

COUNCIL
**Loughborough
University**

Minutes of the meeting of 27 March 2025

COUN25-M1

Attendance

Rachael Alvey	Christine Hodgson	Luke Stott
Kerri Akiwowo	Matthew Inglis	Paul Taylor (ab)
Penny Briscoe	Nick Jennings	Rachel Thomson
Graham Corfield	Jennifer Maxwell-Harris	Mark Thurston
Andrea Davis	Nicky Morgan	Mike Wedderburn
Natalie Gasson-McKinley	Emma Nadin	Sheryl Williams
Tarek Hassan	James Peat	Jon Woods
Naomi Hudson (ab)	David Price	
	Surinder Sharma	

In attendance: Sam Grogan; Jo Maher; Alex Owen; Dan Parsons; Richard Taylor; Luke Vulpiani

Apologies received from: Naomi Hudson, Paul Taylor

25/1 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

25/2 Minutes and Matters Arising

2.1 Minutes

COUN24-M4

Council **APPROVED** the minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2024.

2.2 Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

25/3 Chair's Report

Lay members are required to Chair University Staff Dismissal Appeal Hearings under Ordinance XXXVI. Previously Human Resources contacted lay members direct, however, it has been agreed that contact will come from the Assistant Secretary to Council to reduce separate lines of communication and enable better oversight of lay member workload.

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25/4 University Finances

4.1 Higher Education Sector Financial Sustainability

The Chief Financial Officer presented an update on Higher Education Sector Financial Sustainability outlining the financial challenges and risks the sector is currently facing.

4.2 Financial Update

COUN25-P1

Council **CONSIDERED** the University's current financial position for the 2024/25 financial year and **APPROVED** the Q3 forecast on the recommendation of Finance Committee.

4.3 2025/25 Budget Process

COUN25-P2

Council **NOTED** the process and timelines for the 2025/26 budget and five-year forecast to be brought to Council in July. The 5-year forecast currently indicates that deficits are expected in 2025/26 and 2026/27, partly due to ongoing exceptional cost of change. When considering the budget the University is prioritising its UK top 10 ranking position, international rankings and reputation, maintaining a high-quality student experience, its reputation for Sport and investment in research.

25/5 2025 Pay Gaps Report

COUN25-P3

Council **CONSIDERED** the 2025 Pay Gaps report.

It is a statutory requirement for the University to report its gender pay gap on an annual basis in March. The University has also undertaken analysis of its race and disability pay gaps, although these are not statutory requirements.

The gender pay gap is the percentage difference in pay between all men and women in the organisation. It is different to equal pay, which is about paying men and women the same for work of equal value. The University does not have a structural equal pay issue but it does have a gender pay gap.

Although the mean gender gap increased in the reporting period, the long-term year-on-year trend is positive. The University's target is to better the sector median of 12% and significant progress has been made towards this target since 2018 with a comprehensive action plan developed to support progress towards this target, including actions on recruitment and promotion.

Action on the race and disability gaps are not as advanced as on gender, but a range of actions are being undertaken to reduce the pay gaps. The Race Pay Gap is lower than the Gender Pay Gap. Copyright © Loughborough University. All rights reserved.

Gap, but it is recognised work is still required to reduce and eliminate the gap and actions in support are contained within the University's Race Equality Charter Action Plan. The EDI Core Plan specifically references reducing inequitable gaps within the organisation, and work is commencing to develop KPIs for the reduction of pay gaps as part of the wider People and Culture development work.

25/6 Staff Experience Survey

COUN25-P4

Council **CONSIDERED** a report from Human Resources Committee on the results of the staff experience survey.

The participation rate for the survey was above the HE sector average, although, a higher participation rate was preferable.

The University compares reasonably well, across most categories at or above sector averages. Council asked if operational areas could be bench-marked across the HE sector to understand how different areas perform.

There were no significant differences in responses when broken-down by protected characteristics, however, there is some nuance around people who don't declare a characteristic and further work is being undertaken to understand better this area.

The results of the Staff Experience Survey provide some assurance to Council on staff wellbeing, however this has been flagged by Audit and Risk Committee and Health and Safety as a high-risk area. The executive is aware that workload and wellbeing are challenges for staff. The University has a strong Occupational Health Service and good monitoring processes for wellbeing through the staff survey and other mechanisms, as well as policies and action plans to minimise risk. Training for senior leaders on managing wellbeing has also been undertaken and line management in Schools has been revised to reduce workload, as previously all academic staff in a School reported to the Dean. A University wide People and Culture strategy is being developed, which will focus on fewer but bigger actions. All of the above help to provide assurance to Council that this area of heightened risk is being appropriately managed.

It is important that staff believe action will be taken as a result of the survey and that actions taken are clearly communicated. The Vice-Chancellor reports on actions taken at General Assembly, which is a termly townhall meeting led by the Vice-Chancellor, which all staff are invited to attend. Deans and Directors of Service communicate actions at a local level.

25/7 University Strategy

7.1 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Leadership

Council **CONSIDERED** a verbal update on EDI Leadership.

A review of EDI leadership had been undertaken after the Pro-Vice-Chancellor EDI left the University. Since the establishment of the PVC EDI role, a broader EDI Services Team has been created at the University to support EDI initiatives.

Veronica Moore, Director of EDI Services has been acting as the University's executive EDI lead for the last year, including sitting on University Executive Board. It has been decided to make this arrangement permanent and not to recruit to the vacant PCV EDI role. The decision on EDI leadership was made in consultation with staff committees and networks, and the two Council members of EDI Committee were also involved in the discussions.

This change reinforces the University's commitment to EDI and ensures clear EDI leadership to support the implementation of the EDI Core Plan. A new role of Chief People Officer (created by changes to an existing role) will work closely with the Director of EDI.

7.2 University Strategy – Update on Progress

COUN25-P5

Council **NOTED** a report on strategy progress, including an updated KPI framework and key risks and **APPROVED** in principle a re-phasing of annual milestones for KPIs on i) research awards, ii) research student population and iii) international student population, noting that the latter will materially impact future financial forecasts.

The 2024 Effectiveness Review of Council asked that KPIs were brought forward more frequently than once a year. Many KPIs are updated annually, so these have been rolled forward in this interim update.

The key challenge is recovering and growing international students; a detailed report on student recruitment was contained in The Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost's Report (agenda item 21.1, COUN25-P19). Home student recruitment at Loughborough remains strong, while international Postgraduate recruitment is challenging, although the decline at Loughborough this year is smaller than many other places across the HE sector. However, the situation is being monitored very closely and mitigating actions considered.

The rephasing of KPIs will include an increase in the international undergraduate student target and a decrease in the postgraduate international student target. Post-graduate Research student numbers are below target but the trend is growth over the last few years.

The University is continuing to invest in key areas including the student experience and progressing with student accommodation. An academic recruitment campaign, primarily focussed on research to support the Research Excellence Framework 2029 submission, is imminent and this is also intended to help the QS Rankings.

7.3 Enabling Projects

COUN25-P6

Council **CONSIDERED** an update on the University Strategy Enabling Projects Programme and noted the proposal to close the enabling projects with the transfer to business as usual.

25/8 Annual Academic Assurance Report

COUN25-P7

Council **CONSIDERED** the Annual Academic Assurance Report, **RECEIVED** the Annual Report on Academic Partnerships and **APPROVED** the 2023/24 Degree Outcomes Statement.

The Annual Academic Assurance Report provides assurance to Council on the oversight of the University's educational provision, including how it assures the quality and standards of its awards. Academic quality is assured by both external scrutiny as well as internal frameworks and measures. Education and Student Experience Committee, chaired by the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience oversees arrangements for managing academic standards and assuring the quality of taught students' learning opportunities.

The University's Degree Outcome Statements provides assurance to council on academic standards, including good teaching practice, and that the quality of Loughborough's degree awards are robust.

The University's Access and Participation Plan was approved by the Office for Students in November 2024. As part of the registration process with the Office for Students, universities wishing to charge above the basic tuition fee are required to have an approved Access and Participation Plan, which sets out the approach to improve equality of opportunity for specific groups of students. There remain attainment gaps and these are a direct focus of action to support students co-ordinated by the PVC Education and Student Experience. Gaps in attainment emerge in Semester 1 in Year 1, meaning early intervention is vital. The focus is, therefore, on the pre-arrival experience to end of first year, as this is a crucial time for students. A more detailed breakdown in attainment gap categories would be helpful to understand how different groups can be supported; BAME is a broad category and the University is moving away from this categorisation.

National Student Survey (NSS) results dipped last year. NSS results are important as they feed into to UK league table. The PVC has developed an action plan to maximise and optimise responses to the 2025 survey and has been progressing well with an increased response rate which is a positive indicator. There is an increased expectation from students around personalisation and the taught environment.

Current Teaching Partnerships are low risk; future partnerships may be more complex and volume and resource will need to be considered.

25/9 Audit and Risk Committee

COUN25-P8

Council **RECEIVED** a report from the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 05 February 2025.

Compliance culture across the University has seen improvement over the past few years and work is on-going to ensure it is embedded in business as usual.

The tender process for the internal auditor was concluded and PWC were appointed for a 4-year cycle.

ARC's membership remains below the University's EDI targets and the Chair has raised this previously. Governance and Nominations Committee are aware and considering the matter.

25/10 Governance and Nominations Committee

10.1 Lay Member Recruitment and Skills Matrix

COUN25-P9

Council **RECEIVED** assurance on the robustness of processes for the recruitment of lay members, including the Skills Matrix.

GNoms is constituted in accordance with the Committee of University Chairs Code of Governance and considers candidates on a range of criteria. The skills matrix outlines the skills the University seeks in lay members, in order to ensure there is an appropriate balance of skills, knowledge and expertise in critical areas.

10.2 Reappointment of Lay Members

Council **APPROVED** the re-appointment of Naomi Hudson, Nicky Morgan, David Price and Surinder Sharma as lay members of Council for further three-year terms from 01 August 2025 to 31 July 2028.

Paul Taylor will step down from Council at the end of his term on 31 July 2025. Paul has agreed to continue as a non-Council lay member of Infrastructure Committee. Governance and Nominations Committee will be considering a candidates for the role.

25/11 Health, Safety and Environment Report

11.1 Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report

COUN25-P10

Council was **ASSURED** that the University is fulfilling its obligations with regard to Health, Safety and Environment and **ENDORSED** the annual report.

The Health, Safety and Wellbeing Service provides regular assurance to Health, Safety and Environment Committee, which is Chaired by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost and reports to Council. Assurance for health and safety systems and procedures at the University is also regularly provided to Audit and Risk Committee.

There are three areas of heightened risk, which are under close scrutiny and are being actively managed and monitored: water safety, particularly in relation to the Towers building, fire safety and staff wellbeing.

11.2 Health, Safety and Environment Update

Council **RECEIVED** a verbal report from the meeting of the Health, Safety and Environment Committee held on 05 February 2025. Monthly Health and Safety Bulletins are available on the BI bookshelf.

A new Safeguarding and Prevent Sub-Committee has been formed reporting to Health, Safety and Environment Committee. A new Sustainability Sub-Committee has been formed reporting to Infrastructure Committee; previously Sustainability reported to Health, Safety and Environment Committee.

The Provost has instigated a review of the Serious Incident Review Process to ensure it is robust and this is expected to conclude soon.

25/12 University Honorary Degrees and Medals

COUN25-P11

Council **APPROVED** the award of Honorary Degrees and University Medals to the individuals named in the paper.

25/13 Matters for Report by the Vice-Chancellor

Council **RECEIVED** a verbal report from the Vice-Chancellor who reported the following items:

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- Helen Pennack has recently started as the new Director of Marketing and Advancement. Helen has a wealth of experience within the HE sector and was formerly Chief Marketing and Communications Officer at the University of Nottingham.
- Louise Gear has been appointed as the new Director of Sport and will join the University in June. Lousie is currently the Head of Development at the Football Association. She is a former England netball player and acclaimed leader with 30 years of sports industry experience.
- The University has launched the new Women in Sport Research and Innovation Hub. This is an exciting investment for the University, and we were delighted to welcome the Minister for Sport, Media, Civil Society and Youth, University Ambassador, Karen Carney, as well as many other distinguished athletes including Dame Denise Lewis.
- Druck are the company coming onto the Science Park pending approval of the planning permission. It is expected up to a thousand jobs will be created and the partnership will enable the University to build-up the Science Park.
- The University of Sussex was fined £585,000 by the Office for Students for free speech and governance breaches by the Office for Students. Loughborough is closely monitoring the regulatory environment in light of the OfS decision to ensure it is compliant with all OfS Conditions of Registration and any potential changes to regulatory expectations.

SECTION B – Starred Items for Approval

25/14 *Loughborough Students' Union Complaints Procedure

COUN25-P12

Council **APPROVED** amendments to the Loughborough Students' Union Complaints Procedure.

25/15 *Annual Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Compliance Report

COUN25-P13

Council **APPROVED** the Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Compliance Report 2025.

25/16 Policy on University Statements

COUN25-P14

Council **APPROVED** the policy on University Statements. This item was unstarred at the request of the Students' Union.

The Vice-Chancellor and the COO are the two officers authorised to make statements on behalf of the University. The Policy was intended to provide a framework in which statements could be

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made, balancing relevant risk factors and ensuring statements did not impact wider academic freedom and freedom of expression. Following points raised by the Students' Union at Senate, the COO had met LSU executive and it was agreed some minor clarifications would be made to the policy and that the COO will establish a review group including LSU to monitor the implementation of the policy. LSU executive members on Council confirmed they were reassured by the discussions and agreed measures.

25/17 *Finance Committee Terms of Reference

COUN25-P15

Council **APPROVED** amendments to the Finance Committee Terms of Reference.

25/18 *Revocation of Honorary Degrees and University Medals

COUN25-P16

Council **APPROVED** the procedure for revoking Honorary Degrees and University Medals.

25/19 *Ordinance IV – Titles of Degrees and Conditions of Award

COUN25-P17

Council **APPROVED** amendments to Ordinance IV – Titles of Degrees and Conditions of Award. First Hearing.

25/20 *Ordinance V – The Chancellor

COUN25-P18

Council **APPROVED** amendments to Ordinance V The Chancellor. Second Hearing.

SECTION C – Starred Items for Information

25/21 *Matters for Report

Council **NOTED** the following reports:

*21.1 Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost **COUN25-P19**

*21.2 Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) **COUN25-P20**

*21.3 Executive Director of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion **COUN25-P21**

*21.4 Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) **COUN25-P22**

*21.5 Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Sport) **COUN25-P23**

25/22 *Annual Report on Philanthropy**COUN25-P24**

Council **RECEIVED** the Annual Report on Philanthropy for the 2023-24 financial year.

25/23 *Annual Report from the Radiation Protection Officer**COUN25-P25**

Council **RECEIVED** the Annual Report from the Radiation Protection Officer.

25/24 *Office for Students Reportable Incidents**COUN25-P26**

Council **NOTED** that there have been no reportable incidents since the last meeting of Council and no events which needed to be considered if it qualified as a reportable event.

25/25 *Capital Framework Progress Report**COUN25-P27**

Council **RECEIVED** a progress report.

25/26 *Common Seal**COUN25-P28**

Council **RECEIVED** a list of documents to which the University Seal has been attached.

25/27 *Senior University Appointments

Council **NOTED** the following senior appointments:

Professor Aidan McGarry as Dean of LU London, from 09 December 2024 until 08 December 2029.

Veronica Moore, Executive Director of EDI

Helen Pennack, Director of Marketing and Advancement

Helen Rylands, Head of Student Life

25/28 *Reports from Committees

Council **RECEIVED** reports from the following Committees:

COUN25-P29 Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Governance Committee – 24 October 2025

COUN25-P30 Finance Committee – 10 January 2025

COUN25-P31 Governance and Nominations Committee – 20 November 2024

COUN25-P32	Human Resources Committee – 29 January 2025
COUN25-P33	Infrastructure Committee – 18 November 2024 and 25 February 2025
COUN25-P34	Research and Innovation Committee – 19 November 2024
COUN25-P35	Sport Committee – 06 December 2024
COUN25-P36	Strategic Portfolio and Resources Committee (Part B) – 04 November 2024, 02 December 2024, 13 January 2025 and 10 February 2025
COUN25-P37	Senate – 06 November 2024.

25/29 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 03 July 2025, 14:00-17:00, Loughborough Campus

Future Meetings

Thursday 16 October 2025, all-day, Away Day, Loughborough Campus

Thursday 27 November 2025, 9:00-12:00, online

Thursday 26 March 2026, 9:00-12:00, Loughborough University London

25/30 Any Other Business

Author – Luke Vulpiani

Date – March 2025