

Summary Report of Council 2

The University Council held a meeting on 24 November 2021. The meeting was preceded by a presentation from Mr Paul Mount, Deputy Agent (Yorkshire and Humber), Bank of England who provided reflections on the Autumn statement, with a focus on regional impact in terms of the budget and COVID implications.

This paper provides a high-level summary of the business considered by Council, which will be published on the University website. This is not a formal record of the Council meeting but presents an update on matters discussed by the University's governing body.

Baroness Ann Taylor
Chair of Council

1 Report from the Chair of Council

The Chair welcomed and introduced Mr John Hinchcliffe, the new Court member of Council from 1 January 2022, as an observer. Mr Hinchcliffe would attend as a full member from the next meeting. The Chair also noted that this was Mr Dermot Bolton's final Council meeting.

The Chair drew attention to the complex and challenging environment in which the University, and the HE sector, continued to operate. Council noted with disappointment the recent announcement from the government on the cancellation of the eastern leg of the HS2 high-speed rail line, which was due to link the Midlands to Leeds, via Bradford.

2 Vice-Chancellor's Report

The Vice-Chancellor provided an update on key matters affecting the University since the last meeting of Council. Among topics highlighted were the extensive internal and external engagement activities that had been undertaken by the Vice-Chancellor; this included staff, students and local / City and regional engagement; the University's continued commitment to social mobility and social inclusion; the University's success in receiving funding from the Office for Students to tackle inequalities that created barriers for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students to access and take part in postgraduate research; and the changes that were being made to the University's senior structure. A brief update on the industrial action by UCU over the 2021/22 pay offer and USS changes was provided with Council noting that plans had been developed to address and mitigate any impact on the student offer and student experience. Council was also advised that plans were being progressed to recruit a new Chief Finance Officer and Academic Registrar as well as the addition of a new executive leadership position for a Director of Infrastructure.

3 Student Recruitment Update

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic Innovation and Quality provided a comprehensive update on enrolment numbers of full-time undergraduate and postgraduate taught Home/EU and international students for the 2021/22 entry cycle.

Council noted that this was the final update for Semester 1 enrolments. Recruitment for 2021/22 was broadly in line with projected targets with performance significantly above target for some international markets. Whilst this was extremely positive for the University, it presented a number of business risks and challenges. A Working Group, led by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, AIQ had been established to monitor and mitigate these risks. Council was pleased to note the favourable student



recruitment position for 2021/22 and thanked the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and his team for their hard work in producing a successful recruitment round.

Recruitment was underway for September 2022 with a mix of in-person and virtual Open Days and recruitment events and activities. Detailed application and decision data would continue to be monitored closely by Executive Board and a further briefing would be presented to Council in the Spring.

4 Report from University of Bradford Union of Students (UBU)

Council received a report from the UBU Student Affairs Officer and the UBU Education Officer on current issues and recent activities which included an update on freshers' fortnight events; the launch of the 'women in leadership' programme; and the request for dedicated campus-based learning spaces. This was being addressed by the University and included a new space in Student Central which provided learning and social areas. The continued need to support international students with their understanding of plagiarism was discussed.

Council discussed the importance of local students engaging in co-and-extra curricula aspects of student life. Council was advised that comprehensive student journey maps for all student constituencies (undergraduate, postgraduate, home, and international students) were being developed as part of the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy. These would enhance the diversity of the university experience and would encompass induction, on-and-off curricular activities, and engagement with academic and non-academic experiences.

5 Strategy Delivery Plans and KPIs Report

Council received an update on the University's supporting-and-enabling strategies and associated delivery plans, and the KPI dashboard, noting that the dashboard was an interactive, filterable tool which provided information relating to each strategic objective.

Council discussed the National Student Survey (NSS) KPI, and the importance of securing improvements in NSS scores was noted. Strategy delivery was key to enhancing the student journey and student experience, with the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy being the primary means of achieving positive changes in this indicator.

6 Risk Appetite Statement 2021/22

Council **approved** the University's Risk Appetite Statement, noting that this was presented in terms of the willingness to take risk in areas aligned to the University's corporate level risks. The Risk Appetite Statement would continue to be reviewed annually.

7 Finance and Performance Strategy

Council **approved** the Finance and Performance Strategies, noting that these had been considered in detail by the Finance Committee and Executive Board. The objectives of the strategies were outlined by the Chief Finance Officer with Council noting:

- that the Finance Strategy set out the main financial targets and parameters for the medium term and was designed to ensure financial viability and sustainability.
- that the Performance Strategy would provide a framework and processes to measure, monitor, and manage progress towards delivering the University's strategic objectives.



Council considered and **approved** the consolidated Annual Financial Statements for the University for the year ended 31 July 2021 noting these were compliant with the Office for Students Accounts Direction. Council noted that the Financial Statements had been through an iterative process and had been subject to considerable scrutiny by a Joint Meeting of the Finance and Audit Committees (which included representatives from the University's external and internal auditors, BDO and RSM) who had endorsed the approach to the Financial Statements.

Council acknowledged the significant amount of work that had been undertaken by the Chief Finance Officer and his team in the drafting of the Financial Statements. These would be published on the University's website in due course. Thanks, were also expressed to the Chairs of Finance and Audit Committees for providing scrutiny and challenge on the Financial Statements during its development.

9 Academic Quality and Standards: Institutional Overview

Council considered in detail a report on the University's framework for managing academic standards and the quality of learning and teaching in relation to the requirements of the Office for Students 'Regulatory Framework for Higher Education in England' and the UK Quality Code and **agreed** that it provided assurance:

- of the robustness of the University's current management of quality and standards.
- that the risks associated with the regulatory and quality assessment regime were understood and appropriately mitigated.
- that the implementation of the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy would further enhance the monitoring and management of the University's taught academic provision.

Council also noted an update on the implementation of the Learning, Teaching and Student Experience Strategy, and more specifically, the establishment of a new approach to curriculum design, development, approval, and monitoring. This new approach signalled a fundamental shift in how the University established and maintained strategic and operational oversight over its taught academic provision with the aim of reducing or mitigating the risks and challenges to academic standards and quality associated with current processes and practice.

10 Research Concordat

Council considered and **approved** a report on the University's current and future activities which demonstrated compliance with the Universities UK Concordat to support Research Integrity, a national framework for good research conduct and governance. The statement would be made publicly available as evidence of the University's commitment to research integrity.

11 Prevent Update

Council considered and **approved** the University's Prevent statement and data return for submission to the Office for Students and authorised the Chair of Council to sign the statement of declaration on its behalf.

12 Modern Slavery Statement

Council considered and **approved** the University's Modern Slavery Statement for the 2021/22 academic year which set out the steps the University had taken and would take to mitigate any risk

of modern slavery and human trafficking. Council noted that the statement would be published on the University website.

13 Report from University Secretary

Council received a report from the University Secretary on the ongoing work related to areas of governance pertinent to Council including an update on Council membership; the Chair of Council appointment process; the University Chancellor appointment process; and the role descriptor for a Senior Independent Governor, noting that this had been approved by the Governance and Nominations Committee.

Council also considered and **approved**:

- the Anti-Money Laundering Policy.
- removal of Regulation 29 re consultancies.
- proposed changes to the Honorary Awards Criteria.
- recommendations for awards of Honorary Degrees from the Honorary Awards Committee.

14 Business from Committees of Council, and Senate

Council noted summary reports from Audit Committee, Finance Committee, Governance and Nominations Committee, Honorary Awards Committee, People Committee, Remuneration Committee, University Ethics Committee and Senate on issues discussed since the last meeting of the Council. Council also noted the annual report of the business undertaken by Senate which informed Council of the detailed and diligent scrutiny that was undertaken by Senate and its Committees of the academic governance of the University during 2020/21.

In addition, Council **approved** the Audit Committee Annual Report which covered the work undertaken by the Committee in its fulfilment of terms of reference and compliance with Office for Students requirements for the year to 31 July 2021. The report formed part of the annual accountability process and would be submitted to the Office for Students.

15 Council received the following reports, for information:

- Minutes from the Council meeting held on 21 September 2021 and action tracker.
- Register of interests.
- Student Support and Wellbeing update.
- League Tables update.
- Access and Participation update.
- USS Pension Scheme update.
- Draft Council 3 agenda and Council schedule of business for 2021/22
- Council terms of reference and membership 2021/22.

16 Meeting dates for 2021/22

Council 3: 16 February 2022

Council 4: 11 May 2022

Council 5: 6 July 2022