

**MINUTES OF AN EXTRAORDINARY MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL
HELD ON THURSDAY 10TH SEPTEMBER 2020**

Present: Canon Dr J. Turnbull (*President*), Mr F. Ball, Mrs C. Bond, Dr D. Briggs, Professor M. Clinton, Sir Neil Cossons, Cllr R. Daniels, Dr M. David, Associate Prof. M. Degg, Professor C. Forsdick, Mrs J. France-Hayhurst, Mr N. Jenkins, Ms E. Lewis (*CSU President*), Mr G. Reay, Dr A. Seoney, Professor E. Simmons (*Vice Chancellor*), The Very Revd Dr T. Stratford, The Rt Revd M. Tanner and Mrs S. Verity.

Apologies for absence were received from:

Professor S. Broomhead, Ms K. Howell and Dr L. Smith.

In attendance: Mr A. Lee (*University Secretary*), Mr R. Waddington (*PVC Resources & Chief Financial Officer*), Mr A.J. Parker (*Committee Secretary*) and Ms F. Jones.

	ACTION
<p>3231 DECLARATION OF INTEREST</p> <p>Councillor Razia Daniels declared an interest in item 8 (<i>minute 3236</i>) and took no part in discussion on that item.</p>	
<p>3232 ATTENDANCE & MEMBERSHIP</p> <p>Councillor Razia Daniels, The Rt Revd Mark Tanner and Professor Steven Broomhead (in absentia) were welcomed to their first meeting.</p>	
<p>3233 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor's Report was received and discussed, focussing on the following matters:</p> <p><u>Operational Matters:</u> The University continued to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic by keeping abreast of guidance from the Government, Universities UK (UUK) and the four relevant local authorities. The latest SAGE report of 4th September 'Principles for Managing SARS-CoV-2 Transmission Associated with Higher Education' was followed on 7th September by further DfE guidance.</p> <p>The University's Covid-19 planning was well advanced with protocols to manage new and returning UK students, as well as arrangements for international students to advance book support packages including airport transport and food. Cheshire West and Chester Council had provided support through a public health consultant with whom the University had had frequent discussion regarding the 'Return to Campus' plans and</p>	

ongoing safe management of activities. Particular attention had been given to Outbreak Management Protocols and these had been tested in two scenario sessions with the Council's public health team. Meetings had also been held with equivalent public health leads in Shrewsbury and Warrington. The University's Covid-19 plan would be submitted to the DfE. It was acknowledged that retaining students in 2020/21 would be particularly challenging and, as such, ensuring a smooth and positive induction process would be key.

All staff not in practical or student-facing roles would remain working from home until at least December 2020 and possibly beyond. The longer-term plan remained for a significant number of staff to continue to work from home for at least 40% of their time. Additional office chairs and IT equipment had been provided to support this and risk assessments completed.

Management Changes: The senior committees were now titled Strategic Executive Team, Strategic Leadership Team and a new Heads of Professional Services group had been established. Reporting to Senate would be a new Portfolio Development & Management Committee which replaced the Academic Planning Committee and would combine financial and academic considerations when agreeing new programmes and programme withdrawals. The Dean of Students role had been discontinued and an interim PVC Student Experience appointed. At UCS the role of Deputy Provost Operations had been discontinued and Professor Paul Johnson had taken on the role of Head of Centre in addition to his responsibilities as Executive Dean, Arts & Humanities. Professor Anna Sutton had handed over responsibility for UCS to Professor Johnson and would retire from her role as DVC Student Experience on 30th September 2020.

Undergraduate Recruitment: The UF/ CF figure was currently 249 greater than in 2019 and was ahead of the budget target of 2,920, although it was acknowledged there would be some attrition before the HESES return due in December 2020. The new UF/CF target was 3,063. The Clearing Project Board had been very effective as had the Clearing Campaign, nonetheless, a consultancy report on the whole recruitment cycle had identified 28 points of improvement for next year.

Postgraduate Recruitment: Applications were 2% above last year and continued to be received. Offers had increased by 1% and conversion had increased by 8% on last year (51 students). Total UF/CF was currently 724 compared to 637 in 2019. International student numbers were positive and were 28% ahead of last year in terms of deposit payments. The University was predicting 750-800 deposits over the year, although uncertainties remained, particularly regarding travel and visas.

3233 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT (CONTINUED)

Financial implications: The financial statements for the year ended 31st July 2020 were being finalised and the deficit was likely to be approximately £0.5M better than the forecast of £5.1M. Cash balances at year end were £38.5M (forecast £37.7M). The actuarial valuation on the LGPS pension scheme had increased the deficit significantly in 2020. A revised forecast pension charge had been received from the actuary for 2021 of £5.4M compared to an assumption of £4.4M in the financial forecasts presented to the Council meeting on 14th July 2020. This had therefore increased the current budgeted deficit to £9.8M.

Most other assumptions for the 2020-21 budget remain valid, particularly the assumptions around student numbers. The exceptions are an expected £400K charge from Warwick Medical School for the curriculum which was not budgeted and assumptions around the annual pay award.

University Centre Shrewsbury: Enrolment figures would be similar to the previous year, predominantly due to a healthy intake of teacher trainees. The rationalisation of the undergraduate portfolio would continue as the focus shifted to professional courses. There had been no substantial progress on the Partnership Agreement with Shropshire Council despite several meetings. The University had submitted a draft Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to the Council for consideration.

Leighton Hospital: The decision was taken in August 2020 not to use the facility at Leighton for nurse education in 2020/21, primarily due to the inability to maintain a Covid-secure environment in a teaching area regularly accessed by ward staff. Current students had been relocated to either Warrington or UCS.

Kingsway Campus: Initial discussions had commenced with CWaC to explore whether Arts and Media provision could take advantage of opportunities presented by the local authority's new Northgate development, adjacent to Storyhouse, to establish and maintain a dynamic and appealing offer to students. Senior colleagues at CWaC were very supportive of the project and a joint working group had been established.

Faculty of Science & Engineering: The relocation to the Parkgate Road campus progressed and plans for a new building would shortly be submitted to CWaC. The Office for Students maintained its interest in this transition. Odgers Berndtson would launch the search for a new Executive Dean in the coming weeks. Several subjects would move into the new Faculty in due course, predominantly in Biological Sciences.

Chester Medical School: The Faculty of Medicine & Life Sciences would be renamed the Chester Medical School (CMS) following the move of courses into Science & Engineering. Departmental boundaries would be revised and subjects would include: Medical Science, Microbiology, Pharmacology, Nutrition, Biomedical Sciences, Sport & Exercise Science, PE and Biochemistry.

3233 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT (CONTINUED)

The Executive Dean continued to progress the next stage of application to the GMC.

Student Satisfaction: During 2020/21 there would be enhanced sharing of student satisfaction data across the institution and the introduction of 'Student Voice Champions' at departmental level both in academic and professional service areas. All survey data would be included in the ongoing review of courses and the performance of services and teams.

National Student Survey 2020: The University's response rate rose by 2% and the overall satisfaction increased by 0.7% compared to a sector reduction of -1%. The University was ranked equal 32nd which placed it in the top quartile with a score of 86.36%. Above sector average scores were recorded in 20 of 24 subject areas and across all question areas performance was above the sector average.

The Guardian University Guide (GUG) League Table: The University was ranked 81st out of 121 institutions in the 2021 table, a rise of one place on 2020. It was noted that there had been some changes to the methodology including the move to Graduate Outcomes Survey data as the measure of employment success; an area of weakness for the University and as such an area of focus.

3234 STRATEGIC DEVELOPMENT

The new Strategic Direction was received and discussed in detail. It was highlighted that further work had been undertaken since the previous meeting in order to refine the 'Citizen Student' strategy which aimed to provide a 'premium', 'personalised' and 'purposeful' student experience. The strategy would focus on building social capital by equipping students to be engaged citizens and would provide a holistic student approach which engendered a strong sense of belonging and community engagement.

Professional Centres would also be established in Business, Teaching, Nursing, Policing and Social and Youth Work providing a flexible approach to study. Research would be directed at regional and sector needs and all students would gain access to the research process from year one through membership of research clusters. Commitment to the environmental sustainability agenda continued through enhanced partnerships with Reaseheath and research already being undertaken at Thornton and UCS.

Communicating with students would remain a priority over the next six months. Faculties and Departments would be supported to create plans to show how they proposed to adapt provision and direction to deliver the Strategy. Plans would include clear resource allocations and align with the business planning and quality monitoring processes. Enhanced use of data analytics would also inform key performance indicators against which impact and success would be monitored.

IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the new Strategic Direction.

3235 MAJOR INITIATIVE UPDATE

A report on the Warrington Project was received and discussed in detail. The Secretary updated the University Council on work being undertaken to determine future development of the University's provision in Warrington. Detailed work had been undertaken and considered options.

After extensive discussion it was acknowledged that further work was required to conclude the work. Key actions included further engagement with the Warrington Borough Council both strategically and as the planning authority.

It was reported that several workstreams had contributed to the preparatory work required to effect this strategic intent, including Curriculum, Student Experience, Estates and Facilities and Stakeholder Engagement and are detailed in Annex 1 to the minutes.

IT WAS RESOLVED to approve the Vice-Chancellor and Strategic Executive Team progress the project as detailed in Annex 1 to the minutes.

3236 PROPERTY MATTERS**26/27 and 28 Brook Lane, Chester**

A report on the proposed disposal of 26/27 and 28 Brook Lane, Chester was received and discussed. The Secretary reported that the University had been in negotiation with the local authority over the sale of these properties and, in accordance with Charity Commission regulations, a valuation report had been prepared by Messrs Fisher German (FG). It was also noted that a disposal of assets required University Council approval under the financial regulations.

The FG report differed as to valuation from the local authority's valuation by Beresford Adams Commercial (BAC), but noted the current uncertainty in the residential market and the impact this may have on the valuation.

IT WAS RESOLVED

- (1) to authorise disposal of the premises at not less than the amount of the BAC valuation, subject to the University being satisfied as to compliance with the Charity Commission Regulations;
- (2) to delegate authority to resolve outstanding matters to the Planning & Resources Committee.

3237 SENIOR STAFF MATTERS

The Vice-Chancellor reported that a large number of applications had been received for both the Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) posts. Long listing had been undertaken with interviews due in October 2020.

IT WAS RESOLVED that University Council involvement in the interview process would be determined by the President and the Vice-Chancellor.

3238 DATES AND TIMES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

Next meeting: Tuesday 24th November, 9.30 am

Future meetings – all 9.30 am:

Tuesday 23rd March 2021

Tuesday 6th July 2021

Annex 1

Workstream	Ref.	Recommendation
Project	P1	<p>Create</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) A Warrington Project Board in conjunction with the Borough Council. ii) Below the Board there is a need for a coordinated University implementation team. This could be managed through Workstreams or an internal Implementation Task Force. Input will be required from key functions including Faculties, Finance, CSU, Corporate Communications, HR, Estates & Resources, MRA, Registry and AQS. The areas of focus include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Property • Curriculum Development • Internal stakeholder relations and communication • External stakeholder relations and communication (especially LEP, WBC, NHS and other Education providers) • Marketing and branding <p>Particular care will be needed with communications to create stakeholder confidence in the Project and avoid unnecessary and potentially disruptive adverse public opinion.</p>
Curriculum	C1	<p>Establish Warrington as a Professional Centre focusing on delivery of UG and PG programmes relating to key public sector functions: health, education, youth, social work and policing and key business areas.</p>
	C2	<p>Business Management and Entrepreneurship curriculum is crucial in a recession. Chester Business School to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) formalise its Warrington business liaison through a sub-group of the Business Advisory Group. ii) proceed at pace to deploy Warrington-relevant curriculum including UG and PG apprenticeships and single modules as micro-credits iii) In the longer term, consider the development of a UG liberal arts-style degree in digital-focussed Business Administration and Management, including specialist content in accounting, HR, marketing focused on mature, part-time learners and career changers.

Workstream	Ref.	Recommendation
	C3	Develop a new and reinvigorated teacher education offer to be delivered from Warrington. The University has a proud pedigree as a teacher training institution, but the offer in Warrington is not currently performing as well as it should. As well as primary and secondary provision, this could include other sectors such as youth centres or prison education.
	C4	Continuing Professional Development and Re-Skilling: Develop and deliver postgraduate programmes and short courses for students without traditional UG entry qualifications. Specialisms e.g. health management to be considered.
	C5	Foundation Year Provision to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) underpin Warrington programmes ii) enable progression to other UoC campuses
	C6	Programme teams to work with LIS on a digital-first collections strategy to support transition from library to learning resource centre.
	C7	Programme teams to work with learning technologists and instructional designers to develop active collaborative learning online and face to face.
	C8	AQA to support the introduction of the Chester Credit Framework to enable the use of microcredits for lifelong learning.
Student Experience	S1	Develop provision for professional programmes where students have 'non-standard' term dates, and operate in a block or part-time study mode. This recommendation would focus on the implementation and operation of The Chester Blend for Warrington students.
	S2	Become a sector leader in supporting the particular types of student it is looking to recruit to Warrington, such as those coming with particular needs, including returning to learning, those who work, career changers or those who have family or caring commitments. Again, provision should be modelled on these students, rather than looking to adapt a 'standard' model to fit these requirements.
	S3	Facilitate a co-located digitally supported 'hub' approach to all student facing support services (not just Student Futures) in the short term leading to a much more integrated and easily

Workstream	Ref.	Recommendation
		navigable approach to academic and pastoral student support and guidance in the future.
	S4	Incorporate social learning spaces throughout any facility with accessible provision for commuting students at evenings and weekends and mixed-use social/study spaces. Consider CSU presence e.g. create a Students' Union social and support and guidance centre which makes officers available digitally and face to face through flexible and responsive working hours.
	S5	Reimagine library provision to a digital learning resources centre model where a range of social and learning areas fit alongside a welcome hub, catering (possibly self-serve) and an information point.
	S6	Use effective timetabling measures to facilitate accessible learning opportunities for mature students and those with caring responsibilities.
Estates and Facilities	E1	<p>The work carried out in the Student Experience workstream has highlighted the very significant investment which would be required to bring the University's Padgate facilities up to standard. Student numbers would have to rise considerably at the Padgate Campus in order to fund such investment. This would be unlikely to succeed in such a competitive market with a comparatively little-known brand.</p> <p>Therefore, move the University's Warrington campus to a high-quality town centre location, increasing accessibility to the local community, consolidating its provision into a prominent location, with high levels of footfall and proximity to nearby residential, leisure, and retail facilities.</p>
	E2	If an appropriate building is not immediately available, immediately consider a town centre presence to raise awareness of its offer. This could take the form of outreach and recruitment rather than the delivery of teaching in the first instance.
	E3	Maximise flexibility in its teaching and other facilities, which should form a critical component of the University's community engagement agenda.
	E4	Consider discussions with third parties to establish a small pool of student accommodation in the centre of Warrington, if considered desirable. There are currently 150 students including undergraduate policing students currently using the University's accommodation at Padgate.

Workstream	Ref.	Recommendation
Marketing and Branding	M1	Review and harmonise the naming and brand identity for the University, its Professional Centres and its various other sites.
	M2	Develop a full-scale ambitious marketing and awareness raising campaign ahead of the Warrington town-centre relaunch.
Community Engagement	CE1	<p>The work carried out in the stakeholder engagement workstream has highlighted that the University's relationships with key stakeholders (such as the LEP) are often more as a vehicle for projects like Accelerate and the Cheshire and Warrington Growth Hub, rather than as a higher education institute providing research and degree-level teaching.</p> <p>Therefore, prioritise stronger engagement with key external stakeholder including the Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership and Warrington Borough Council over its future in Warrington, considering joint opportunities, but at the least to develop strategic partnership agreements,</p>
	CE2	As part of the CRM project include Warrington in strategic stakeholder engagement and ensure reporting route into governance structure of the University.
	CE3	Introduce a wide range of social impact initiatives as part of the relaunch of the Warrington centre, such as sector-leading scholarships.