STAFF IN ATTENDANCE**

Dave Stacey	Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Executive Divisional Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Commercial Services
Alison Chambers	Chief Executive Officer, University of Exeter Guild of Students
Dr Jeremy Diaper	Assistant Director, Governance (minutes)
Professor Krasimira Tsaneva-Atanasova	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Impact) (Minute Item 15)
Dr Michael Wykes	Divisional Director of University Corporate Services (Minute Item 16)
Joe Wall	Assistant Director, Finance (Minute item 17)
Professor Richard Follett	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement) (Minute Item 18, 19 and 20)

**APOLOGIES**

Professor Barrie Cooper	Senate Representative (apologies received for the first half of the Away Day)
Salam Katbi	Independent Member

Nicholas Cheffings

Independent Member

## **1. Chair's Welcome and Declarations of Interest**

1.1 The Chair welcomed Council members to the Council away day and noted that apologies had been received from Nicholas Cheffings and Salam Katbi. Apologies were also received for the first half of the Away day from Professor Barrie Cooper.

## **2. Vice-Chancellor's Welcome and Strategic Look Ahead at 2023/24 (CNL/08/23-24 Confidential)**

2.1 There were a number of significant challenges facing the Higher Education sector, including:

- 2.1.1 long-term pressures on the current funding model and falling real-terms value of tuition fees;
- 2.1.2 continued sector dependence on unregulated fee income amidst increasing competition for international student recruitment;
- 2.1.3 a challenging industrial relations landscape and increasingly uncertain geopolitical context;
- 2.1.4 problematic public perceptions of Universities, with reduced recognition and awareness of the important economic contribution and impact of Universities to local regions, business and the national economy;

2.2 there had been a number of significant institutional achievements in the Academic Year 2022/23, including:

- 2.2.1 ranking 11<sup>th</sup> in the Times Higher Education Good University Guide and Runner-up for *University of the Year*;
- 2.2.2 being shortlisted for University of the Year in the Times Higher Education Awards;
- 2.2.3 securing a Triple Gold rating in the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which was underpinned by Gold ratings in each of the two aspects of the assessment (Student Experience and Student Outcomes) and recognised the University as delivering consistently outstanding teaching, learning and outcomes for students and was of the highest quality found in the UK;
- 2.2.4 other notable achievements included increasing the University's total income and research income; securing the University's most successful ever year for philanthropic income; launching the 'Green Futures' Solutions and establishing 3 Civic University Agreements with Exeter, Cornwall and Torbay and achieving the University's most successful ever year for philanthropic income;

2.3 the following high priority strategic areas for the University in 2023-24:

- 2.3.1 *Recruitment*: developing revised student number plans, a holistic student recruitment strategy and portfolio review to ensure delivery of attractive market-led portfolio of programmes to enhance international recruitment, diversity of student population and to capitalise on increasing demand in Computer Data Science and Artificial Intelligence;

- 2.3.2 *Global Reputation and Ranking*: enhancing global brand, reputation and international league table rankings;
- 2.3.3 *Student Experience*: continuing to improve the student experience and focusing on key areas of performance in NSS (including assessment and feedback);
- 2.3.4 *Research*: growing research income per FTE, further enhancing cost recovery and REF 2028 preparations and continued focus on enhancing performance, quality and reputation;
- 2.3.5 *Financial*: ensuring continued financial sustainability and review of operating model, including opportunities for delivering high-quality education in a more efficient and sustainable model of delivery;

#### Closed Minute – Confidential

2.6 there were a number of strategic priorities in relation to Capital Plan in 2023-24, including:

- 2.6.1 developing a strategic approach to the capital plan, including sequential phasing of projects and relationship with S2030 priorities;
- 2.6.2 ensuring our buildings were providing the right size and shape for the future;
- 2.6.3 planning of interim infrastructure for areas of strategic growth;
- 2.6.4 ensuring student experience continued to be delivered through all major projects;
- 2.6.5 in relation to the Capital Plan projects: that there was a capital working group which had been established to help develop sequential planning of major capital projects;
- 2.6.6 that the Learning Futures Building concept would help to enhance student experience for appropriate subject mix including Business, Data Science, Artificial Intelligence, Law and provide multi-purpose and flexible use.

### **3. Update on Council Performance, Effectiveness and Opportunities for further enhancement (CNL/09/23-24 Strictly Confidential)**

- 3.1 at the beginning of the Academic Year 2022/23, three success metrics had been presented for Council to ensure continued focus on the University achieving the following outcomes, including: i) increasing the University's impact and reputation; ii) strengthening of financial resilience; iii) improving the University's strategic position;
- 3.2 the chair presented a framework for board effectiveness based on the fundamental premise that effective boards make outstanding decisions and excellent and timely intervention, which is in turn enabled by a high-performance culture and well-designed governance and information systems;
- 3.3 the importance of Council remaining focused on monitoring performance and Strategy delivery to ensure and the long-term sustainability and success of the institution, alongside constructive challenge, effective risk management and regulatory compliance;
- 3.4 the Chair provided an overview of areas of effective decision making in the Academic Year 2022/23, including: implementation of the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Review;

the review and approval of the Strategy 2030 delivery plan and Pay Band Restructuring. A number of areas for continuous improvement were also highlighted, including effective scrutiny of admissions targets and associated contingency plans; monitoring of KPIs and performance in Faculties and Departments; review of delivery of institutional sub-strategies, including: Global, Digital and Sustainability;

- 3.5 overall, it was highlighted that there had been significant improvements in relation to board performance, culture and governance processes throughout the academic year 2022/23, but further work would continue to be undertaken to enable further enhancements;
- 3.6 it was noted that a number of improvements to governance processes had been implemented, including: ongoing improvements to Council paperwork through an enhanced coversheet, shorter papers, more focused agendas on key challenges, risks and strategic issues; and the introduction of a new action log and business schedule template;
- 3.7 a new Code of Conduct, Fit and Proper Person Declaration Form and enhanced register of interests had also been introduced to ensure clarity surrounding the role and expectations of Council members; maintain the highest levels of probity and to ensure effective management of any conflicts of interest;
- 3.8 the on-going effectiveness project work for 2023/24, including: the development of a cascaded set of KPIs for critical Strategy 2030 activities; completion of the Council Assurance Review in 2023/24 and scoping of an external Council Effectiveness Review to be undertaken in late 2024/25;
- 3.9 Council welcomed the introduction of an effectiveness framework to enable continued focus on further improvements and recognised that Council had made significant progress in the Academic Year 2022/23 towards continued improvements in board effectiveness;
- 3.10 in discussion:
  - 3.10.1 that it would be helpful to schedule wider discussions on institutional culture and approach to measuring major cultural change associated with delivery of Strategy 2030. Further consideration would be given to this issue once the new Deputy Vice-Chancellor (People and Culture) had been appointed and was settled in post;
  - 3.10.2 that another key element to the effectiveness of Council was drawing upon the breadth of independent members perspectives and experience from across a range of sectors to consider other opportunities for innovation and enhancement;
  - 3.10.3 effective succession planning for independent members would remain an important element for ensuring an effective board;
  - 3.10.4 that it would be important to have further discussion surrounding the planned capital investment and key priority capital projects at Council to ensure there was a detailed understanding and agreement surrounding the agreed prioritisation and alignment with Strategy 2030. It was recognised that the Council Financial Review Sub-Committee had been reconstituted to ensure detailed scrutiny and review of major strategic capital projects prior to Council consideration;

3.10.5 that further consideration should be given to retaining the Joint Senate and Council Away Day as it provided a valuable opportunity to engage with a distributed body of academics across the University and ensure they had a mechanism to engage in dialogue with Council.

**Agreed:** to schedule an update paper for Council on progress with wider cultural change across the organization in the Academic Year 2023-24.

**Agreed:** that further consideration would be given to developing an agenda for a Joint Senate / Council Away Day in May 2024.

### **Faculty of Environment, Science and Economy (ESE): Strategic Update Session**

#### **4 Introduction to the Faculty Team and Faculty Performance (CNL/10a/23-24)**

Professor Alex Gerbasi (Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Faculty of ESE) was invited to deliver an overview of the Faculty, current performance and strategic areas of focus:

- 4.1 the Faculty of Environment, Science and Economy (ESE) consisted of 10 Departments, 3 Institutes and included the University of Exeter Business School, which was focused on core themes of Environmental Sustainability and Technological Transformation;
- 4.2 in relation to the size and shape of the student population within the Faculty:
  - 4.2.1 the total student population within the Faculty was c. 13,000 students, with over 8,000 Undergraduate students;
  - 4.2.2 the Faculty remained focused on continued growth in international postgraduate taught students;
  - 4.2.3 there was also further scope for increasing proportion of postgraduate research students, particularly through increased engagement with business and industry partnerships;
- 4.3 in relation to NSS Performance:
  - 4.3.1 the Faculty had a number of sector and institution leading disciplines in Geology, Mining and Minerals and Natural Sciences;

#### **Closed Minute**

- 4.4 in relation to research:
  - 4.4.1 there was a continued focus on enhancing research quality and impact through collaboration, partnership development and staff development;
  - 4.4.2 the research income generated within the Faculty was £59m, with a strategy to grow to over £100m by 2030;

- 4.4.3 key priorities to enhance research performance within the faculty included increased integration of major initiatives across Data Science AI, Business, Engineering and Environmental Science;
- 4.5 the key educational priorities within the Faculty of ESE were as follows: enabling supportive community in Departments; focusing on assisting students to identify how they develop graduate skills and attributes; facilitating interdisciplinary opportunities and skills development; understanding and addressing awarding gaps; identifying students in need of additional support to help improve student outcomes;
- 4.6 in relation to Business Engagement:
  - 4.6.1 the recent launch of the Green Future Solutions would provide enhanced brand recognition and visibility to enable enhanced engagement with business and industry;
  - 4.6.2 that it would be important to continue to be efficient in the design and delivery of a new portfolio of programmes, including embedding generative AI programmes within executive education;
  - 4.6.3 the launch of the Dame Ellen MacArthur's University of Exeter Business School centre had enabled a strong foundation for developing strong brand recognition across business;

#### Closed Minute

- 4.7 in relation to global engagement opportunities
  - 4.7.1 that a key focus for global engagement activity, including international student reputation and brand development, was surrounding the four main ESE strategic initiatives, including: Business 2030; Penryn 2.0; Accelerating Data Science and AI; and Exeter Engineering;
  - 4.7.2 the importance of evolving a new suite of January PGT programmes to ensure flexibility within the portfolio; diversifying international student recruitment activity towards India and South East Asia, including articulation and progression recruitment partnerships.

## 5 Spotlight on Research in the Greener Theme of Strategy 2030 (CNL/10b/23-24)

### a) Global Systems Institute

*Professor Peter Cox was invited to deliver a presentation on the Global Institute*

- 5.1 the Global Systems Institute (GSI) was focused on creating transformative solutions to climate change, through research, education and engagement. The expertise of the centre was focused on climate change but focused on interactions with other aspects, including: land use, biodiversity, human health, sustainable finance, social justice and human security;
- 5.2 the centre had produced high-impact climate change research and was considered to host the 5 most influential climate scientists in the UK. Particular research strengths included: Carbon Dioxide Removal; Solar Radiation Management; Green Finance and Energy Transitions;
- 5.3 the Global Carbon Budget Office was hosted as part of the GSI and was extremely influential as it provided definitive annually-updated estimates of CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and carbon sources;

- 5.4 there were further opportunities to strengthen collaboration with the Met Office through joint activities such as the Joint Centre for Excellence in Environmental Intelligence;
- 5.5 in discussions: that there were further opportunities to utilise interdisciplinary expertise across disciplines and faculties to support businesses to progress to net zero through effective supply chain management, including offering guidance on procurement law, legal contracting, economics and finance; whilst the current focus remained on continuing to seek to engage with and influence Businesses to make a difference, further consideration could be given to exploring opportunities to influencing government policy;

**b) The Exeter Centre for Circular Economy**

*Professor Fiona Charnley and Professor Peter Hopkinson were invited to deliver a presentation on the Exeter Centre for Circular Economy.*

- 5.6 the Exeter Centre for Circular Economy (ECCE) was launched in 2018 by Dame Ellen MacArthur, a world-leading academic centre of over 30 staff dedicated to the provision of Interdisciplinary Circular Economy Research, Education and Impact;
- 5.7 the University had been the first global University Partner of the Ellen MacArthur Foundation and continued to develop strategic relationships with a range of funding bodies, UK / EU government and global businesses (including Philips, DS Smith and Danone);
- 5.8 key initiatives included the NICER programme Circular Economy Data Observatory which provided a multi-disciplinary data-led system to offer real-time benefits of circular economy transformations at regional and national scale;

**c) Centre for Resilience in Environment, Waste and Water (CREWW)**

*Professor Richard Brazier was invited to deliver a presentation on CREWW*

- 5.9 the new CREWW building provided 800m<sup>2</sup> of laboratory space comprising world-leading, analytical, field-monitoring and computing facilities. Additional funding from UKRPIF had also been secured for the building to be the University of Exeter's first 'Net Zero in Operation' research facility;
- 5.10 a suite of research projects were being undertaken to support beaver reintroduction to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services including: natural flood management, drought resilience, enhanced biodiversity and nature recovery and improved water quality;

**d) The Land, Environment, Economics and Policy (LEEP Institute)**

*Professor Ben Groom was invited to deliver a presentation on the LEEP Institute*

- 5.11 the LEEP Institute deliver policy-focused research, outputs and tools to drive real world change and solve local and global environmental challenges, including climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution and nature recovery
- 5.12 NetZeroPlus was a flagship £6m interdisciplinary research programme in the Faculty bringing together researchers from Environmental Economics, Maths and Statistics, Climate Science, Geography and Ecology to develop policy driven research in partnership with Defra and HMT



and contributing to Net Zero, Nature Recovery Biodiversity Net Gain and Clain Growth;

- 5.13 the partnership between the University and Dragon Capital aimed to increase the consideration of biodiversity in investments in financial markets and government policy making;
- 5.14 a suite of research projects were being undertaken to support beaver reintroduction to deliver a wide range of ecosystem services including: natural flood management, drought resilience, enhanced biodiversity and nature recovery and improved water quality.

## **6. Major ESE Initiatives Delivering Strategy 2030**

- 6.1 the Faculty of ESE had developed robust Departmental, School and Institute Plans and Strategies to help strengthen overall performance and were leading on a number of major Strategy 2030 initiatives;
- 6.2 the main areas of focus were on growth of reputation, development of market share potential and enhanced recruitment of international students;

### **a) Strategy 2030 Major Initiative: Accelerating Data Science and Artificial Intelligence (CNL/10d/23-24)**

*The Chair of Council invited Professor Nick Stone, Professor Andrew Howes and Dr Miriam Koschate-Reis to present on Accelerating Data Science and AI in the ESE Faculty.*

- 6.3 the programme of accelerating Data Science and AI at Exeter would help to attracting international students, industrial partners and leading academics, whilst enabling strong engagement with Data Science and Artificial Intelligence across the whole of the University;
- 6.4 Phase 1 would involve increasing research power and capacity, significant student number growth in PGT and UG international and research income per FTE. Phase 2 would be focused on developing cross-disciplinary capability across the University, including environmental intelligence and health data science;
- 6.5 The University had appointed 10 new members of staff to help accelerate the programme for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence, including the Director for the Institute for Data Science and Artificial Intelligence, Director of Joint Centre of Excellence in Environmental Intelligence and Head of Computer Science
- 6.6 Computer Science was the fastest area of total student body growth nationally over the last 5 years, with an increase of 46.15% since 2014-15. The University had the fastest growth in Computer Science admissions nationally over the last 5 years and was the best performing Russell Group University in NSS over 5 years;
- 6.7 further work would continue to be undertaken to accelerate further growth and interweave Data Science and Artificial Intelligence throughout the institutional portfolio;
- 6.8 an audit of the current levels of high-performance computing equipment and infrastructure had been undertaken to enable effective planning for future requirements in light of planned growth. As a result of the utilisation of cloud computing and virtual servers, there was ability to avoid reliance on own institutional servers;

6.9 in discussion the importance of the following: enabling discussion and cross-fertilization of across in different disciplinary areas; continuing to review and consider the potential carbon impact of expanding data science and computer science; retaining leading academic staff and enhancing expertise in key areas of specialisation; exploring opportunities to provide academic expertise to support industry partners and businesses to utilize data science and AI and identify opportunities for spin-out companies and executive education and continued professional development.

**b) Business 2030 (CNL/10e/23-24)**

*The Chair invited Professor David Boughey, Professor Bill Peng, and Professor Loukas Balafoutas to present on Business 2030.*

- 6.10 the Business School was one of only in the Russell Group operating within a science based Faculty;
- 6.11 recent successes in the Business School included being awarded THE Business School of the Year in 2022, maintaining Triple Accredited Status (EQUIS, AACSB, AMBA) and improving research performance with a ranking of 9<sup>th</sup> nationally for Business and Management in REF 2021;
- 6.12 there were significant opportunities to build on existing strengths within the Business School to develop the quality of education, societal impact of research across environmental sustainability, responsible leadership and technological transformation;
- 6.13 key objectives for the Business School included:
  - 6.13.1 continually improving the School's reputation with a goal of being among the Top 100 Schools globally in the QS and THE rankings for relevant subject areas
  - 6.13.2 further enhancing the attractiveness of education and skills portfolio to grow the student population;
  - 6.13.3 diversifying the University's portfolio to further grow reputation, margin and income to raise average fee to £20,000;
  - 6.13.4 attracting, developing and retaining high-quality academic staff to support research power for REF 2028 and further enhance research reputation;
  - 6.13.5 developing a substantial and sustainable income stream through Professional Education and aiming to grow this to £20m;
  - 6.13.6 delivering an excellent experience for all staff, students, stakeholders and partners;
- 6.14 there were significant opportunities to build on existing strengths within the Business School to develop the quality of education and employability skills, societal impact of research across environmental sustainability, responsible leadership and technological transformation, and to leverage existing Degree Apprenticeship partnership relationships to develop research collaboration in Business and Computer Science;
- 6.15 in discussion, the importance of the following: undertaking detailed stakeholder analysis alongside alumni and partner mapping exercise to identify opportunities to build on existing connections and develop a proactive and strategic approach to fostering key relationships ,

and partnerships; reflecting on the possibility of identifying a number of 'Alumni Champions' and Advisory Boards to help foster wider connections and build relationships with alumni.

**c) Exeter Engineering (CNL/10f/23-24)**

*The Chair invited Professor Dave Hosken to present on Exeter Engineering.*

- 6.16 the major objective of the Exeter Engineering project was to harness Exeter's areas of distinctive strength and focus on research areas that underpin these and address future challenges
- 6.17 Computational, Modelling and Data Science underpinned the four areas of thematic focus, including: Infrastructure and Built Environment; Clean Energy and Decarbonisation and Materials and Manufacturing;
- 6.18 there were significant strengths in Engineering which could be developed upon, including ranking 14<sup>th</sup> in Russell Group for research power based on current GPA and number of research staff.

**7. Chair's Final Remarks and Faculty Tours**

- 7.1 The Chair extended a sincere thank you to the Faculty of ESE for holding such an engaging and informative series of presentations;
- 7.2 Council Members were invited to attend one of two guided tours in Faculty Research facilities, i) Metamaterials and Rama Nanontheranostics and ii) Engineering Maker Space.