



University of Exeter

COUNCIL

MINUTES AND ACTIONS – APPROVED BY COUNCIL

23 May 2024

10.00am-2pm

Pearson Teaching Room, Building: One and online via Microsoft Teams

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

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Council Meeting

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Attendees:**MEMBERS PRESENT**

Quentin Woodley	Pro-Chancellor and Chair
Professor Lisa Roberts	President and Vice-Chancellor
Professor Tim Quine	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience)
Professor Dan Charman	Senior Vice-President and Provost
Richard Atkins	Pro-Chancellor and Deputy Chair of Council
Sally Cabrini	Pro-Chancellor and Senior Independent Governor
Nicholas Cheffings	Independent Member
Karime Hassan	Independent Member
Salam Katbi	Independent Member
Professor Malcom Skingle	Independent Member
Alison Reed	Independent Member
Tim Weller	Independent Member
Glenn Woodcock	Independent Member
Sarah Matthews-DeMers	Independent Member
Professor Barrie Cooper	Senate Representative
Professor Sue Prince	Senate Representative
Professor Karen Knapp	Senate Representative
Shades Chaudhary	Professional Services Representative
Alex Stanley	Education Officer and Representative of the Exeter Students' Guild
Connie Chilcott	President Exeter, Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union

SECRETARY

Mike Shore-Nye	Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary
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MEMBERS APOLOGIES

Andrew Greenway	Independent Member
Damaris Anderson-Supple	Independent Member

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
Imelda Rogers	Executive Divisional Director of Human Resources
Dr Jeremy Diaper	Assistant Director, Governance (minutes)

Minute Item 102 – Admissions Update

Alicia O'Grady	Executive Divisional Director of External Engagement and Global
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Minute Item 111 – EDI Update Report

Professor Rajani Naidoo	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Culture and Inclusion)
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96. Chair's Welcome and Declarations of Interest

96.1 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.

96.2 the Chair noted that apologies had been received from Andrew Greenway and Damaris Anderson-Supple.

97. Minutes from the Meetings held on 28 February, 29 February and 18 April 2024 (CNL/128/23-24, CNL/128a/23-24, CNL/129/23-24, CNL/129a/23-24, CNL/130/23-24, CNL/130a/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

97.1 the minutes of the meetings of 28 February, 29 February and 18 April 2024 were **APPROVED**, subject to minor amendments to minute 59.5.1 and 61.9.3.

98. Action Log (CNL/131/23-24 and CNL/131a/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

98.1 Council received the Action Log for information which had been updated to incorporate the most recent actions from the Council meetings in February and April 2024. The current status of the actions were noted.

99. Business Schedule (CNL/132/23-24 and CNL/132a/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

99.1 Council noted the updated format of the Business Schedule which had been updated in response to recent feedback. The new format provided a breakdown of each meeting, an overview of Council business categorised according to key areas, and assurance dashboards to illustrate the areas of focus across the academic year.

100. Chair's Business and Matters Arising

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

a) Updates to Financial Regulation Thresholds

100.1.1 that the Chair had approved an update to the University's Financial Regulations to ensure these were in alignment with the new Procurement Operating model that would come into effect on 1 June 2024. The amendment pertained to a minor change in Procurement thresholds from £2,500 - £5,000 previously managed via self-services, to £2,500 - £9,999 now managed via the Procurement Operations team;

100.1.2 as a result of the change, related requests would now be progressed via Procurement Specialists within PS Connect, which would provide additional expertise, support and guidance to the purchase requester;

100.1.3 the Financial Regulations had subsequently been updated and re-published on the relevant Webpage.

101. President and Vice-Chancellor's Report (CNL/133/23-24 Confidential)

101.1 in response to the UK Government's announcement that a General Election would be held on 4 July 2024, the Russell Group had published a manifesto to demonstrate how the new Government could harness the strength of research-intensive universities to deliver a real and sustained impact across the country and contribute to a thriving economy;

- 101.2 the Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) review of the Graduate route had identified no evidence of abuse and no impact on the integrity and quality of UK Higher Education. The review recommended retaining the graduate route and highlighted that it continued to achieve the government's own objectives as set out in the international education strategy;
- 101.3 the MAC review highlighted that increased tightening of restrictions for the Graduate route would impact international student applications and further reduce the UK's appeal as a destination for international study, which had already been affected by international students no longer being able to bring dependents with them as a result of restrictions to UK student visas introduced from January 2024;
- 101.4 more transparency surrounding international recruitment agents had also been called for within the MAC review which had set out the need for a mandatory recruitment agent registration system and annual publication of provider level spending on agents and recruitment numbers to improve disclosure;
- 101.5 the MAC review had been well received by the Higher Education sector and it was hoped that there would be no major changes to the current post-study work arrangements. However, a formal government response to the review had yet to be issued;
- 101.6 the Office for Students (OfS) had published its independent analysis of the financial sustainability of the Higher Education sector and its resilience to financial challenges. The report was based on analysis of the financial data returned to the OfS from universities, colleges and other higher education providers in England for the financial year ending in 2023 and forecast data to 2026-27. The following was highlighted:
- 101.7.1 that the report had identified there was increased pressure on Higher Education sector finances and cautioned universities against overly optimistic projections of future student number growth;
- 101.7.2 the analysis undertaken by the OfS indicated that the financial situation for the sector could continue to worsen up until 2026-27 unless mitigating action was taken;
- 101.7.3 that the outturn position for the sector was likely to be even more challenging than providers had forecast for the short and medium term, with 40 per cent of providers expecting to be in deficit in 2023-24;
- 101.7.4 that there were multiple factors creating the challenging financial environment, including: the continuing decline in the real-terms value of income from UK home undergraduates; increasing inflationary and economic pressures on operating costs and capital development; the recent sector-wide reduction in international student recruitment; and the significant costs associated with reducing carbon emissions;
- 101.7.5 the report had also modelled a range of student number scenarios, which predicted that no growth across the sector could result in c. two-thirds of institutions being in deficit by 2026-27. The reasonable worst-case scenario modelled, which assumed a significant reduction in international student numbers and no cost cutting activity, would result in over 80 per cent of institutions in deficit and nearly three quarters facing low levels of liquidity;
- 101.8 the University had successfully renewed its Athena SWAN Silver award, which was a

global framework and accreditation scheme used to support and transform gender equality within higher education and research. A number of elements of best practice had been highlighted as best practice as part of the renewal process, including safeguarding gender equality during the Covid-19 pandemic, the implementation of bystander training and 'Speak Out' anonymous reporting tool;

101.9 the University had retained its position in the top 15 of the Complete University Guide League Table in 2025, ranking in 14th place, which was one position above the previous year. 4 subjects had been ranked in the top 5 (up from 2 in 2024), with 21 subjects ranked in the top 10 (up from 18 in 2024);

101.10 that the President and Vice-Chancellor had been elected to the position of Policy Lead for Student Experience, Education and Skills at Universities UK (UUK). In this role, which would be held for 3 years, the President and Vice-Chancellor would be working with UUK members, Government, regulators, and industry to deliver long-term benefits for students, regions and the UK.

102. Admissions Update (CNL/134/23-24 Confidential)

The Chair welcomed Alicia O'Grady (Executive Divisional Director of External Engagement and Global) to the meeting for the Admissions Update.

102.1 the admissions report was focused on early conversion and estimated UG and PGT intakes for 2024 entry. There was currently strong performance in relation to Undergraduate recruitment, with the University expected to meet its UG home target and secure 88% of undergraduate international year one targets. There had been an increase in UG home applications and offers compared with the previous year;

102.2 it was estimated that there could be a substantial shortfall in PGT international recruitment. There were ongoing measures in effect to boost applications and improve conversion rates;

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102.7 it was hoped the positive outcome of the recent MAC review would bolster confidence in the UK international recruitment market and result in further recovery in international postgraduate taught recruitment. However, the uncertainty surrounding the graduate route had resulted in a significant sector-wide decline in international student recruitment and had a severe impact on the appeal of the UK as a study destination;

102.8 in relation to Widening Participation and State school recruitment:

102.8.1 Council noted that the potential optics surrounding the inclusion of a very short section within the report on enhancing state school and widening participation. It was highlighted that the level of detailed had been partly determined by the page limit for Council papers, but that future iterations of the admission update reports would contain greater levels of detail;

102.8.2 it was highlighted that a strategic review of schools able to access our contextual offer had been undertaken to widen this across the South-West and into Wales, with plans in place to make this available nationwide from the Academic Year 2024-25;

102.8.3 that work was also being undertaken as part of the Access and Participation Plan to

strengthen the working relationships and collaboration with schools to actively encourage Widening Participation students to submit applications to the University;

102.8.4 that during the confirmation and clearing period there would be a strategic approach to prioritising Widening Participation students where possible, and prior to clearing data analysis would be undertaken to try and proactively identify eligible Widening Participation students and highlighting the importance of entering the clearing process at an early stage;

102.9 in relation to confirmation and clearing:

102.9.1 the importance of developing a strategic and forward-thinking approach to ensure that the increased UK student intake would deliver a financial margin on £9,250 fees and that the approach adopted via confirmation and clearing would result in an overall financial return, whilst avoiding late in cycle decisions which could impact on the overall student experience;

102.9.2 that it would be important to ensure there was also suitable alignment between additional student recruitment and capacity within Departments so that there was sufficient academic resource and student support to recruit additional students without negatively impacting on the student experience or affecting NSS scores;

102.9.3 that further consideration should be given to aligning the approach to confirmation and clearing with wider strategic approaches to the Curriculum for Change programme, space utilisation and areas of strong international student demand;

102.9.4 that Finance teams had undertaken a detailed programme and module analysis to identify specific areas of the University that were making a surplus and that there was a concerted strategic approach to focusing on recruiting additional students in areas that delivered a clear financial return and improved financial margins, including in some areas that delivered c. 110% full economic costing;

102.11.5 there had been a substantive change to the clearing process in recent years, and was no longer exclusively utilised by candidates who had fallen short of their predicted grades. It was estimated that c. one-third of students now opted to self-release into clearing because they had outperformed their predicted grades;

102.11.6 that it would be important to develop a holistic strategy to the clearing period and ensure that sufficient consideration was being given to the wider impact on space utilisation and potential constraints on further international student growth;

102.11.7 that in-year fluctuations in student recruitment had created further capacity to increase recruitment through clearing, such as the decline in postgraduate international student recruitment in the business school. As a result of these annual changes in recruitment it was important to be agile and responsible to deliver the budget within the existing cost envelope;

102.11.8 that analysis had not yet been undertaken to determine if the recruitment of additional cohorts of students through clearing had historically had a negative impact on NSS and quality of educational delivery. However, there had been a sustained focus on promoting the importance of NSS within Economics and there had been dramatic progress and improvements on NSS scores over several years. It was recognised that there had been significant fluctuations in student numbers in the Law Department throughout the

Covid-19 pandemic;

102.12 in relation to Degree Apprenticeships:

102.12.1 that irrespective of the outcome of the forthcoming election it was anticipated that there would be a continued focus on Degree Apprenticeships and it would therefore be strategically important for the University to maintain its competitive advantage in this area and build on the strong position of being the largest Degree Apprenticeship provider in the Russell Group;

102.12.2 that there was shared responsibility for Degree Apprenticeship activity between the Executive Divisional Director of External Engagement and Global and the Divisional Director of Exeter Innovation. Both teams worked closely to ensure suitable approach to conversation activity and to carefully position offers.

103. Reprofileing our International Student Numbers (CNL/135/23-24 Confidential)

103.1 the paper provided Council with an updated five-year student intake target which had been reprofiled in line with the latest recruitment and market insights data, new programmes in development, the marketing strategy and other mitigating actions;

103.2 the 2024/25 applications data indicated that there remained significant risk to achieving the reprofiled 2024/25 targets, especially for PGT International;

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AGREED: that the reprofiled international student numbers were still considered overly optimistic and unrealistic in the context of an increasingly competitive and volatile student recruitment market;

AGREED: that a further set of modelled scenarios would be produced, including a set of more prudent and cautiously deliverable international student number plans and a worst case pessimistic downturn scenario;

AGREED: that a further iteration of the 5-year student number plan would be developed and presented to Council in October 2024, including a wider range of modelling scenarios based on more conservative student growth projections that were also informed by the final confirmed entrant numbers for AY 2024-25;

104. Access and Participation Plan (CNL/136/23-24 Confidential)

104.1 the new Access and Participation Plan (2025/26 – 2028/29) was structured around five intervention strategies, each linked to a specific objective with related targets;

104.2 the five intervention strategies were linked to the University's civic mission and specific stages of the student journey as outlined below:

- i. Leadership and Partnership within our region to support attainment and access;
- ii. Widening Participation and recruitment activity to diversify our student body and support progression to Higher Education;

- iii. Alleviating non-academic barriers to learning, improving continuation and delivering positive student experience;
- iv. Supporting students to fulfil their academic potential and adopting sector leading inclusive practice;
- v. Supporting students to fulfil their post-study ambitions to achieve social mobility;

104.2 the 12 targets reflected the largest gaps in outcomes for specific student groups and were based on a detailed analysis of performance, sector and internal research, and related theories of change;

104.3 the new Plan was built on the significant progress made over the duration of the current Access and Participation Plan. New areas of activity included regional work and access, pupil attainment, regional focus, success and progression;

104.4 that the Student Unions would be making a joint student submission providing their views to the OfS on the Access and Participation Plan;

104.5 Council was strongly supportive of the ambitious approach and welcomed the setting of challenging and aspirational targets in recognition of the importance of enhancing Access and Participation and maintaining a clear focus on this key strand of the University's mission to help create a fair, socially just and inclusive society;

104.6. all Access and Participation Plans would be published and openly accessible in the public domain. The OfS monitored the progress of providers in delivering their access and participation plan commitments each year. The new approach to regulating equality of opportunity placed a greater emphasis on evaluation, with Universities expected to strengthen their evaluation activity to understand the impact of their work to support students and sharing evaluation outcomes so that the entire sector moved towards a more informed and evidence based approach;

104.7. the OfS Conditions of Registration (Condition A) required the University to have in force an Access and Participation Plan approved by the OfS and to take all reasonable steps to comply with the provisions of the plan;

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APPROVE: the University's new Access and Participation Plan 2025/26 – 2028/29 and related annexes for submission to the Office for Students by the deadline of the end of May 2024.

105. Draft Performance Framework (CNL/137/23-24 Confidential)

105.1 the Draft Performance Framework would enable the University to align the institutional KPIs with the goals of the institutional strategy (Strategy 2030);

105.2 the 'Strategy 2030 KPIs' would become the core institutional targets, with UEB and Council focused on agreement of annual targets and regular reporting and tracking of progress;

105.3 a master list of associated Performance Indicators would also be maintained to provide the necessary information for establishing Faculty, Departmental and Divisional Performance Targets and ensuring these were in alignment with the Strategy 2030 KPIs;

105.4 it was anticipated that the performance of both Russell Group and other key comparator institutions would provide context for target setting;

105.5 the following in discussion:

105.5.1 whilst it was recognised there would be a range of Performance Indicators for the Digital Team aligned with the overarching Strategy 2030 KPIs, the current 'Digital Engagement' Measure and associated targets were no longer deemed optimal and there was therefore a need to review this and develop a revised target which was more suitably aligned with the overall strategic objective and helped accurately measure the institutional ambition to enhance digital ways of working and achieve financial cost efficiencies;

105.5.2 that it was recognised that there were not many forward looking KPIs, but that there would be other mechanisms for Council to monitor and review performance in year, including regular reporting on admissions and other annual assurance papers on key areas of activity, including performance in the NSS and international league tables;

105.5.3 that the inclusion of % State School within the potential Performance Indicators in Annexe B was welcomed and it was affirmed that it would be important for this to be retained as a measure of performance;

105.5.4 that each KPI would have an ultimate owner who would be held accountable and that this would typically be aligned with the portfolio of a Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor and set as targets in performance review process with the President and Vice-Chancellor;

105.5.5 it was noted that all of the measures in relation to Education and Student Experience were currently focused on Undergraduate Performance, but the broad elements of 'excellent experience', 'graduate outcomes', 'progression' and 'equality of opportunity' could be would utilised as a proxy for monitoring quality of education. The Performance Indicators would also incorporate a wider set of postgraduate metrics, which could include PTES and PRES.

105.5.6 that in order to be incorporated within the institutional KPIs and targets there needed to be a clear benchmark available. The Performance Indicators in Appendix included areas of performance which would be monitored, but for which there was not necessarily a clear benchmark;

105.5.7 that estate efficiency and space occupation was not proposed as a Performance Indicator. There was a workstream as part of the Curriculum for Change Programme which was reflecting on space usage, timetabling and potential for extending the teaching day to maximise utilisation and efficiency. The University's percentage occupancy and efficiency of utilisation of facilities was currently c. 60-70%, which was comparatively very high in relation to the rest of the sector, with a number of institutions only achieving c. 17-20%;

105.5.8 the importance of reflecting on how best to utilise the Performance Indicators to influence and drive behaviours and cultural change;

AGREED: that Council would review performance against institutional KPIs and receive/approve in-year targets on an annual basis in October 2024.

AGREED: that the 'Digital Engagement' measure and associated targets would be reviewed and refreshed and brought to Council for approval in October 2024.

AGREED: that further consideration would be given to changing the measure of financial sustainability to an operating cash flow measure rather than operating surplus;

AGREED: that when cascading the Performance Indicators to Departments, Faculties and Professional Services these should be accompanied by the Strategy 2030 to ensure the targets were clearly aligned with wider strategic narrative and ambitions.

106. Third Financial Forecast 2023/24 (CNL/138/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

106.1 the paper provided the third financial forecast which had been prepared based on actual results to the end of February 2024. Key drivers of improved financial performance included improvements in levels of interest receivable, increasing teaching income in the Faculty of ESE and Degree Apprenticeship income; and a forecast surplus from INTO LLP;

106.2 staff and operating costs had been well managed and forecast to be in line with the revised budget when exceptional items were allowed for;

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108. Draft Budget 2024-25 and Later Year Plans (CNL/139/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

108.1 the Draft Budget 2024-25 had been developed in light of the challenges of international student recruitment for 2024/25. The later year plans incorporated agreed mitigations and initiatives required to secure a sustainable budget, with no specific assumptions on the impact of the recently announced Voluntary Severance Scheme;

108.2 in comparison with the July 2023 Council budget, there was a material change in tuition fee income expectations and there was sufficient risk within the Draft Budget 2024-25 and later year plans to make a deficit a distinct possibility;

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NOTED: the basis for the initial draft of the budget, the proposed 1% EBIT and further actions.

108. Al-Qasimi: Outline Business Cases (CNL/140/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

108.1 following ongoing engagement with Sheikh Dr Sultan bin Muhammad Al-Qasimi, a capital donation had been secured that provided a unique opportunity for the University to build a cross-faculty environment to enhance the University's global reputation, attract international students and enhance interdisciplinary research at the interface between environment, social justice and health and engagement in environment and climate solutions;

108.2 the academic vision of Al-Qasimi was focused on building on existing strengths in contributing to the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals in the Global South' which would embodied the University's core values of Greener, Healthier, Fairer;

108.3 the capital development would deliver high-quality student spaces to help facilitate additional planned student growth, including: 5 new teaching rooms, learning spaces for c. 225 students, capacity for c. 60 spaces within the café, c. 86 bookable academic desk spaces and 3 meeting rooms. It would also provide an area to host Green Future Solutions events and help to

accelerate opportunities to enhance business support and engagement activities in climate and the environment;

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APPROVE: the Outline Business Case for the Al-Qasimi Initiative and the drawdown of capital funds of £5m to deliver the next stage of the project until the Full Business Case was presented to Council for consideration in Summer 2025.

109. West Park Student Residences: Full Business Case (CNL/141/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

109.1 that the West Park Student Residences Project was commissioned to support and enhance the student experience and the University's Strategy 2030 ambitions by developing high-quality, affordable and accessible accommodation and support social space on Streatham campus;

109.2 West Park would provide greater flexibility of accommodation offerings to all student groups and deliver over 1,500 bedrooms in shared flats;

109.3 a position had been negotiated with UPP alongside an external advisory team to ensure the project could meet overarching requirements and achieve at least a net zero position regarding capital receipt;

109.4 the project would also enable the University to provide international students an enhanced accommodation packages (including multi-year provision and longer tenancy lengths across academic years) and an expanded offering to January starters;

109.5 Council were strongly supportive of the West Park Student Residences Project and recognised it would future proof residential student experience on campus by providing greater flexibility of accommodation and meet student demand for a range of different groups;

109.6 that West Park would also result in significant carbon savings and deliver Passivhaus standards in the new building development;

109.7 in relation to the query regarding the demand for privately rented accommodation and whether the project would help to support the strategic growth need for rented housing in Exeter and reduce pressure on private accommodation, it was highlighted that the West Park proposal aligned with the current Exeter City Council Policy for Purpose-Built Student Accommodation (PBSA), which aimed for a minimum of c. 75% of student growth in Exeter from 2007 onwards to be accommodated in PBSAs;

109.8 it was highlighted the University had provided Exeter City Council with an indication of the amount of student accommodation that would be secured by its PBSA developments. The University was also part of the Devon Housing Commission which was set up by Devon's 11 Local Authorities to conduct an in-depth analysis of the various local housing markets to Understand the need for future housing supply, influence housing and social policy change and identify practical solutions to accommodation challenges in the local region;

109.9 that the 5 accessible rooms would provide sufficient facilities for any students with

accessibility requirements, including enhanced provision for any deaf or sight impaired students and access to full time health care support. The Estates team had also worked closely with the EDI team to ensure the building designers and planners considered the accessibility needs of the neurodiverse population;

109.10 there had been Guild student representation on the project group and steering group to ensure student voice was being integrated at the point of design to future proof the development and ensure it appealed to international student demographic;

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AGREED: that the West Park Student Accommodation Project proceeds to Financial Close and that the University enters into any documents required in connection with the West Park Student Accommodation Project including (without limitation) the project agreement, the headlease, the independent certifier appointment, the underleases and the funder's direct agreement;

AGREED: that delegated authority would be provided to the Chair of Council and President, Senior Vice-President and Chief Financial Officer to sign the documents above based on the key Parameters outlined below:

- i. A minimum of a Zero financial contribution from the University at Practical Completion
- ii. A concession period of 50 years
- iii. Delivery of over 1,500 high quality student rooms

110. Academic Assurance: Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) (CNL/142/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

110.1 that the report on the University's accreditation by Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs) was presented as part of the continued enhancement of academic assurance to Council;

110.2 the report outlined the current activity associated with PSRBs and the work to maintain and expand programme accreditations which was of vital importance from both a reputational and regulatory perspective;

110.3 the University was currently delivering c. 153 programmes (including programme variants) that were accredited by 34 PSRBs, representing c. 8,850 students in the 2022/23 Academic year;

110.4 that responsibility for PSRB accreditation sat within the relevant Departments and Faculties and across Professional Services (mainly in Education Policy, Quality and Standards (EPQS)) and in Learning Experiences & Innovation (LXI). The EPQS team currently had 2.6 FTE Quality and Standards Advisors dedicated to PSRB Accreditation activity which supported the majority

of PSRB accreditation in the HLS and ESE Faculties. It was recognised that this was a small team in the challenging sector-wide context, they were continuing to operate effectively within the

current resource allocation;

110.5 it was noted that it would be remiss to rely exclusively on Professional Services colleagues to manage PSRB accreditation requirements and it was essential the wider academic community (including both Programme and Module leads) were appropriately trained and had detailed understanding of requirements and specific learning outcomes, whilst also working in partnership with colleagues across the institution;

110.6 a Community of Practice had been established to ensure a co-ordinated and consistent approach across Faculties and to embed best practice across the University;

110.7 that it would also be important to be cognisant of wider requirements of international regulations and other training requirements which may sit outside of PSRBs;

110.8 that it would be beneficial to develop a robust university management system which could enable effective data sharing and management which maps different accreditation requirements across different Faculties, Departments and Programmes.

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111. EDI KPI Update (CNL/143/23-24 Strictly Confidential)

The Chair welcomed Professor Rajani Naidoo (Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, People and Culture) to attend the meeting and to introduce the EDI KPI Update.

111.1 that the report provided an update on institutional progress against the student and staff EDI KPIs and outlined key priorities for the 2024/25 academic year. It was noted that the University was on course to meet its KPI targets, but it was recognised that there was further improvements which could be made to close the pay gaps and ethnicity disclosure rates;

111.2 the Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (People and Culture) highlighted that since joining the institution they had been pleased to see the breadth of activity being undertaken to further enhance performance in relation to inclusion and diversity;

111.3 that further work would be undertaken to develop dashboard reporting to enhance access to staff data in relation to pay gaps and to enable this to be reviewed and analysed in a more dynamic and interactive fashion over longer timer periods;

111.4 that there was budget both within HR and Faculties and Departments do drive forward Wellbeing, Inclusion and Culture initiatives. There had also recently been enhanced investment in the culture and inclusion team to help enable further institutional capacity;

111.5 that enacting positive impact and change across the University would require an institution-wide approach including regular faculty meetings, development of WIC priorities and discussions and University-wide communicates of practice, with no agenda but opportunity to raise live issues to co construct solutions to emerging issues;

The Chair thanked Professor Rajani Naidoo (Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, People and Culture) for their contribution to the meeting and invited them to leave.

112. Verbal Update on Council Assurance Review

112.1 the Chair advised that the draft Terms of Reference for the newly constituted Council sub-committees and any existing committees with a substantially expanded remit would be circulated offline by the Assistant Director (Governance) for review and feedback from Council members, prior to endorsement by Nominations Committee (1 July 2024) and formal approval by Council on 11 July 2024.

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

113.1 the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee provided a brief update on key issues discussed at the most recent meeting on 9 May 2024 as outlined below:

113.1.1 the President and Vice-Chancellor had provided a sector-update presentation;

113.1.2 in response to discussion at the meeting, it was agreed that the incoming Chair would reflect further on the process for input into development of the Terms of Reference for the internal audit programme and determining whether consideration should be given to sharing more widely with the committee for review, feedback and input;

113.1.3 in response to discussion at the meeting, it was agreed that the incoming Chair would reflect further on the process for input into development of the Terms of Reference for the internal audit programme;

113.1.4 in alignment with best practice highlighted at the recent Advance HE Governance Development Programme for Audit and Risk members held in March 2024, it was agreed that a formal effectiveness review would be undertaken after the completion of the external audit programme

113.1.5 the first draft of the internal audit schedule for AY 2024/25 was discussed and reviewed. It was agreed that further consideration should be given to the possibility of prioritising the following within the plan: i) Conflict of interests (especially in the context of increasing global and international activities); ii) Research cost recovery processes and procedures; iii) governance surrounding international agents;

113.1.6 a final version of the internal audit schedule would be approved by Audit and Risk Committee at the forthcoming meeting on 28 June 2024, and provided to Council for information;

113.1.7 the Committee had reflected on the recent challenges experienced with the implementation of the digital risk register and work was being undertaken on revising the format and streamlining the content of risk report 3 for endorsement to Council in July 2024;

113.1.8 the Committee noted the importance of having a clear Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) process which facilitated compliance with GDPR issues and the increased risk surrounding data management. Assurance had been provided that there was a proposal to enhance sufficient data governance resourcing to address concerns in light of the increasing complexity of operations relating to data management and operations;

113.1.9 the Committee noted their concern surrounding risks relating to the current institutional approach to removal data and use of USBs. It was agreed that further discussion and assurance would need to be provided on this issue in due course in light of the significant risks in this area;

113.1.10 the Committee would be commencing a new risk 'deep-dive' programme at the next meeting in June and the first risks being explored would be focused on research;

114. Chair's Closing Remarks

114.1 the Chair thanked members for their contribution and indicated that the next meeting of Council would be held on 12 July 2024.

115. Part II (For Information)

115.1 the following items were received by Council for information:

115.1.1 Register of Interests (CNL/144/23-24)

115.1.2 Affixing the Seal (CNL/145/23-24 and CNL/145a/23-24 Confidential)

115.1.3 Minutes and Reports:

115.1.3.1 Capital Management Group (CNL/146/23-24)

115.1.3.2 Strategy Investment Committee (CNL/147/23-24)

115.1.3.3 Audit and Risk Committee (10 November 2023) (CNL/148/23-24)

115.1.3.4 OfS Compliance – Outcome of the Prevent Accountability and Data Return (CNL/149/23-24)

115.1.3.5 Assurance Report on Professional Statutory and Regulatory Bodies Accreditation - Appendix 1 (CNL/142a/23-24 Confidential)

115.1.3.6 Internationalisation Risk Report (CNL/150/23-24 Confidential)

115.1.4 Annual Reports

115.1.4.1 Bill Douglas Museum Annual Report (CNL/151/23-24 Confidential)

115.1.4.2 Exeter University Foundation Annual Report and Financial Statements (CNL/152/23-24, CNL/152a/23-24 and CNL/152b/23-24 Confidential)

115.1.4.3 Speak Out Guardians Annual Report (CNL/153/23-24 Confidential)

115.1.4.4. Wellbeing and Welfare Services Annual Report (CNL/154/23-24 Confidential)

115.1.4.5 Northcott Theatre Annual Report (CNL/155/23-24 Confidential)