

APPROVED

**MINUTES OF THE 221ST MEETING OF THE COURT OF GOVERNORS HELD ON WEDNESDAY 23
NOVEMBER 2016 IN THE BOARDROOM, UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER, 309 REGENT STREET.**

PRESENT:	Mr P Kyle (Chair) Mr C Barnes Mr D Batchelor Mr J Begg Mr D Cheeseman Dr S Courtenage Dame K Dunnell Mr A Ganguli Mr S Hart	Mr T Hope Professor G Megson Mr G Morley Mr P Murphy Ms L Neil Professor G Petts Mr M Smith Ms F Thompson (UWSU)
IN ATTENDANCE:	Professor R Dannreuther Ms S Enright (Secretary) Ms K Hayes	Mrs E McMillan (Clerk) Ms F Nieboer, KPMG (items 221.1-221.4) Mr M Webb
APOLOGIES:	Mrs R Bellamy-James Dame M Hogg Professor A Hughes (attendee)	Mr J Wates Mrs D Yeo

Clerk's note: This meeting of the Court of Governors was preceded by a joint meeting of the Court of Governors and Academic Council to consider the annual assurance statements relating to the student academic experience, student outcomes and academic quality and standards.

221.1. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 221.1.1. Apologies were noted as listed above.
- 221.1.2. No interests were declared.
- 221.1.3. The Clerk confirmed that where there is no dissent (i.e. no request to un-star) starred items will be taken as received/approved without debate.
- 221.1.4. The Chair agreed to a request to un-star the draft PID whistleblowing policy and procedure (refer to Minute 221.9). Otherwise, there were no requests from members to discuss starred items (Minutes 221.10 to 221.22).
- 221.1.5. The Chair briefed the Court on the topics discussed at the Committee of University Chairs Autumn plenary and the HEFCE annual meeting, which took place on 20 and 21 October 2016.
- 221.1.6. Members reflected on the joint meeting with Academic Council preceding this meeting of the Court of Governors and discussed ways in which the relationship between the two bodies could be enhanced and to develop a deeper understanding by governors of quality matters, particularly around academic achievement in the University.

221.1.7. **AGREED** Court established a small working group to consider how the Court will work with Academic Council, particularly in preparation for the signing of annual assurance statements relating to the student academic experience, student outcomes and academic quality and standards.

221.1.7.1. **ACTION Clerk** to confirm the membership of the working group and make arrangements for an initial meeting.

221.2. AUDIT COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORT TO THE COURT 2015-16

221.2.1. Members received and considered the annual report from the Audit Committee (Document COG 161123A); which includes as appendices the Internal Audit annual report for the year ending 31 July 2016 and HEFCE Annex A: Annual accountability assurance form.

221.2.2. The Chair thanked all members of the Audit Committee for their work and for the clarity that the report provides around their activities and outcomes.

221.2.3. Members discussed the Internal Audit opinion on the efficiency and effectiveness elements of value for money and noted that HEFCE's approach to this area is moving from an emphasis on procurement to a more holistic view.

221.2.4. Members noted that there are two areas within the internal audit programme of work: the core financial and data reporting (compliance) and areas of strategic and operational risk. The Audit Committee reports that in the latter, Internal Audit identified lack of academic staff engagement as a specific area of weakness in the effectiveness of change programmes requiring the implementation of new systems and processes but that management action in response to areas where there is limited assurance are appropriate. The Audit Committee will maintain oversight of progress and the Court expects to see definite improvements.

221.2.5. **AGREED** Annex A: Annual accountability assurance form to be submitted to HEFCE as part of the annual statutory return.

221.3. EXTERNAL AUDIT

221.3.1. Ms F Nieboer, External Auditor KPMG, presented the audit highlights memorandum and management letter 2015-16 (Document COG 161123Bi), which had previously been considered by the Audit Committee and Finance and Property Committee.

221.3.2. Members heard that KPMG will issue unqualified opinion of the financial statements and on use of funds. Members noted that KPMG took the internal audit opinion relating to value for money into account when examining use of funds.

221.3.3. Members noted the confirmation of independence and objectivity of the external auditors.

221.3.4. The Court congratulated the finance team for their work to ensure that the audit process has proceeded successfully.

221.3.5. Members received and noted a summary of the representations made by the University to the External Auditor (KPMG) in connection with their audit of the Group and University financial statements for the year ended 31 July 2016 (Document COG 161123Bii).

221.3.6. Members noted that there are two representations for this year. These relate to valuation of land and the intended use of two University properties and conversion to The Financial Accounting Standard FRS102.

221.3.7. **AGREED** The letter of representation is accurate and should be signed by the Chair.

221.4. ANNUAL REPORT AND FINANCIAL STATEMENTS

- 221.4.1. Members received and considered the Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 July 2016 (Document COG 161123Ci).
- 221.4.2. The Chair, Finance and Property Committee highlighted that the annual report and financial statements has a limited audience so is in a different format to previous years and that conversion to FRS102 also results in a different presentation of information.
- 221.4.3. Members noted that a major development is the issue of pension contribution viability and that the University's approach has been tested and is supported by the auditors.
- 221.4.4. Members discussed the current position and the need for the Court to receive appropriate guidance on this sector wide issue. Members considered that an external view would help to reassure governors and the Chair, Finance and Property Committee informed the Court that the Committee has invited KPMG to arrange for a pensions expert to meet with the Committee in 2017.
- 221.4.5. Members heard from the Director, Finance and Operations how the University is addressing income and expenditure performance that is out of line with the approved budget for the current year. Members noted that performance in year will be measured against the surplus before other gains and losses as this is where the University can exert operational control.
- 221.4.6. The Director, Finance and Operations informed members that some minor adjustments had been made to the annual report and financial statements subsequent to consideration and agreement by the Audit Committee and the Finance and Property Committee at the joint meeting on 10 November 2016. Governors had access in advance of the meeting to a version of the final report and statements that highlights these changes.
- 221.4.7. **APPROVED** Annual report and financial statements confirmed for submission to the Annual General Meeting.
- 221.4.8. Members received and noted the HEFCE accounts direction 2015-16 (Document COG 161123Cii).
- 221.4.9. Members received and considered the updated financial commentary (Document COG 161123Ciii), which had been considered and agreed by the Audit Committee and Finance and Property Committee at the joint meeting.
- 221.4.10. Members received and noted the Annual Sustainability Assurance Report 2016 (Document COG 161123Civ). Members noted that completion of the report is not compulsory, however governing bodies are encouraged to submit the report as part of the annual assurance return to HEFCE as it confirms that the Court has reviewed the institution's sustainability over the longer term. The Director, Finance and Operations informed members that the calculation is consistent with previous years and shows that we are sustainable financially.
- 221.4.11. **AGREED** ASSUR report to be submitted to HEFCE with the annual statutory return.

[Clerk's note: At this point the meeting was adjourned for the AGM and re-convened at its completion]

221.5. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

- 221.5.1. Members received and noted a report from the Vice-Chancellor that included a review of the external environment and a summary of University news since the last Court meeting (Document COG 161123D).
- 221.5.2. Members heard that VC has met with a number of government representatives to discuss the UK's exit from the European Union.

- 221.5.3. Members heard that the HEFCE report 'Financial health of the higher education sector: 2015-16 to 2018-19 forecasts'¹ states that sector surpluses are projected to be between 2.3% and 4.3% of total income in the forecast period and that these are relatively small margins in which to operate.
- 221.5.4. The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the University's achievement in the Chevening Scholars programme, the UK government's international awards scheme aimed at building lasting positive relationships with the UK.
- 221.5.5. Members heard that the headlines from the Autumn statement published earlier in the day included restrictions on tax-free employee benefits offered by salary sacrifice schemes and an announcement of additional funding for research and development.
- 221.5.6. Court congratulated the staff and students mentioned in the report for their achievements and the Chair encouraged all governors to attend the staff appreciation awards taking place that evening.

221.6. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION – SEPTEMBER 2016

- 221.6.1. Members received and noted the management information for September 2016 (Document COG 161123E), which covers the first two months of the financial year 2016-17 and has been considered by the University Executive Board (UEB).
- 221.6.2. Members heard that the monthly and year to date income and expenditure figures show the position prior to invoicing for tuition fees for students starting in September 2016.
- 221.6.3. Members heard that the year to date financial performance is positive against budget; this favourable variance has arisen due to a mix of timing differences in income and expenditure recognition and underspends in depreciation charges.
- 221.6.4. Members received assurance that the University is committed to quality of provision and maintaining the minimum entry tariff at the current level. Members discussed the importance of reviewing our portfolio to identify areas of strength and to examine the continuing validity of courses. Members also considered it important to interrogate available data to better understand who our students are and what differentiates those who are succeeding – in terms of attainment and employability – and those who are not.
- 221.6.5. Members noted that UEB is examining the timing, size and amount of capital projects and that adjustments will be made to the capital budget to ensure that the group of projects taken forward in year is sustainable and affordable.

221.7. PREVENT DUTY ANNUAL REPORT DECEMBER 2016

- 221.7.1. Members received and considered the annual report under the HEFCE Prevent Monitoring Framework (Document COG 161123F), which has been considered by UEB.
- 221.7.2. Members noted that this is the first year that HEFCE has required such a submission and that this will be an annual return. HEFCE will take a decision in January, based on these returns, as to whether they visit individual institutions.
- 221.7.3. Members noted that the Code of practice on freedom of speech, which has been reviewed with no material change to report, is on the agenda for approval (refer to Minute 221.10 below).
- 221.7.4. Members noted appointments to the Interfaith advisory team and discussed the institutional data to be submitted by HEFCE to the government.

¹ <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/year/2016/201634/>

221.7.5. **AGREED** The annual report is accepted and the Chair of the Court can sign the declaration below on behalf of the Court.

“Throughout the academic year and up to the date of approval, the University of Westminster:

- *has had due regard to the need to prevent people being drawn into terrorism (the Prevent duty);*
- *has provided to HEFCE all required information about its implementation of the Prevent duty; and*
- *has reported to HEFCE in a timely way all serious issues related to the Prevent duty.”*

221.8. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

221.8.1. **AGREED** The minutes of the Court of Governors meeting held on 5 October 2016 (Document COG 161123G) were agreed as an accurate record.

221.8.2. Members received and noted the summary of actions and matters arising from previous meetings (Document COG 161123H).

221.8.3. Members noted the resignation of Mr Alastair Woods from the Court since the last meeting and noted their gratitude to Mr Woods for his contribution to the University.

221.8.4. **Management information report (Action 220.6.3.1):** The Clerk confirmed that she has not received any comment on the format of the report since the last meeting. The Director, Finance and Operations informed members that from earlier discussions with governors he has noted that they do not wish to see a reduction in the financial information provided but would additionally like other, non-financial, KPIs represented.

221.8.5. **Pension liabilities (Action 220.6.7.1):** As reported earlier in the meeting (see Minute 221.4.4) the Finance and Property Committee will meet with a pensions expert from KPMG.

221.8.5.1. ACTION Director, Finance and Operations to submit a briefing paper on pension liabilities to the Court following the Committee’s discussion with KPMG.

221.8.6. **Risk management (Minute 220.7 and Action 220.7.14.1):** Members noted that the Director, Corporate Planning and Performance has updated the University risk register taking into account discussions at the Court meeting on 5 October 2016.

221.8.6.1. ACTION Clerk to circulate the new risk register to members of the Audit Committee once it has been agreed by UEB. Audit Committee will review the risk register by correspondence prior to submission to the Court in early 2017.

221.8.6.2. ACTION Clerk to include a detailed discussion on risk appetite to the Court schedule of business following liaison with the Director, Finance and Operations and Director, Corporate Planning and Performance about timing.

221.8.7. **Leadership and management of health and safety in HEIs (Minute 220.14):** Members noted a summary of how the Court level governance requirements are being managed by the University, as reported to the HR Committee on 8 November 2016.

221.8.8. **Managing performance policy and procedures (Actions 219.9.2.1 and 219.9.3.1):** Members noted that the policy was implemented on 1 September 2016 and that communication of the policy to staff has been included in the Learning and Organisational Development for the current academic year and will be part of the Leadership and Management Development Strategy Implementation work in partnership with the HRM Advisory Group.

APPROVED

221.8.9. **Graduation ceremonies (Action 219.26.4.1):** The Chair thanked all governors who attended the recent graduation ceremonies and reported that the Deputy Chairs of Court will open and close the ceremonies to be held on Monday 28 November 2016.

Changes to the UWSU constitutional documents (Minute 220.4)

221.8.10. Members considered a proposal from the UWSU Trustee Board for an amendment to the Trustee Board membership.

221.8.11. **APPROVED** UWSU Trustee Board membership to be amended to include an additional student trustee (postgraduate representative) and an additional external trustee.

221.9. PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE (WHISTLEBLOWING) POLICY

221.9.1. Members received and considered the draft Public interest disclosure (whistleblowing) policy and procedure (Document COG 161123L), which is recommended by the Audit Committee.

221.9.2. Members discussed comments received from staff during the consultation, which had been duly considered by the UEB and the Audit Committee and are recorded in the supporting documentation submitted to the Court.

221.9.2.1. **ACTION Clerk** to provide feedback to the unions on the Court's decision and on their comments on the draft policy and procedure.

221.9.3. Members discussed the nomination of senior post holders in the University as Designated Officers and noted that following discussion of the issue by UEB a nominated independent governor has been included in the draft policy.

221.9.3.1. **ACTION Clerk** to invite the Chair of Court's nominee to take on the role of nominated independent governor.

221.9.4. A member queried the use of 'may' rather than 'should' or 'will' with regards to disciplinary action for anyone found to have engaged in victimisation of an individual who has raised a concern in accordance with the Policy. Members noted that this provides for consideration of the facts and circumstances of individual cases; however in most cases the Court would expect disciplinary action to be taken.

221.9.5. Members noted that there have not been any incidents of whistleblowing in recent years.

221.9.6. **APPROVED** Public interest disclosure (whistleblowing) policy to be implemented from 1 December 2016.

221.10. CODE OF PRACTICE ON FREEDOM OF SPEECH

221.10.1. Members received and considered the updated Code of practice on freedom of speech for 2016-17 (Document COG 161123I), which is recommended by UEB and does not include any material changes.

221.10.2. **APPROVED** Code of practice on freedom of speech for 2016-17 to be implemented with immediate effect.

221.11. DIGNITY AT WORK AND STUDY POLICY AND PROCEDURES

221.11.1. Members received and considered the revised Dignity at work and study policy and procedures (Document COG 161123J), which is recommended by the HR Committee.

221.11.2. **APPROVED** Dignity at work and study policy and procedure to be implemented with immediate effect.

221.12. TREASURY MANAGEMENT REPORT, STRATEGY AND POLICY REVIEW

221.12.1. Members received and considered the Treasury management - report, strategy and policy review (Document COG 161123K), which is recommended by the Finance and Property Committee.

221.12.2. **APPROVED** Treasury management and investment management policies to be implemented with immediate effect.

221.12.3. **AGREED** Court agreed the Treasury Management plan for 2016-17.

221.13. INTERNAL AUDIT

221.13.1. Members received and considered the Internal Audit service evaluation form for 2015-16 (Document COG 161123M).

221.13.2. **AGREED** Court supported the recommendation from the Audit Committee that the University continues as a member of the KCG consortium.

221.14. MEMBERSHIP OF COURT AND COMMITTEES

221.14.1. Members received and considered recommendations from the Nominations Committee for appointments (Document COG 161123N).

221.14.2. **APPROVED** Mr G Morley is re-appointed as an independent governor for a final three-year term from 11 July 2017 to 10 July 2020.

221.14.3. **APPROVED** Mr A Ganguli is appointed as Chair of the Audit Committee with effect from 1 December 2016.

221.14.4. **APPROVED** The Nomination Committee's nominee is appointed as a non-governor member of the Finance and Property Committee with effect from 1 December 2016 (pending acceptance of the role).

221.14.5. **APPROVED** The Nomination Committee's nominee is appointed as a non-governor member of the HR Committee with effect from 1 December 2016 (pending acceptance of the role).

221.15. MINUTES FROM PRECEDING COMMITTEE MEETINGS

221.15.1. Members received and noted a report on the business conducted at meetings of the committees of the Court since the last meeting (Document COG 161123O).

221.15.2. In addition to the summary of business, members received the following minutes (Document COG 161123P):

- i. Audit Committee 11 October 2016
- ii. Academic Council 19 October 2016
- iii. Nominations Committee 19 October 2016
- iv. HR Committee 8 November 2016
- v. Audit Committee 10 November 2016
- vi. Joint Audit and Finance and Property 10 November 2016
- vii. Finance and Property Committee 10 November 2016
- viii. Remuneration Committee 15 November 2016

221.15.2.1. ACTION Clerk to circulate the Academic Council and Remuneration Committee minutes (Document COG 161123Pii and Pviii) by email with the draft minutes of this meeting.

221.16. STATUTORY HUMAN RESOURCES REPORTS

- 221.16.1. Members received and noted the Safety, health and wellbeing annual report 2015-16 (Document COG 161123Q), which had previously been considered by the HR Committee.
- 221.16.2. Members received and noted the Equality, diversity and inclusion annual report 2015-16 (Document COG 161123R), which had previously been considered by the HR Committee.
- 221.16.3. **AGREED** Equality, diversity and inclusion annual report 2015-16 accepted for publication on the University website.

221.17. VALUE FOR MONEY - ANNUAL REPORT 2015-16 AND PLAN 2016-17

- 221.17.1. Members received and noted a report of value for money strategy, control and initiatives over the last year and for the coming year (Document COG 161123S), which had previously been considered and endorsed by the Audit Committee.

221.18. CAPITAL AND MAJOR PROJECTS UPDATE

- 221.18.1. Members received and noted a summary of progress on capital projects to date and the schedule of major project business case submissions (Document COG 161123T), which had previously been considered by the Finance and Property Committee.

221.19. UNIVERSITY OF WESTMINSTER PRESS

- 221.19.1. Members received and noted an update on progress and editorial strategy for the University of Westminster Press (Document COG 161123U), which had previously been considered by UEB.

221.20. SCHEDULE OF BUSINESS 2016-17

- 221.20.1. Members received and noted the updated schedule of business for the current academic year (Document COG 161123V).

221.21. APPRENTICESHIP LEVY - HOW IT WILL WORK

- 221.21.1. Members received and noted government guidance on the apprenticeship levy².

221.22. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

2016-17

Wednesday 15 February 2017 3.30pm in CH1.14 Cavendish House, 101 New Cavendish Street (**special meeting**)

Wednesday 22 March 2017 3.30pm in Room RS117 (main boardroom), 309 Regent Street (**revised location**)

Wednesday 24 May 2017 3.30pm in CH1.14 Cavendish House

Wednesday 19 July 2017 3.30pm in CH1.14 Cavendish House

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work/apprenticeship-levy-how-it-will-work>

2017-2018

Wednesday 20 September 2017 12noon to 8pm (**Court away day**)

Wednesday 4 October 2017 3.30pm

Wednesday 22 November 2017 3.30pm

Wednesday 21 March 2018 3.30pm

Wednesday 6 June 2018 3.30pm

Wednesday 18 July 2018 3.30pm

(Location to be confirmed for all meetings in 2017-18)

221.23. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

Graduation ceremonies

- 221.23.1. A governor who recently attended the Faculty of Architecture and the Built Environment graduation ceremony congratulated the University on the large number of RIBA Part 3 graduates graduating.

APPROVED

**MINUTES OF THE JOINT MEETING OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL AND THE COURT OF GOVERNORS
HELD ON WEDNESDAY 23 NOVEMBER 2016 IN THE CAYLEY ROOM, UNIVERSITY OF
WESTMINSTER, 309 REGENT STREET.**

PRESENT:	Professor G Petts (Chair)	Ms A Hookings
	Mr P Kyle	Mr T Hope
	Mr C Barnes	Professor A Hughes
	Mr D Batchelor	Professor M Kirkup
	Mr J Begg	Professor T Lamb
	Professor A Bligh	Professor A Linn
	Mr D Cheeseman	Dr A McNicholas
	Dr M Chondrogianni	Professor G Megson
	Dr S Courtenage	Mr G Morley
	Professor R Dannreuther	Mr P Murphy
	Professor D Dernie	Ms L Neil
	Ms L Duff	Mr K Patrick
	Dame K Dunnell	Ms E Rugg
	Ms S Enright	Mr D Shacklady
	Dr J Gimenez	Mr M Smith
	Mr S Hart	Ms F Thompson (UWSU)
	Ms K Hayes	
IN ATTENDANCE:	Mr D Burt (Clerk, Academic Council)	Dr C Murray
	Mrs E McMillan (Secretary)	Mrs E Standen
APOLOGIES:	Mrs R Bellamy-James	Dame M Hogg
	Ms V Can	Professor S Joss
	Dr D Conway	Professor K Mey
	Dr P Dwyer	Mr J Wates
	Mr A Ganguli	Mrs D Yeo

1. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 1.1. Apologies were noted as listed above.
- 1.2. The Vice-Chancellor, Chair of Academic Council, welcomed governors and members of Academic Council to the joint meeting.
- 1.3. The Vice-Chancellor advised participants of the following contextual information from HEFCE's Annual Provider Review guidance document (October 2016/29): *"It is not our intention that the governing body be drawn into quality management activities itself, but rather that it receives reports and challenges assurances from elsewhere in the provider. This does not alter the well-established relationships between governing bodies and senates or academic boards (or equivalent). The evidence on which an individual governing body's assurances are based, and the way in which it chooses to receive and challenge information, will be shaped by the particular arrangements in that provider. Each governing body is, therefore, responsible for determining the approach that it will*

take. For example, there is no standard template for reports or action plans and each governing body will determine its own requirements.”

- 1.4. The Vice-Chancellor reminded participants that the focus of the meeting is on the processes and methodologies and not the detailed outcomes of these processes.
- 1.5. Members of Academic Council, which is the supreme academic body at the University of Westminster (‘the University’) and has oversight of quality assessment activity, were asked to consider the annual report of quality assurance and enhancement activities (Document AC-COG 161123A) and the supporting evidence base and confirm to the Court of Governors (‘the Court’) that the assurance statements have been met.
- 1.6. Members of the Court of Governors were asked to consider the annual report of quality assurance and enhancement activities and the supporting evidence base and recommend to the Chair of the Court that he signs the assurance statements in the annual accountability return to HEFCE.

2. ASSURANCE STATEMENTS

- 2.1 The Academic Registrar reminded participants that HEFCE’s annual provider review replaces the Quality Assurance Agency review and that a judgement of ‘Meets requirements’ is a threshold assurance of standards and pre-requisite for the Teaching Excellence Framework.
 - 2.2 Participants were invited to provide a view on any documentation that they would add or remove from the quality assurance evidence base.
- 2.2.1 ACTION Participants** to consider what information they would like to see in the evidence base in future years and inform the Secretary to Academic Council/Clerk to the Court.

Assurance statement 2: Quality assessment methodologies

- 2.3 The Academic Registrar referred participants to the following documents:
 - Annual quality report 2015-16 (Document AC-COG 161123A)
 - Guide to quality assessment (Document AC-COG 161123B)
 - Quality assurance and enhancement handbook (Document AC-COG 161123D)
- 2.4 The Academic Registrar reported that the University’s methodologies are in common with other institutions and aligned with the QAA UK Quality Code for HE and the European Standards and Guidelines.

Assurance statement 3: Standards of awards

- 2.5 The Academic Registrar referred participants to the following documents:
 - Annual quality report 2015-16 (Document AC-COG 161123A)
 - External Examiner overview report (Document AC-COG 161123E)
- 2.6 The Academic Registrar informed members of the Court that External Examiner responses confirm the appropriateness of the University’s academic standards indicated by the marking of the award under consideration and the comparability of the standards of student performance with similar programmes in other UK institutions with which they are familiar. 99.6% of External Examiners score the University as Good, Very Good or Excellent in this regard.

Assurance statement 4: European standards and guidelines

- 2.7 The Academic Registrar informed participants that assurance on this statement will not be a requirement of the annual provider review until December 2017; however the University has completed the mapping exercise ahead of time.

- 2.8 The Academic Registrar referred participants to the following documents:
- Annual quality report 2015-16 (Document AC-COG 161123A)
 - Mapping of Part One of the European Standards and Guidelines (Document AC-COG 161123C)
- 2.9 Participants discussed the annual quality report and the reassuringly high percentage of positive External Examiner responses and reports. A governor commented that it would be beneficial for such reassurance from professionally qualified individuals to translate better to a public message about the University's strengths and performance.
- 2.10 In response to a query from a governor, the President, University of Westminster Students' Union discussed the student engagement with quality assurance processes and confirmed that this engagement is influential.
- 2.11 A governor raised the question of engagement between the Court and Academic Council. It was noted that governors are invited to attend each meeting of Academic Council as observers and that there is a member of Academic Council elected by the membership of Council to become a member also of the Court.

Assurance statement 1: Continuous improvement of the student academic experience and student outcomes

- 2.12 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) referred participants to the following documents:
- Annual quality report 2015-16 (Document AC-COG 161123A)
 - External Examiner overview report (Document AC-COG 161123E)
 - Annual monitoring stage 1 and 2 report 2014-15 (Document AC-COG 161123F)
 - Validation and review report 2014-15 (Document AC-COG 161123G)
 - Academic integrity report 2014-15 (AC-COG 161123H)
- 2.13 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) highlighted in particular the action plan accompanying the Annual quality report and informed participants that the key indicators and performance against benchmark is provided by HEFCE as part of the TEF process.
- 2.14 Participants noted that the University has taken a number of steps to improve our metrics, not least the Learning Futures programme, however we are not likely to see the outcomes of such activities for some time.
- 2.15 Participants discussed the timescale for the review of the University's portfolio and of viability of provision and the need to understand fully the characteristics of our students, in particular management information relating to retention and completion.
- 2.16 The Head, Centre for Teaching Innovation (CTI) briefed participants on the planned activities of this new Centre. He reported that the CTI, as a champion for learning and teaching and building on Learning Futures, will have a critical role to play in improving the student – and staff – experience.

3. SUMMING UP

- 3.1 The Vice-Chancellor invited participants to give their view on whether or not the assurance statements have been met.
- 3.2 **AGREED** Academic Council confirm to the Court that the University has met the four assurance statements.
- 3.3 **AGREED** Members of the Court recommend to the Chair of the Court that he signs the assurance statements in the annual accountability return to HEFCE.

APPROVED

- 3.4 The Vice-Chancellor suggested that he establishes a small working group to explore how governors might engage more fully with the quality assurance agenda through the academic year. Governors welcomed the suggestion.

The joint meeting concluded here and no other business was considered.