

COUNCIL



Loughborough
University

Minutes of the meeting of 27 November 2025

COUN25-M4

Attendance

	Christine Hodgson	
Karen Blay	Nick Jennings	Rachel Thomson
Penny Briscoe (ab)	Jennifer Maxwell-Harris	Mark Thurston
Graham Corfield	Nicky Morgan	Julie Turner
Andrea Davis	Lucy Palmer	Justin Waring
Natalie Gasson-McKinley (ab)	David Price	Mike Wedderburn
Naomi Hudson	Dan Rodenhurst	Sheryl Williams
Matthew Inglis	Surinder Sharma	Jon Woods
Mia Jackson	Luke Langbein-Stott	

In attendance: Sam Grogan; James Henry; Jo Maher; Jennifer Nutkins; Dan Parsons;
Richard Taylor; Luke Vulpiani

Apologies received from: Penny Briscoe, Natalie Gasson-McKinley

25/81 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

25/82 Minutes and Matters Arising

82.1 Minutes

COUN25-M3

Council **APPROVED** the minutes of the meeting held on 16 October 2025.

82.2 Matters Arising

Council **NOTED** the following matters arising:

1. The internal auditors have been asked to include the Health and Safety Service in the 2025/26 audit plan following the request from Council at October Council.

25/83 Chair's Report

Council **RECEIVED** a verbal report from the Chair.

The Chair commended the executive on a good set of accounts despite the challenging financial environment.

25/84 Strategy Update and Key Performance Indicators

84.1 Council Away Day Report

COUN25-P104

Council **CONSIDERED** action points and outcomes following the Council Away Day.

The three areas of focus identified at the away day were protecting the student experience (essential to the University's top 10 ranking), the Research Excellence Framework and the University's sport USP. The away day also focused on the financial context, including the Gillies Report which emphasised the importance of governance oversight, appropriate financial controls and transparency from the executive.

At the away day Council endorsed the strategic recommendations to grow undergraduate numbers, build more student accommodation and reduce operating costs. Council also endorsed a change in how partnerships were measured from a tier system to one based on the Higher Education Business and Community Interaction Survey (HEBCIS), which measures partnerships revenues and enables sector comparison. The change to partnerships is primarily a change in measurement not in direction.

The importance of staff and the role staff have in ensuring the success of the University was emphasised.

84.2 Key Performance Indicators

COUN25-P105

Council **CONSIDERED** an update and review of the University KPIs.

Council **NOTED** the updated KPI framework and new reporting format.

Council **ENDORSED** the formal closure of the International Engagement and Impact Core Plan and associated Core Plan Board

Council **ENDORSED** changes to Commercial and Partnerships KPIs

Council **NOTED** potential future changes to the Research and Innovation KPIs.

Council welcomed the new reporting format for the KPIs which included a single page summary so that progress could be viewed easily.

25/85 University Finances

85.1 University Financial Statements 24/25

COUN25-P106

Council **APPROVED** the adoption of the accounts and the submission to the Office for Students for the year ended 31 July 2025.

A broader document confirming the University's Going Concern position was produced at the request of the external auditors and had been endorsed by the external auditors. Council has responsibility to confirm that the University has sufficient funding for at least the next 12 months from the date of approval of the financial statements and also conclude that there are no material uncertainties that could cast significant doubt over the University's ability to continue as a going concern.

The Chair of Audit and Risk Committee noted that despite a good set of accounts, the Gilles report indicated that there should not be any complacency and that the governing body needed to ensure robust oversight of finances. ARC have reviewed and approved the Going Concern paper, but Council should review the forecasts in the paper, to ensure the assumptions made are fully understood and clear. ARC will request more information around the numbers in the report and continue to review and monitor the University's financial position with the external auditors; Council should also review this on an on-going basis.

The statement on page 9 of the annual accounts that 'employer contribution percentages remain high' was questioned by a member of Council as potentially 'misleading' as contribution rates are 'at historic lows'. The University contributes to two main pension schemes: USS and the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS). The USS employer contribution rate was reduced from 21.6% to 14.15% in January 2024. The current employer contribution rate for LGPS is 24.9%, although a valuation is currently taking place which may result in the contribution rate changing. Whilst noting the change in the USS contribution rate, Council was satisfied that the rates remained high in comparison to other schemes especially in the private sector.

85.2 Confirmation of Financial Forecast 2025-30

COUN25-P107

Council **APPROVED** the content of the OfS financial annual returns, and the process for submission.

Council **APPROVED** the data in the financial and student number tables relating to actual financial data for 2023/24 and 2024/25 for submission to OfS.

Council **APPROVED**, on the recommendation of Finance Committee, the financial forecasts for the period ending 31 July 2030, as presented in the financial and student number tables, for submission to OfS.

Council **APPROVED** the associated commentary for submission to OfS.

Council **AUTHORISED** the Vice-Chancellor to approve changes to the tables resulting from OfS queries following submission, and sign off any re-submission required.

The Quarter 2 forecast process is nearly complete; the £5 million deficit and covenant headroom remain the same indicating a stable position. The postgraduate international student market remains challenging so targeted growth in undergraduate numbers was being planned.

Protecting the student experience is crucial in growing student numbers and the Students' Union are a critical partner. Student members raised the importance of ensuring the Central Accommodation Project was completed on time and a sufficient number of returning students are able to live on campus as important.

The forecast national pay increase was below inflation, which has been the case for many years. Pay is determined through national collective bargaining and the HE financial challenges means there are constraints for many Universities on increasing salaries. Staff wellbeing, retention and people remain key risks, if pay cannot be increased then it is important to look at other measures to make staff feel valued. Salaries at the lower-grades have increased quite substantially in recent years owing to the living wage commitment. This has led to some compression at the lower grades which had required mitigation.

25/86 Senior Staff Remuneration Report 2024/25

COUN25-P108

Council **APPROVED** the annual report on Senior Staff Remuneration on the recommendation of Remuneration Committee. The report is published publicly on the University's website.

The Vice-Chancellor recused himself for this item.

Remuneration Committee had considered Senior Staff Remuneration in accordance with the Committee of University Chairs Code of Governance.

25/87 Office for Students Regulatory Compliance

87.1 Office for Students Regulatory Compliance

COUN25-P109

Council **CONSIDERED** an update on regulatory compliance for the Office for Students, which provides assurance that there is minimal risk of the University breaching its conditions of registration. All conditions were rated green except for Financial Sustainability, which was rated

amber; this did not indicate a change to the specific risk at Loughborough but the context of the financial sustainability challenges faced by the HE sector.

The RAG rating for the new OfS condition of registration E6 Harassment and Sexual Misconduct had been moved from amber to green, but still required ongoing monitoring and embedding activity. The University has already published its code of information, policies for staff and students and a reporting portal. The condition includes a requirement to train staff and students and this has made good progress. The Students' Union sat on the working group but were not directly involved in the delivery of the student training. They had worked closely with Student Services and feedback on the training had been positive.

Mandatory training levels for staff are reported to Human Resources Committee and figures will be available in the next cycle. A heightened level of training has been delivered by external colleagues for those who undertake the investigations into staff and student complaints. There are trained investigators for student cases but staff investigations may require more trauma trained investigators.

Freedom of Speech is not an OfS condition of registration, however, it remains a focus for the OfS and the University is mindful of its duties under the Act and Council has received assurance on this matter at previous meetings. Consumer rights compliance is also currently a focus for the OfS.

87.2 Academic Annual Assurance Report

COUN25-P110

Council **CONSIDERED** the annual Academic Assurance Report.

The report outlined internal and external measures to assure Council that there are robust processes in place to manage the quality of taught provision. External scrutiny includes OfS student outcomes, National Student Survey (NSS) and the Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey. The report also outlined future risks and opportunities around regulatory changes, the NSS and AI Council was assured these areas are being actively discussed and considered to ensure provision is forward-looking.

Action to recover the University's NSS position remains a critical area with current action focussed on improving assessment and feedback. Other institutions are increasingly prioritising the NSS, meaning it is very competitive so even an improvement in the University's performance may not result in a comparative improvement. It may therefore, take a number of years to recover the position. The Students' Union are an important partner in the student experience and the PVC Education and Student Experience is working closely with the LSU Academic Experience Executive Officer to support actions on NSS. It is important that students see the improvements that are made and know that action has been taken.

A Technology Enhanced Teaching and Learning Sub-Committee has been constituted to consider the role AI in education, including training for staff and students on AI. Council requested a future update on how AI could be implemented to enhance the student learning experience, as well as the student experience more broadly.

25/88 Governance and Nominations Committee

Council **APPROVED**, on the Recommendation of Governance and Nominations Committee, the reappointment of Mark Thurston as a lay Member of Council for a further 3-year term from 01 August 2026.

Council **APPROVED** the appointment of Andrea Davis as Deputy Chair and Pro-Chancellor from 01 August 2026. Andrea will continue to hold the role of Honorary Treasurer.

25/89 Audit and Risk Committee

89.1 Report of Meetings

COUN25-P111

Council **RECEIVED** a report from the meeting of the Audit and Risk Committee held on 17 September and 31 October 2025. ARC had reviewed the draft financial statements and endorsed the external Audit Report at the October meeting. The audit is substantially complete and there have been no issues or concerns which require highlighting to Council. ARC recommended the adoption by Council of the financial statements subject to the successful completion of the outstanding audit matters, including the external auditor's approval of the Going Concern assessment, and the confirmation of an unmodified audit report. ARC commended the Executive Director of Finance and the Finance team on another clean and efficient audit for the University.

89.2 Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report

COUN25-P112

Council **APPROVED** the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report 2024-25, to **NOTE** the Audit Committee's findings, and to **RECEIVE** the Internal Audit Annual Report 2024-25.

The ARC Annual Report provided positive assurance to Council on the adequacy and effectiveness of risk management, control and governance processes, including value for money and the quality of data submitted to regulatory bodies. The internal audit report indicated a strong position and that Loughborough benchmarks well against its comparable institutions in the sector. There were no high-risk areas to flag to Council this year and internal audit actions also continue to reduce. ARC's focus next year will be on three key areas: financial sustainability and efficiency, IT systems security and cyber threats, and identifying emerging risks.

25/90 University Honorary Degrees and Medals

COUN25-P113

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

25/91 Matters for Report by the Vice-Chancellor

COUN25-P114

Council **RECEIVED** a written report from the Vice-Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor particularly highlighted the following items not discussed elsewhere:

- Druck will not be proceeding at this time with their development on Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park. The University continues to explore new prospects for LUSEP development, and this remains a key focus for the senior team.
- The Marketing and Communications Team won a Times Higher Education Award for 'Outstanding Marketing/Communications Team' for their 'Don't Mention It' campaign for the 2024 Paris Olympic and Paralympic Games.
- 10 years of Loughborough University London was celebrated with an event at the London campus attended by key people who have contributed to LUL and Alumni.
- Loughborough has been awarded the Queen Elizabeth Prize for Higher and Further Education in recognition of its pioneering contributions to Para and disability sport. This is a hugely prestigious honour and Loughborough has now received eight awards in total – only the University of Oxford has more. The Vice-Chancellor attended a ceremony earlier in the week at St James's Palace where the award was announced and The King will make a presentation of the award at an event in February, which will be attended by a number of people from Loughborough including the Chair of Council.

SECTION B – Starred Items for Approval

25/92 *Prevent Duty

COUN25-P115

Council **APPROVED** the Prevent Annual Monitoring Report for submission to the Office for Students.

25/93 *Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking

COUN25-P116

Council **APPROVED** the statement on Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking.

25/94 *Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy and Anti-Fraud Policy**COUN25-P117**

Council **APPROVED** updates to the Anti-Bribery and Corruption Policy and Anti-Fraud Policy to align with the Economic Crime and Corporate Transparency Act 2023.

25/95 *Ordinance XXXVI – Staff Disciplinary, Capability and Dismissal Appeal Procedure**COUN25-P118**

Council **APPROVED** amendments to Ordinance XXXVI Staff Disciplinary, Capability and Dismissal Appeal Procedure. Second Hearing.

25/96 *Ordinance XLIII – Policy and Procedure on the Use of Fixed Term Contracts**COUN25-P119**

Council **APPROVED** amendments to Ordinance XLIII Policy and Procedure on the Use of Fixed Term Contracts. Second Hearing.

SECTION C – Starred Items for Information**25/97 *Matters for Report**

Council **RECEIVED** the following reports:

97.1 *Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor including student recruitment COUN25-P120

97.2 *Student Recruitment Update COUN25-P121

97.3 *Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) COUN25-P122

97.4 *Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) COUN25-P123

97.5 *Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Sport) COUN25-P124

25/98 *Schedule of Briefings for Council Members**COUN25-P124**

Council **NOTED** the Schedule of Briefings for Council Members.

25/99 *Membership of Council Committees 2025/26**COUN25-P125**

Council **NOTED** the membership of Council committees for 2025/26.

25/100 *Office for Students Reportable Events**COUN25-P126**

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

25/101 *Capital Framework Progress Report**COUN25-P127**

Council **RECEIVED** a progress report.

25/102 *Common Seal**COUN25-P128**

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

25/103 *Graduation Ceremonies

Council **NOTED** the dates of Graduation Ceremonies on the Loughborough campus on Thursday 11th and Friday 12th December 2025.

25/104 *Reports from Committees

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

COUN25-P129	Estates Management and Sustainability Committee – 21 October 2025
COUN25-P130	Finance Committee – 29 October 2025
COUN25-P131	Governance and Nominations Committee – 15 October 2025
COUN25-P132	Health, Safety and Environment Committee – 08 October 2025
COUN25-P133	Human Resources Committee – 30 September 2025
COUN25-P134	Information Technology Governance Committee – 07 October 2025
COUN25-P135	Remuneration Committee – 03 July 2025
COUN25-P136	Senate – 05 November 2025
COUN25-P137	Sport Committee – 23 October 2025
COUN25-P138	Strategic Portfolio and Resources Committee (Part B) – 06 October 2025 and 03 November 2025

25/105 Date of Next Meeting

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

Luke Vulpiani

November 2025