



University of Exeter

COUNCIL

MINUTES AND ACTIONS – APPROVED BY COUNCIL

30 April 2026

09.00am-2.40pm

Council Chamber, Northcote House

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Attendees:

MEMBERS PRESENT

Quentin Woodley (Chair)	Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council
Professor Lisa Roberts	President and Vice-Chancellor
Professor Dan Charman	Senior Vice-President and Provost
Professor Liz Jones	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience)
Professor Malcolm Skingle	Pro-Chancellor and Deputy Chair of Council
Sally Cabrini	Pro-Chancellor and Senior Independent Governor
Lauren Aste	Independent Member
Rebecca Boomer-Clark	Independent Member
Adrian Harris	Independent Member
Karime Hassan	Independent Member
Gareth Mostyn	Independent Member
Sarah Matthews-Demers	Independent Member
Tim Weller	Independent Member
Glenn Woodcock	Independent Member
Dr Sarah Hodge	Senate Representative
Professor Maisha Reza	Senate Representative
Professor Karen Knapp	Senate Representative
Elaine Cordy	Professional Services Representative
Izzy Brinkley	President Exeter, Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union
Seb Racisz	Guild President, Exeter Students' Guild

SECRETARY

Mike Shore-Nye	Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary
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STANDING ATTENDEES

Imelda Rogers	Executive Divisional Director of Human Resources, Assurance and Culture
Dave Stacey	Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Executive Divisional Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Commercial Services
Dr Jeremy Diaper	Director of Governance Services (<i>minutes</i>)
Alison Chambers	Chief Executive Officer, University of Exeter Guild of Students

APOLOGIES

Damaris Anderson-Supple	Independent Member
Nigel Cain	Independent Member
Salam Katbi	Independent Member
Alison Chambers	Chief Executive Officer, University of Exeter Guild of Students

IN ATTENDANCE FOR INDIVIDUAL AGENDA ITEMS**Minute Item 103: Draft Research and Innovation Strategy**

Professor Krasi Tsaneva-Atanasova	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Impact)
Stuart Brocklehurst	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Business Engagement)

Minute Item 109: TEF Update and OfS New Integrated Approach to Quality

Roscoe Hastings	Director of Teaching Excellence and Student Experience
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Minute Item 110: TNE Academic Assurance Report

Roscoe Hastings	Director of Teaching Excellence and Student Experience
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97. Chair's Introduction, Welcome and Declarations of Interest

97.1 The Chair welcomed Council members to the meeting and invited any declarations of interest. There were no new declarations of interest in relation to items on the agenda.

97.2 The Chair noted that apologies had been received from Damaris Anderson-Supple, Nigel Cain, Salam Katbi and Alison Chambers.

98. Minutes from the Meetings held on 25 February 2026 and 26 February 2026 (CNL/132/25-26, CNL/132a/25-26, CNL/133/25-26 and CNL/133a/25-26 Strictly Confidential)

98.1 Council **APPROVED** the minutes of the meeting on 9 December 2025, subject to inclusion of a correction to a typographical amendment to the minutes of 25th February 2026 in relation to minute 58.4.2 on UKRI research funding allocation.

99. Action Log (CNL/134/25-26 and CNL/134a/25-26 Strictly Confidential)

99.1 Council received the Action Log for information which had been updated to incorporate the most recent actions from the Council meeting on 25 and 26 February 2026. The current status of the actions were noted.

100. Chair's Business and Matters Arising

100.1 The Chair provided an update on the following Matters Arising:

a) Endowment Management Retendering

100.2 The Chair noted that Finance and Investment Committee endorsed via e-circulation the initiation of a market testing exercise for the University's Endowment Manager (currently Rathbones Greenbank) using a streamlined competitive process;

100.3 The Chief Financial Officer, Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary, and Gareth Mostyn (Independent Member) would oversee finalisation of specification documentation and provider shortlists in line with delegated authority to the Investment and Endowments Committee;

100.4 That a formal proposal would be presented to Finance and Investment Committee for endorsement prior to Council approval in October 2026.

b) Environmental Sustainability Data Assurance Report

100.5 Following review and consideration of the Environmental Sustainability Data Assurance report for the year ended 31st July 2025 by Audit and Risk Committee on 26 March 2026, the Chair noted that he had subsequently signed-off as Chair of Council on the representation letter returned to PwC on 27 March 2026. The Sustainability Data Assurance report had subsequently been published on the University's website alongside the Annual Sustainability Report previously considered by Council in December 2025;

c) Reportable Event to the Office for Students (OfS)

100.6 The Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary updated Council in relation to a contempt proceeding arising from non-compliance with a Freedom of Information request and the previous reportable event to the OfS on 11 July 2025;

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101. Council Business Schedule 2024-25 (CNL/135/25-26 Confidential and CNL/133a/25-26 Confidential)

101.1 Council received for information the Business Schedule for the Academic Year 2025-26.

102. President and Vice-Chancellor's Report (CNL/136/25-26 Strictly Confidential)

102.1 The High Court had overturned a record £585,000 fine imposed on the University of Sussex by the Office for Students (OfS), which had claimed the university's governing documents failed to uphold freedom of speech and academic freedom. The decision, by Mrs Justice Lieven, criticised the regulator for its 'closed mind' approach in dealing with the investigation. The judgment also found that the OfS had misapplied the concepts of freedom of speech and academic freedom, exceeded its regulatory powers, and refused to consider any changes made by Sussex or similar cases at other universities;

102.2 The Government had recently announced a new complaints scheme which aimed to protect freedom of speech and academic freedom across Universities. It was intended to be run by the OfS and allow University staff, external speakers, and non-student members to raise concerns about providers who fail to protect freedom of speech. The scheme had intended to be available from September 2026 and indicated that Universities that failed to protect free speech could face fines of £500,000 or 2% of their income or in the most serious cases face deregistration. However, it was anticipated that the new Free Speech Code and complaints scheme may be reconsidered in light of the High Court recently overturning the Sussex ruling;

102.3 The latest UCAS figures indicated that the number of UK 18 year olds applying to University by the January deadline had gone up by 4.8% in comparison to last year, which reflected that there was still a demand for University. Furthermore, there had been a continued shift to high-quality providers, with applications to higher tariff institutions up by 6.9% (which compared to an increase of just 1.8% in lower tariff institutions).

102.4 The IntoUniversity Bristol South centre, run by the national education charity IntoUniversity in partnership with the University of Bath, University of Bristol and University of Exeter, had recently celebrated its 10 year anniversary. Working with local schools and the wider community, the centre provides long-term educational support to help students improve their attainment, build confidence and explore their future study and career options. Since opening, the centre has had a measurable impact on young people in the area, with c. 7,000 students taken part in its programmes and 167 students eventually coming to study at the University of Exeter;

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102.6 The University of Exeter's Psychology department was the first in the University to receive an Athena SWAN Gold award – the highest accolade available under the charter to recognise commitment to advancing gender equality;

102.7 The President and Vice-Chancellor extended a warm invitation to an exclusive event hosted by Sir Sajid Javid (Chair of the Campaign Board) to launch the University of Exeter's Philanthropic Campaign on Tuesday 13th October 2026 . Consideration was also being given to raising the financial target for the campaign above £150m;

102.8 Her Royal Highness The Princess Royal would be awarded an Honorary Degree of Laws at a special ceremony at the University of Exeter's St Luke's Campus Chapel on Friday 8 May in recognition for her life-long dedication to public service.

103. Final Draft Research and Innovation Strategy (CNL/137/25-26 Strictly Confidential)

103.1 The Final Draft of the University's Research & Innovation (R&I) Strategy 2026-2031 incorporated essential feedback from senior governance committees and the wider community.

103.2 The strategy adopted a targeted approach that emphasised areas of established and emerging excellence aligned with national priorities: from economic growth and industrial capability to regional impact, as defined by the UK government.

103.3 The core evolution from the earlier versions considered by Council was as follows:

103.1 Integration of research and innovation into a single framework;

103.2 Strategically embedding Artificial Intelligence (AI) to align with the University's strengths and sector potential;

103.3 Influence and Reputation elevated to a Strategic Priority;

103.4 The Performance measure and Risk Assessment Summary (as detailed in Appendix 3).

103.5 The strategy adopted a targeted approach that emphasised areas of established and emerging excellence aligned with national priorities: from economic growth and industrial capability to regional impact, as defined by the UK government.

103.6 Council commended the breath of consultation and engagement that had informed the final version of the Research and Innovation Strategy and welcomed the inclusion of the performance measures in Appendix 3 which would provide a clear mechanism for implementation of the Strategy.

APPROVED: The R&I strategy (see Appendix 1) prior to Strategy launch on May 6th.

104. Third Financial Forecast 2025-26 (CNL/138/25-26 Strictly Confidential)

104.1 The paper presented the third forecast, prepared in late March 2026, based on actual results to the end of February (actuals to period 7 + 5 forecast periods).

Closed Minute – Strictly Confidential**105. Al Qasimi Building: Full Business Case (CNL/139/25-26 Confidential and an additional slide CNL/139a/25-26 which was tabled and has been filed with the meeting)**

- 105.1 The Al Qasimi Building would be aligned with the key pillars of Strategy 2030 and provide a unique opportunity to strengthen the University's global reputation; enhance student recruitment and experience; and strengthen interdisciplinary research power at the interface between environment, social justice and health; and business engagement in environment and climate solutions. In addition, it would also amplify the existing work of the Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies, by providing space for an increase in interdisciplinary working and build on the University's reputation for delivering impact research across all areas of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs);
- 105.2 The Al Qasimi Building would also help strengthen teaching and research income generation and the University's global reputation through enabling bespoke leadership training programmes and delivery of collaborative research and education programmes in Marine Science with the University of Khorfakkan, and a Geology education partnership with Al Dhaid University;
- 105.3 The project would enable the construction of the three story 1750sqm building and provide a range of seminar rooms in which to teach education activities, a workspace to facilitate multidisciplinary research activity, café/study zone, and extensive outdoor landscape gardens for communal activity. The learning spaces and AV requirements had been designed to ensure they could be utilised as flexibly as possible and the Learning Futures Steering Group had been engaged alongside the AV team in IT to ensure this aligned with best practice;
- 105.4 The Academic Vision for the Al-Qasimi Building would be to enhance existing strengths in the contribution to the United Nations SDGs in the Global South, and enable interdisciplinary subject areas within Environmental Management, Climate Change Solutions, International Studies & Global Governance and Global Development & Health. The Building would also house the new Climate and Nature Institute, new School of Government and Foreign Service, and facilitate business engagement activity of Green Future Solutions;
- 105.5 The flagship project would be an important manifestation of the ongoing partnership with Sharjah and the construction had been co-funded by His Highness Dr Sultan bin Mohammed Al Qasimi the Ruler of Sharjah;

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- 107.8 In relation to the timescales for project delivery, Council noted that planning permission had been secured and construction was due to commence in June 2026. Building completion was scheduled for Spring 2028 with building opening anticipated by September 2028;
- 107.9 Council were strongly supportive of the project and recognised that the additional capital outlay required as a result of the impact of the Iran war and rising inflation costs still made strategic sense in light of the opportunities to grow research and teaching income, strengthen global reputation, and increase space for a range of teaching, business engagement and research activities;

107.10 In relation to the impact of the Iran war on the global economy:

107.10.1 Council noted that the Iran war had resulted in significant direct and indirect costs and the impact was causing continued financial volatility and economic damage in the Middle East, which could be exacerbated further by the United Arab Emirates planning to leave the oil producers' group OPEC (the Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries).

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APPROVED: The Al Qasimi Building Full Business Case.

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106. 5-Year Financial Plan and Assumptions (CNL/140/25-26 Confidential)

106.1 Council discussed and considered the 5-year plan and budget assumptions in detail, the resulting projected financial gap, and explored a number of potential mitigating options to close the gap.

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AGREED: That Options 1 – 3 were understood and so did not require any further development and that some elements of these could feed into further development of Options 4 and Options 5.

AGREED: To discuss and consider options 4 and 5 in further detail at Council on 3rd June 2026 as Council continued its assessment of which option or combination of options would be the right choice to make.

107. Risk Report 2 (2025-26) and Horizon Scanning (CNL/141/25-26 Confidential)

107.2 Council was provided with an overview of Risk Report 2. The following points were highlighted:

107.2.1 UEB had undertaken the blank paper exercise and had reviewed all corporate risks. The review had considered where consolidation or movement of risk from the corporate risk register to the operational risk register would be appropriate. A proposal had been prepared for further consideration by UEB in April 2026 and the new format of the report would be presented to Audit and Risk Committee (26 June) and Council (8 July);

107.2.2 That there were no very high 'red' risks, and nine corporate risks rated 'amber', compared with ten in the previous report. Seven risks remained unchanged from the last report;

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108. Verbal Update from the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee

108.1 Council was provided with a verbal overview of key issues discussed at the Audit and Risk Committee on 30 April 2026:

a) Internal Audit Progress Report

- 108.1.1 PwC provided an update on the Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26. 3 audits had been deferred to realign more closely with key elements of work and management team availability. The re-scheduled audits would be completed within the academic year.
- 108.1.2 The outline planning timetable for the 2026/27 internal audit plan was shared with the Committee and it was noted that the draft internal audit plan would be presented to Audit and Risk Committee at the next meeting in June, which would subsequently be shared with Council in July for information and assurance.
- 108.1.3 Audit and Risk Committee noted the rationale for the deferral of 9 actions from the 2022/23 Project Risk Management internal audit and agreed these actions would be completed by September 2026. The Chair noted that the length of delay in completing these actions was unusual and that there a strong track of record of responding to actions and completing actions.

b) Internal Audit 2024/25 reports:

- 108.2 The Committee had received three completed reports from the 2024/25 internal audits, including: IT and Digital; Curriculum for Change and Freedom of Speech and Duty of Care (Protests).
- 108.3 The Curriculum for Change report had resulted in a medium risk outcome overall with 2 medium risk and 4 low risk findings. The report had noted C4C had been supported by a comprehensive overarching business case, defined governance arrangements, and a range of good practice that had been established across monitoring, assurance and programme planning. The 2 medium risk findings were:
- 108.3.1 That the intended financial benefits could not be accurately assessed without defined baseline, targets, measurement methods and monitoring frequencies;
- 108.3.2 That whilst the overarching C4C Business Case had been approved in March 2025, not all individual workstreams had been supported by fully developed business cases.

c) Internal Audit 2025/26 reports:

- 108.4 The Committee had received three reports from the 2025/26 internal audits, including: Treasury Management, Annual Financial Return, and UUK Accommodate Code of Practice.
- 108.4.1 The UUK Accommodation Code of Practice internal audit reviewed the University's controls and processes to ensure that its student residences remained compliant with the UUK Code of Practice for the Management of Student Housing. The Committee noted the requirement to submit an independent audit report on compliance with the UUK Accommodation Code of Practice every 3 years. The last audit was conducted in March 2023 and the number of mandatory elements had increased from 84 to 252 in the most recent Code, and the audit considered all elements of the Code.
- 108.4.2 The Committee had extended thanks to PwC for a comprehensive audit and noted the good level of performance. Following a detailed review of all 252 elements of the Code, the Committee noted 7 exceptions, categorised into 6 themes, had been identified:
- 108.4.3 Whilst it was noted that findings had not been risk rated in line with the agreed approach with UUK, it was affirmed that all actions identified would be followed up and monitored in accordance with the action plans detailed in the report.

108.4.4 The Committee received assurance in relation to FX Plus preparation for audits under the new UUK Code of Practice. It was noted that FX Plus had established an Operational Team Working Group to oversee, manage and ensure compliance with the UUK Code of Practice.

d) Business Continuity:

108.5 Audit and Risk Committee had noted there were 61 business continuity plans in place to support the maintenance and recovery of essential services during and after a disruptive event and was assured that the plans were effective and had highlighted several areas for consideration for continuous improvement.

108.6 The annual major incident test that involved the Gold response team had tested extreme weather damage on campus and this had been attended by the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee.

e) IT Services Update:

108.7 Audit and Risk Committee had received a comprehensive IT Services Update from the Divisional Director of IT Services. There had been several recent complex and sophisticated phishing incidents which had demonstrated the requirement for phishing resistant Multi Factor Authentication.

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f) Risk Deep Dive Programme

108.8 Two risk 'deep dives' had been held on CR2 (Loss of Research Data) and CR109 (Devolution of Power Preparedness).

g) International Student Recruitment Audit Update Report

108.9 The Committee received an International Student Recruitment update that responded to 2 previously agreed actions and provided assurance that the backlog of due diligence checked in recruitment agents had been completed and set out an overview of due diligence training for the International Student Recruitment team.

108.10 The Committee received assurance that a robust performance management process had been introduced for all agents as a result of the internal audit, that involved regular meetings with agents to set and review targets prior to re-appointment.

108.11 The Committee had also received for information a number of papers for assurance, including: Internal Audit Policy; Financial Controls Report for the Prevention of Money Laundering; Data Assurance Update on Statutory Returns; Procurement Competition Waiver (PCW) Report.

109. TEF Update and OfS New Integrated Approach to Quality (CNL/142/25-26 Confidential)

The Chair invited Roscoe Hastings (Director of Teaching Excellence and Student Experience) to the meeting

109.1 The Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) was the Office for Students (OfS) national assessment of teaching quality in English higher education. The OfS was proposing significant

reform to the way it regulates and assesses quality, including substantial changes to the TEF.

109.2 Council noted the developments regarding the future quality model by the Office for Students and that the OfS has not yet confirmed the final structure, rules, or assessment approach.

109.3 TEF was expected to continue to rate two core aspects of an institution's performance: Student Experience and Student Outcomes. TEF would also give one overall rating for an institution (as was the case in TEF 2023), but OfS has proposed capping this at the lower of the two aspect ratings (a significant change from the 'best fit' model used in 2023), which has elicited strong sector concern).

109.4 The University has identified a set of working assumptions to support TEF readiness, based on the consultation and wider sector insight. Council noted the work underway in support of the University's TEF preparedness, including the current performance in the TEF metrics;

109.5 Council also noted the broader cultural change to improve consistency and ownership of the student experience in boost departments and welcomed the enhanced visibility of data insights and embedding of consistent institutional messaging and expectations;

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110. TNE Academic Assurance Report (CNL/143/25-26 Confidential)

110.1 Council noted the changing and developing regulatory environment associated with transnational education and the growing focus of the OfS on partnership provision and TNE, which reinforced the need for robust and consistent oversight of quality and standards.

110.2 Education Board and the TNE Operational Group had established a clear approach to the management of academic assurance, quality and standards within the current quality and standards framework of the University;

110.3 Both Education Board and Senate had approved a set of baseline principles for quality assurance of our TNE provision. Under these principles, the University will use its established 'business as usual' approach wherever possible, as set out in the Teaching Quality Manual (TQA). Where necessary, policies co-developed with partners will be established to ensure compliance with local requirements. Any variations or exceptions from standard practice in the TQA would be clearly set out.

110.4 All education programmes delivered through TNE will be subject to the University's quality process for development, regular monitoring, periodic review, and effective governance.

110.5 Within the UK, the QAA's QE-TNE scheme provides enhancement-led support and the UK-China Joint Institute Educational Alliance was an important knowledge-sharing community which had provided clear guidance for the TNE partnership with ZJUT (Zhejiang University of Technology (ZJUT) in China. There was a growing body of guidance and articles regarding TNE and franchised partnerships, with consistent themes around risk, governance and quality. The University was actively engaging with such initiatives, networks and resources.

110.6 However, with regards to the transformative partnership with Ain Shams University in Cairo, this was the first educational partnership between a Russell Group University an institution in Africa so there was clarity surrounding the approach to quality assurance. The framework adopted by the University would enable a sufficiently flexible approach to be adopted and to

respond to any in-county regulatory requirements and to adopt a risk-based approach on a case by case basis and depending on the nature of the arrangement and award;

The Chair thanked Roscoe Hastings (Director of Teaching Excellence and Student Experience) for their contribution to the meeting and invited them to leave.

111. Chair's Closing Remarks

111.1 The Chair of Council thanked members for their contribution to the meeting and advised that the next meeting of Council would be held on 3 June 2026.

112. Part II – Items (For Approval)

In accordance with agreed practice, the Chair confirmed that the following items in Part II (For Decision) had been formally **APPROVED** by Council, including:

112. FX Plus Debt Loan Refinancing (CNL/114/25-26)

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a) Background to FXP Arrangements

113.1.1 Exeter Retirement Benefit Scheme (ERBS) Trustee (CNL/145/25-26)

113. Part II – Items (For Information)

The following items were received in Part II by Council for information and assurance:

Academic Governance, Education and Student Experience

113.1.2 Curriculum for Change: Termly Report (CNL/146/25-26)

113.1.3 Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) (CNL/147/25-26)

113.1.4 Taught Degree Classifications Report 2024/25 (CNL/148/25-26)

113.1.5 OfS Bachelors' Degree Classification Algorithms (CNL/149/25-26)

113.1.6 Education Act Code of Practice: Falmouth & Exeter Students' Union (CNL/150/25-26)

113.1.7 Constitutional Review: Falmouth & Exeter Students' Union (CNL/151/25-26)

Governance Documentation

113.1.8 Final University Terms and Academic Calendar (CNL/152/25-26)

113.1.9 Arts and Culture Creative Review (CNL/153/25-26)

113.1.10 Affixing the Seal (CNL/154/25-26)

113.1.11 Ordinance 6 – Academic Requirements (CNL/155/25-26)

Human Resources

113.1.12 Occupational Health and Safety Annual Report (CNL/156/25-26)

Research and Innovation

113.1.13 Consultancy and Contract Research Review (CNL/157/25-26)

Minutes and Reports

113.1.14 Audit and Risk Committee Minutes – 6 November 2025 (CNL/158/25-26)

113.1.15 Capital Management Group Report (CNL/159/25-26)

113.1.16 Strategic Investment Committee Report (CNL/160/25-26)

113.1.16 Acronym and Abbreviations List (CNL/161/25-26)