

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

Thursday, 4 July 2024

CONFIRMED MINUTES

Author:	Ms Alison Jones, University Secretary, 24 July 2024
Present:	Mr Jonathan Thornton (Chair), Mr Ajaz Ahmed, Mr Wamick Aijaz, Mr Bernard Ainsworth, Ms Sally Baines, Professor Sarah Bastow, Mr Robert Cox, Ms Sally Crosland, Professor Bob Cryan, Mr Rhys Davies, Mr Mark Fisher, Mrs Clare Morrow, Mr Krish Pilicudale, Professor Isobel Pollock-Hulf, Bishop Smitha Prasadam
In attendance:	Dr Laura Chambers, Ms Lydia Devenny, Ms Alison Jones, Mr Taha Khan, Ms Siobhan Moss, Professor Jane Owen-Lynch, Professor Tim Thornton
Apologies:	Baroness Kathryn Pinnock

PRELIMINARY ITEMS

PAPER REFERENCE

The Chair welcomed Bishop Smitha Prasadam, external Council member, and Mr Wamick Aijaz, the new Huddersfield Students' Union (HSU) President, to the meeting as new members.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 1.1 Mr Robert Cox and Mr Ajaz Ahmed declared an interest in item 6 (membership renewals).

2. MINUTES

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- 2.1 **Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 March 2023, and associated confidential supplement, be accepted as a correct record.

3. MATTERS ARISING

- 3.1 There were no matters arising.

4. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

- 4.1 The Chair reported on two items of business:

- A change of date for the October Strategy Day, which would be confirmed by the University Secretary's Office as soon as possible.
- His attendance at a recent CUC event. This had included a presentation from WonkHE on 'The Secret Lives of Students' which highlighted a range of issues currently impacting on students. This included mental health concerns, the impact of part-time work, loneliness, and the cost of living. A range of statistics about these factors were presented at the event.


- 4.2 The Vice-Chancellor stated that data for University of Huddersfield students on these issues would be brought forward to a future Strategy Day for discussion. The Students' Union (SU) President reported that the SU Strategic Plan included consideration of these issues, with events planning designed to provide as wide a range of activities as possible.

5. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS

Presentation

5.1 The Vice-Chancellor reminded members of the range of issues currently impacting the higher education sector, including the decline in international recruitment, an increasingly competitive domestic market, rising costs (particularly for pensions), and the impact of stagnant tuition fees. A recent report by the Office for Students (OfS) analysing the financial sustainability of the sector predicted a reasonable worst-case scenario of 80% of universities being in deficit by 2026/7, which included several Russell Group institutions.

5.2

 The recent national pay negotiations were also summarised, although it was noted that final agreement with trade unions had not yet been reached.

5.3 The Vice-Chancellor updated members on a wide range of news from across the University, including:

- The University would be leading a £13.3m project to help advance sustainable manufacturing, building directly upon the success of its Future Metrology Hub. The UKRI Engineering and Physical Sciences Research Council announced funding of £11m towards the new advanced manufacturing hub with a focus on metrology in a bid to enable net zero manufacturing.
- The School of Human and Health Sciences has been awarded the Athena Swan Bronze Award for gender equality, in recognition of its commitment to progressing equality within the School.
- The University was part of a partnership of 22 organisations across Europe, the US and Brazil to be awarded a total of €730,000 to research 6G communications as part of the 6G-ICARUS project, funded by Horizon Europe. A grant of €161,000 had been awarded to the Huddersfield team, led by Professor Pavlos Lazaridis.
- 3D audio software (APL VIRTUOSO), created by Professor Hyunkook Lee and the University's Applied Psychoacoustics Lab, had been used in the production of US TV series *Halo*. The software has received industry praise and been named Best New Plugin of 2023.
- The University won the Diversity, Equality and Inclusion category at the Education North Awards 2024 for its Global Professional Award scheme.
- A partnership between the University and Puffin Packaging has seen the launch of a new sustainable packaging liner, the only one of its type certified by British Wool. The two-year Knowledge Transfer Partnership began in February 2023 to develop more environmentally friendly, efficient packaging solutions, and this was the first new product.
- The People and Organisational Development team have partnered with Bellrock Group to deliver bespoke leadership training for the firm, which provides integrated consulting and property and facility management solutions. The aim of this partnership was to encourage first-line managers to grow professionally and personally, gaining a Chartered Management Institute Level 5 certificate on completion.
- The University has signed a memorandum of understanding with the Nursing and Midwifery Council of Ghana. A delegation from the Council visited the University as part of the Global Health Workforce

Programme project, which aimed to establish a real-time database and improvements to an existing Management Information System.

- A new partnership between AI experts at the University's Centre for Autonomous and Intelligent Systems and the Leeds digital marketing firm Trio Media would explore an innovative use of Artificial Intelligence in the marketing world.
- The University has been awarded a Leverhulme International Professorship grant from the prestigious Leverhulme Trust. Professor Steve Waksman, currently at Smith College in Massachusetts, would be joining the University, and the grant would also fund six post-doctoral researchers and 12 PhD studentships over the next five years.
- The University has been successful in gaining a Race Equality Charter Bronze Award from Advance HE. This award recognised the University's work in identifying and addressing the barriers facing Black, Asian and minority ethnic students and staff, and in bringing about action and improvement.
- Thanh Thi Hai Nguyen, who graduated in MSc International Business Management in 2012, picked up an award for Business and Innovation at the 2024 Alumni Awards run by the British Council.
- A partnership between the University and local medical technology company Paxman that could benefit cancer patients undergoing chemotherapy has earned an Outstanding grade from UK Research and Innovation. The award was the culmination of a two-year Knowledge Transfer Partnership that designed and developed a world-first portable medical cryocompression device which could be worn on limbs to reduce the severity of chemotherapy-induced peripheral neuropathy.
- A newly-curated collection focusing on women's rugby league had opened at Heritage Quay. *The Pioneering Years* focused on grassroots women's rugby league as part of the Commonsense Initiative, led by ex-rugby league referee Julia Lee.
- From September 2024 students would be able to study Civil Engineering at the University for the first time. The course has been designed around the EnABLE learning approach – Engineering in an Activity Based Learning Environment. Other new courses that have been developed include a new Computer Science foundation year, and a Health and Social Care Foundation pathway that would provide entry into a wide range of healthcare professions including Midwifery, Nursing, Occupational Therapy, and Paramedic Science.
- The Duchess of Edinburgh recently visited the University to meet University managers who had achieved CMI qualifications. She also toured the University's Optometry Department and unveiled a plaque in the Joseph Priestley Building, which had undergone an £18.2m redevelopment.
- The latest figures from the Higher Education Statistics Agency (HESA) showed that the University has maintained its outstanding reputation for investing in the quality and qualifications of staff, and is the leading university in the country for this measure.
- The University has been named as among the world's top universities for 13 subjects in the 2024 QS Rankings, and in the top 300 for 10 of those subjects.
- The University has also placed top in the UK in the global *Times Higher Education* Young University Rankings 2024. This league table lists the world's best universities that are 50 years old or younger. Huddersfield is the highest-placed young university in the UK, having been ranked 88th internationally.

6. UNIVERSITY SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

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- 6.1 The University Secretary briefed members on a range of governance matters which had been considered by the Governance and Membership Committee (GMC) at its meeting on 25 June 2024, including:
- The completion of the University's governance action plan, which had been implemented following the external governance effectiveness review in 2022. The University Secretary would continue to monitor the outcomes of the plan, bringing forward any further actions as required. It was noted that the next external review was likely to take place in the 2025/26 year, and enhancement activities remained ongoing during the interim, including a recent Audit and Risk Committee effectiveness survey that had raised some suggestions for enhancement specific to that committee.
 - Proposed membership renewals, as outlined below.
 - The outcome of the recent Huddersfield Students' Union (SU) elections.
 - The application of the University Seal since the last meeting.
- 6.2 Members of the Council whose term of office was under consideration left the meeting as their membership was discussed, and returned when notified to do so.
- 6.3 Following detailed consideration, members **resolved** to approve the following appointments with effect from 1 August 2024 for a further three-year term of office:
- the re-appointment of **Mr Robert Cox** as external member of Council, and for him to retain his respective committee appointments including as Chair of Audit and Risk Committee.
 - the re-appointment of **Mr Ajaz Ahmed** as an external member of Council for a further three years, and for him to retain his respective committee appointments.

INSPIRING:

7. STUDENTS' UNION REPORT

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- 7.1 The previous SU President updated members on a range of SU activities, including:
- Partnership successes resulting from collaboration with the University, including:
 - introducing 'known as name' as the default for University communications with enquirers, applicants, students and alumni
 - upgrading AV and lecture capture equipment
 - the new progress road crossing
 - the provision of free sanitary product machines across campus.
 - Recent sporting success, including Varsity victory and an overview of sports society activities and engagement activities.
 - The annual SU Awards.

- An update about the recent NUS Conference.
- Awareness-raising work around voting options in advance of the forthcoming general election.

7.2 Members congratulated the SU for its wide-ranging programme of activities, and noted that the previous SU President had recently appeared in the media to highlight the benefits that international students bring to local economies and communities.

8. HUDDERSFIELD STUDENT SURVEY 2024 RESULTS

UC_2024_07_04_P8
Presentation

8.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning, informed Council that the latest set of National Student Survey results would be published on 10 July 2024. As the redesigned survey was in its second year, it would be possible to draw accurate sector comparisons across a range of important themes.

8.2 The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning, presented the latest set of results from the Huddersfield Student Survey, which surveyed first- and second-year students on a range of matters linked to their experiences at the University. Overall satisfaction had improved compared with the previous year, particularly among students with a disability and within the School of Human and Health Sciences specifically, although overall satisfaction was lower among disadvantaged students. The free-text comments received were largely positive, especially regarding staffing, with some School-specific concerns also being raised.

8.3 In response to member queries, the Pro Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning, clarified that the student voice question was designed to establish whether students felt that their voices were heard and acted upon, and that they understood the various mechanisms by which they could raise concerns. It also sought to verify that students were also aware of the support provided by the Students' Union.

8.4 It was noted that the overall response rate for the survey had been lower than expected despite keeping the survey open for an extended period, and the University would look to review the timing of when the survey was issued in future years.

9. ACCESS AND PARTICIPATION PLAN

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9.1 Council considered the revised Access and Participation Plan (APP), which outlined the University's plans for widening access and participation and support across the student lifecycle (including post-graduation). The latter had been designed to focus on differential attainment and achievement, and would be funded by refocusing student bursaries towards targeted progression and completion support. The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning, highlighted that recent reforms made to disability support allowance allocations would not impact the APP.

9.2 Council members **resolved** to approve the Access and Participation Plan, which would be submitted to the OfS for scrutiny and final regulatory approval.

GROWTH AND EFFICIENCY:

10. HOME AND INTERNATIONAL APPLICATIONS, ENROLMENTS AND RETENTION

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Presentation

10.1 University Council received an update on the latest applications, enrolments and retention figures for Home and International students from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor.* Members noted that continuation rates (the retention of current students) remained pleasing, with overall reductions observed in the number of withdrawals and suspensions.

10.2 The Chair of Estates and Finance Committee reported that student recruitment had been discussed in depth at the recent meeting of the Committee, including the steps being taken by the University to boost overall recruitment and associated income streams.

10.3



10.4 Council was briefed on the recent decision by DIGS to stop offering student accommodation at Storthes Hall, and the plans put into place by the Students' Union and the University to assist students with locating new accommodation.

11. REVISED CORPORATE RISK REGISTER

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11.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor reminded Council that the provisional Corporate Risk Register had been considered by members in March 2024, and confirmed that the feedback received at that meeting had been incorporated into the revised Risk Register. It was confirmed that no further changes had been made following the completion of the Services planning round.

11.2 The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee stated that the Risk Register had been discussed extensively at the last meeting of the Committee and confirmed that no further revisions had been suggested.

11.3



11.4 Council members **resolved** to approve the revised Corporate Risk Register for 2024.

12. RE-APPOINTMENT OF INTERNAL AUDITORS

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- 12.1** The Director of Finance briefed members on the positive feedback received on the service provided by the University's current internal auditors, Uniac, following an internal survey, and highlighted the recommendation to re-appoint Uniac as recommended by Audit and Risk Committee. The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee commented that the external perspective that Uniac brought (in the form of briefing notes and benchmarking reports) was valuable in gauging the University's position within the sector.
- 12.2** University Council **resolved** to approve the re-appointment of Uniac as the University's internal audit service, as recommended by Audit and Risk Committee.

13. NATIONAL HEALTH INNOVATION CAMPUS (NHIC) UPDATE

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- 13.1** The Deputy Vice-Chancellor provided an update on construction progress for the NHIC campus, reporting that the Daphne Steele building was on track for completion in September 2024 and construction on the second building had commenced on 1 July. [REDACTED]

- 13.2** Council noted the request to approve an additional £500k to support partnership work and bid writing (as included in the paper for item 15). This would enable the University to build upon new opportunities arising through the West Yorkshire Investment Zone and associated innovation and enterprise work. This request had been considered and recommended by the Estates and Finance Committee.
- 13.3** The Chair of Estates and Finance Committee requested that any updates on the completion date for the Daphne Steele building were communicated to the Committee prior to its next meeting in September.

14. UNIVERSITY DECARBONISATION PLAN

UC_2024_07_04_P14

- 14.1** The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the proposal for the University to undertake two phases of decarbonisation in order to meet its Scope 1 and Scope 2 emissions targets for 2030, which aimed to reduce overall emissions by 40% from 2022/23 levels. These proposals were part of the University's wider sustainability and reputational goals.
- 14.2** Members noted that the paper detailed plans for the 2024 to 2026 period, with the first phase of activity to include investment in additional photovoltaic panels, installation of LED lighting across the campus, control upgrades, and the refurbishment of specific buildings. Following feedback from the Estates and Finance Committee, additional cost benefit information had been included within the paper.
- 14.3** Council members agreed the proposals in principle, with final approval considered under item 15.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY:

15. ANNUAL REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET

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- 15.1** The Director of Finance presented the draft budget for 2024/25, noting that a revised budget would be considered at the University Council meeting in November prior to submission to the OfS in December.*
- 15.2** Council members also received the indicative forecast for 2027-28. The Chair of Estates and Finance Committee reported that this report and associated matters had been discussed in detail at the last meeting of the Committee, which had recommended approval. It was confirmed that a modelling exercise for a range of budget scenarios had been undertaken, and these would be considered at the next Council Strategy Day.
- 15.3** University Council **resolved** to approve the annual revenue and capital projects budget requests included in the report and as discussed under items 13 and 14 on the agenda.*

PEOPLE FIRST:

16. ANNUAL HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT

UC_2024_07_04_P16

- 16.1** Members noted the annual Health and Safety Report that had also been considered at the June meetings of Audit and Risk Committee and Estates and Finance Committee. The University Secretary confirmed that feedback from Audit and Risk Committee concerning the structure of the report would be incorporated into the next year's reporting cycle, and stated that an interim report on mandatory staff training would be brought forward to the next meeting of that committee.
- 16.2** In response to a member query concerning University Council and executive responsibility for health and safety, the University Secretary confirmed that the Vice-Chancellor retained ultimate responsibility, with operational management devolved to the University Health and Safety Committee and the Office for Health and Safety which was under the University Secretary's remit. The University Secretary confirmed that a benchmarking exercise would be undertaken to determine sector practice in terms of Council responsibility for health and safety, and suggested that an executive summary could be brought forward to each Council meeting.

OTHER BUSINESS:

17. COMMITTEE MINUTES

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- 17.1** The minutes of the following meetings were noted:
- Audit and Risk Committee, 13 June 2024
 - Estates and Finance Committee, 24 April (extraordinary meeting) and 18 June 2024
 - Governance and Membership Committee, 25 June 2024
 - A summary of the Senate meeting held on 19 June 2024.

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 18.1 Members noted that it was the last University Council meeting for Mr Taha Khan, out-going SU President, and wished him success in his future endeavours.
- 18.2 The Chair also expressed his thanks to Mr Mark Fisher for his long service and contribution to the work of University Council over many years, particularly as Chair of Estates and Finance Committee.

- 18.3 The Vice-Chancellor thanked all members on behalf of the Executive for their support over the past year, and also thanked Mr Taha Khan and Mr Mark Fisher for their service to Council, its committees, and to the University.

19. AVAILABILITY OF AGENDA, PAPERS AND MINUTES

- 19.1 **Resolved:** to exclude the following papers from the open version under Standing order 11.8:

Agenda item 2	Confidential Supplement to the minutes	UC_2024_07_04_P2
Agenda item 5	Vice-Chancellor's Business	UC_2024_07_04_P5
Agenda item 6	University Secretary's Business	UC_2024_07_04_P6
Agenda item 8	Huddersfield Student Survey 2024 Results	UC_2024_07_04_P8
Agenda item 9	Access and Participation Plan	UC_2024_07_04_P9
Agenda item 10	Home and International Applications, Enrolments and Retention	UC_2024_07_04_P10
Agenda item 11	Revised Corporate Risk Register	UC_2024_07_04_P11
Agenda item 12	Re-Appointment of Internal Auditors	UC_2024_07_04_P12
Agenda item 13	National Health Innovation Campus Update	UC_2024_07_04_P13
Agenda item 14	University Decarbonisation Plan	UC_2024_07_04_P14
Agenda item 15	Annual Revenue and Capital Budget	UC_2024_07_04_P15
Agenda item 16	Annual Health and Safety Report	UC_2024_07_04_P16
Agenda item 17	Committee minutes (confidential supplements)	UC_2024_07_04_P17

20. DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETINGS

- Thursday, 15 October 2024 at 10:00 in the McClelland Suite, Schwann Building (**Strategy Day**) – **date to be confirmed**
- Thursday, 27 November 2024 at 13:00 in the McClelland Suite, Schwann Building

(* = Further details in the Confidential Supplement to these minutes, excluded under Standing Order 11.8)