

NEWMAN UNIVERSITY

COUNCIL

**Minutes of the Meeting held Thursday 22nd November 2018 at 2.30 pm in
ST102/103**

Present:

Mr Jonathan Day	Chair of the Council
Mr Glen Alexander	
Mr Tom Ashford	
	Ms Deirdre Finucane
	Ms Karan Gilmore
	Mr Colin Harris
	Mr Stephen Kenny
	Ms Julie Jones
	Mr Phillip Lennon
	Professor Femi Oyebode
	Mr Richard Wallace

In Attendance:

Ms Andrea Bolshaw	Registrar and University Secretary and Clerk to the Council
Professor Peter Childs	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Mr Tony Sharma	Chief Financial Officer
Ms Jackie Flowers	Minute Secretary

For item 5.4

Ms Lysandre de-la-Haye	Deputy Registrar
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1. Apologies

Apologies were received from Archbishop Bernard Longley and Ms Elizabeth McGrath QC.

2. Minutes of Previous Meetings

2.1 Minutes of the Meeting held on 4th October 2018 (UC 5M18)

The minutes were agreed to be a correct record of the meeting.

2.2 Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th September 2018 (UC 4M18)

The minutes were agreed to be a correct record of the meeting.

3. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meetings

3.1 OfS Registration Outcome (UC 43/18)

The Clerk to the Council outlined the provisions of the OfS Registration letter: the requirements for enhanced monitoring; issues the OfS wished to draw to the University's attention; and, the Reportable Events procedure.

The requirements for enhanced monitoring were not a condition of registration but the University had to submit to the OfS details of the actions being taken to improve student outcomes in the following areas: continuation of full-time PGCE students, continuation of part-time other undergraduate and postgraduate taught students, completion of part-time undergraduate students. The Retention and Success Task Group would propose an action plan for consideration by ULT on 7th January 2019 prior to submission by the OfS by 31st January 2019. There was a concern that OfS and Ofsted were using different algorithms in computing PGCE completion outcomes.

It was noted that the action plan did not have to be signed off by Council but would be provided to Council members for information.

Action: Clerk to the Council

Council asked why these particular items had been selected for enhanced monitoring and which benchmarks they were being compared with. A datasheet had been sent by OfS, but no template had been provided for addressing the concern. It was assumed that the OfS wanted an action plan in response. The University could benchmark against the national picture or use other methods of situating itself against similar Universities.

It was agreed that for the next meeting, the data sheet would be circulated to Council members, with current data and the University management's view of the comparison with other institutions in the sector.

Action: Clerk to the Council

The issues the OfS wished to draw to the University's attention were: reducing gaps in continuation of students with disabilities; reducing gaps in attainment and progression for students from some ethnic minority groups; ensuring robust evaluation of the University's activities. The Clerk to the Council said that this was thought to be a standard sentence appearing in several ID 27 >>BDC -0.-2.u

Council members observed that performance against the targets was falling and the implications of this were considered. It was thought that the OfS would expect action plans to be put in place.

The reasons for being under the recruitment target in low participation neighbourhoods were not fully understood but were possibly due to the University's drive to recruit students from a wider area. The immediate environs of the University had the lowest participation rate in the country.

It was noted that the OfS's concern now seemed more with success and completion than with recruitment.

The CFO explained that there was no correlation at the University between socio-economic background and continuation. He said that most non-continuation was due to academic failure.

Council received the report and noted the activity and performance relating to the provisions of the Access Agreement in force in 2017/18.

5.2 Accounts and Audit 2017/18

5.2.1 Audit Findings Report from Grant Thornton (UC 47/18)

The Council considered the Audit Findings Report which covered both the University and Newman Firmtrust Ltd. The CFO explained that the report had been reviewed by the Audit Committee and received by F&GP. No significant issues were raised in the document and an unqualified opinion was anticipated. The two items outstanding were as expected: the signing of the letter of representation and post balance sheet events; both would be completed over the next few days.

The Auditors had identified a small control deficiency in the journal entry process and the CFO reported that action had been taken in response to restrict the access levels of senior personnel to that of purchase invoice approval only.

The draft Audit Findings Report was received.

5.2.2 Letter of Representation to Grant Thornton (UC 48/18)

The Council received a copy of the Letter of Representation to be provided to Grant Thornton. It had been recommended for approval by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 12th November 2018. The Letter provided assurance to the auditors that the University had given them relevant and complete information. Attention was drawn to the need for the Council having made such enquiries as considered necessary for the purposes of informing itself. It was considered that the

accounts had been considered and reviewed by the Audit Committee and by the Finance and General Purposes Committee and that consequently the necessary enquiries had been made.

Resolved UC 16/2018

To authorise the Chair to sign the Letter of Representation on behalf of the Council.

It was noted that the Letter of Representation would also be signed by the Vice-Chancellor and the CFO.

5.2.3 Newman University Accounts for Year Ended 31st July 2018 (UC 49/18)

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5.3 Annual Report of the Audit Committee to the Council (UC 51/18)

The Chair of the Audit Committee presented the Committee's annual report to the Council. He noted one slight change in format from last year in respect of moving Committee agendas to an appendix. He drew attention to the Committee's opinions on the University's control systems in paragraph 32. Council suggested that the audit opinions could be mapped against the Letter of Representation to confirm that it was receiving assurance on all the items in the letter and to identify which points were covered by the Audit Committee and where else assurance could be found.

Action Chair of the Audit Committee/Clerk to the Council

The Chair of the Audit Committee gave an update on the tendering process for the University's External Auditors. The last tender had been in 2010 and since then there had been a value review in 2015/16 rather than a formal tender. On the basis of the value review, and because of the consolidation of the accounts of the University and Newman Firmtrust, Grant Thornton had remained as External Auditors. When only the University accounts were to be audited, there would be a tender. This was not a reflection on the service provided by Grant Thornton but good practice due to the time that had lapsed since the previous formal tender process.

Council members discussed whether it was important that external auditors appointed had experience of the HE sector; it was felt that while it was not essential for it to be a large national or international firm, a smaller local firm would need to have some exposure to the sector. It was noted that this could be facilitated by use of expression

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number of welfare cases referred for specialist support and advice related to individuals and not occurrences.

In respect of training foh.5 (ccu)-1.4 (r008 Tc -0.008 Tw 5i8 (n)-8.3 (c)3.2 (il))TJ 0 T-2.3 (n)0

Council members emphasised the importance of identifying emerging risks.

Action: Clerk to the Council

Resolved UC23/2018

To approve the Risk Register accordingly as per the University's management processes detailed above.

8. Financial Matters

8.1 Recruitment and Enrolment Update (UC 56/18)

The CFO presented a report which gave an update on recruitment and enrolment for the academic year 2018/19. Recruitment was higher than expected. Conversion rates were lower, which was felt to be because of the volatility of the market. There had been a decrease in recruitment to single and joint honours degrees, although overall student numbers were broadly the same.

The CFO advised that a report on student retention was being prepared for the January meeting of the FGPC.

The Council commended the ULT

a comparison and discussed the relative merits of both options. At its last meeting on 7th November 2018 the FGPC had agreed that firm proposals would be considered at its meeting on 29th January 2019. The FGPC would then make recommendations for approval by Council at its meeting in February or April 2019.

The Council noted the report.

9. Council and Governance Matters

9.1 Membership and

It was noted that a Council vacancy had arisen following the resignation of staff Council member, Dr Karen Graham, who left the University in October 2018. The Nominations and Governance Committee on 4th October 2018 had considered that this gave an opportunity to review the appointment procedure for staff governors. The historical approach of an election did not offer the chance for the NGC to analyse the skill set of the candidates against the overall skill set of council members. It had further been felt that an electoral process could lead to the staff governors being seen as staff representatives rather than as an equal trustee with all of the relevant responsibilities.

The Clerk to the Council advised that the Instrument and Articles did not restrict the method of appointing staff.

The Council reviewed the proposed changes and agreed as follows.

Resolved: UC 26/2018

1. that two separate categories of staff membership (for academic staff and for professional services staff) be replaced with two staff member governorships for which all staff were eligible were to apply;
2. the process of appointing staff governors be the same as that of external Council members through the NGC and not through an election;
3. that NGC review staff applicants against the skill set required and recommend to Council a preferred candidate;
4. the terms of office of the two staff governors be staggered to ensure continuity.

Action: The Clerk to the Council to notify all staff to advise them of the new process and to invite applications.

It was noted that this did not affect the position of the remaining staff governor, Mr Colin Harris, but would apply to the current and future vacancies for staff governors.

Items 10 – Reports from the Council Committees, 11 – Reports from Senate and 12 – Internal Reports were carried o-6 (h)0.79.63 0 Td ()T.7 ()0.5.1 (I)1.7

13.2 Thanks were given to the Project, Policy and Governance Support Officer for her help with Moodle.

14. Date of the Next Meeting

Wednesday 27th February 2019 at 2.30pm.

**The Council
Action Plan from the meeting held on 22nd November 2018**

Minute	Agenda Item	Action to be Taken	Person Responsible
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