

MINUTES OF THE 248TH MEETING OF THE COURT OF GOVERNORS HELD ON WEDNESDAY 6 OCTOBER 2021, ROOM M416, MARYLEBONE CAMPUS AND VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

PRESENT:	Mrs D Yeo (Chair) Professor D Anand Mr J Bairamian (to Minute 248.11) Professor L Berry Dr P Bonfield Miss Z Butt, UWSU Mr D Cheeseman Dame K Dunnell Ms V Foster (to Minute 248.11) Ms S Hafeez Professor A Hughes	Professor G Meikle Ms H Owen Miss O Ponsford, UWSU Ms J Robson Professor F Ross Mr M Smith The Venerable Canon D Stanton Ms P Wales Ms MX Wang Mr S Wylie
IN ATTENDANCE:	Dr S Jarvis Mrs J Lamarque (minutes) Ms N Nelson (Minute 248.4)	Mr W Watson (Minute 248.7) Mr I Wilmot
APOLOGIES:	Mr J Cappock (Company Secretary) Mrs E McMillan (Clerk)	Ms L Phillips (Deputy Chair)

Clerk's note: This meeting of the Court of Governors was preceded by a briefing meeting which included a presentation from the UWSU Sabbatical Officers on their priorities for the year.

248.1. ANNOUNCEMENTS

- 248.1.1. The Chair of the Court of Governors welcomed all governors and regular attendees to the meeting. She also welcomed Jane Robson and Sara Hafeez to their first meeting as members of the Court of Governors, and Ian Wilmot who was attending as Acting University Secretary and Chief Operating Officer.
- 248.1.2. Members noted apologies as recorded above.
- 248.1.3. The Chair confirmed there were no requests to discuss the starred items or to raise matters other than those on the agenda.
- 248.1.4. The Chair briefed members on her activities since the last meeting, which included discussions with the Committee of University Chairs, Chairs of governing bodies for other London universities, the Vice-Chancellor, members of the executive, the Students' Union, Deputy Chairs to the Court and other governors, and a strategic fundraising workshop.
- 248.1.5. As this was her last Court meeting, the Chair thanked members for their support over the last three years.
- 248.1.6. **RATIFIED** Members supported the decision taken by Chair's action between meetings to delegate authority to policy authors to make any amendments necessary to apply the style guide on gender-neutral language to policies approved by the Court or its committees.

248.2. COURT OF GOVERNORS CODE OF CONDUCT

- 248.2.1. Members re-affirmed their commitment to the Court of Governors Code of Conduct (Document COG 211006A).

248.3. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Vice-Chancellor's periodic report

- 248.3.1. Members received and noted the Vice-Chancellor's report (Document COG 211006B).
- 248.3.2. The Vice-Chancellor briefed members on students' return to campus; recruitment; a University Executive Board (UEB) workshop with the Students' Union; and his recent meetings with the Secretary of State and Universities UK.
- 248.3.3. The Vice-Chancellor responded to members' queries about adoption of a Smart Working approach; increasing pension liabilities; and the possibility of changes to student loans for Arts subjects.

248.4. SAFETY, HEALTH AND WELLBEING UPDATE REPORT

- 248.4.1. Niamh Nelson, Head of Safety, Health and Wellbeing (SHW) gave an oral update on the work of the Being Safe, Feeling Safe Group and the meeting of the Safety, Health and Wellbeing Committee on 23 September 2021 (Document COG 211006C).
- 248.4.2. The Head of SHW informed members that the University carried out a colleague wellbeing survey over the summer and wellbeing measures are being put in place, with individual risk assessments for colleagues with complex needs.
- 248.4.3. The Head of SHW reported on the outcomes of surveys about the vaccination status of colleagues and students.
- 248.4.4. In response to a member's query, the Head of SHW informed members that University colleagues continued to meet with the contractor that manages Raffles House to discuss the building cladding and are reasonably satisfied with the assurances given.
- 248.4.5. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) for Employability and Global Engagement reported that colleagues will reflect on students' experiences of Welcome Week to inform planning for subsequent Welcome Weeks.

248.5. NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY (NSS) 2021 OUTCOMES REPORT

- 248.5.1. Members received and noted the National Student Survey 2021 outcomes report (Document COG 211006D).
- 248.5.2. Dr Sal Jarvis, DVC (Education) updated members on activity and enhancements since the survey took place.
- 248.5.3. Members noted that the recent UEB awayday focused on specific aspects of the NSS considering teaching quality, academic leadership roles, sharing best practice, employability, and academic support.
- 248.5.4. A member queried which committee oversees the Education Strategy including holding the executive to account, assessing the risk and ensuring interventions are effective. Members discussed the role of Academic Council, Teaching Committee and the Education Strategy Working Group. The DVC (Education) extended an invitation to governors to observe a Teaching Committee meeting.
- 248.5.5. In response to a member's query about whether independent governors – through Audit Committee or Governance and Nominations Committee should consider risks relating to the Education Strategy, the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that there is a mechanism in place to engage governors with these risks including involvement in the annual quality assurance discussion at Academic Council.
- 248.5.5.1. **ACTION Clerk to the Court** to confirm responsibilities for oversight of risks relating to the Education Strategy and effectiveness of interventions.

APPROVED

248.5.6. Members discussed with the executive professional development activities, Professional Development Reviews, course sizes, reputation and league tables and their potential impact on student engagement, student satisfaction, culture, communities of learning, NSS outcomes and employability.

248.6. FINANCE MATTERS

Management accounts report

248.6.1. The Director of Finance, Ian Wilmot, presented the management accounts for July 2021 – Period 13 (Document COG 211006E), which had been considered by UEB.

248.6.2. The Director of Finance confirmed that the outturn data is draft and subject to audit and presented highlights from the management accounts pack, briefing members on income, salary costs and pension liabilities.

248.6.3. The Director confirmed that the University completed the year to 31 July 2021 in a strong financial position.

248.7. REGENT STREET CINEMA

248.7.1. The Director of Finance, Simon Wylie (Chair, Regent Street Cinema Management Board) and Billy Watson (Executive Commercial Director, Regent Street Cinema), gave a presentation on the future strategy for the Regent Street Cinema (Document COG 211006F).

248.7.2. The Director of Finance thanked Simon Wylie for his leadership of the Board and informed members that the Executive Commercial Director joined the Cinema in March 2020.

248.7.3. Simon Wylie thanked the Executive Commercial Director and the Finance team for their help.

248.7.4. The UWSU President and student governor suggested that there are good opportunities for the Cinema to collaborate with the Students' Union.

248.8. RISK APPETITE FRAMEWORK REVIEW

248.8.1. Members considered proposed updates to the risk appetite framework (Document COG 211006G), which are recommended by the Audit Committee.

248.8.2. **APPROVED** Risk appetite framework to be updated as proposed, including the process for interim and formal reviews (Document COG 211006G).

248.9. EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW 2022

248.9.1. **AGREED** Effectiveness Review 2022 to be implemented as recommended by Governance and Nominations Committee (COG 211006H).

248.10. ARTICLES OF ASSOCIATION REVIEW 2021/22

248.10.1. **AGREED** Review of the Articles of Association to be implemented as recommended by Governance and Nominations Committee (Document COG 211006I).

248.11. STUDENTS' UNION STRATEGIC UPDATE

248.11.1. Zahra Butt, the UWSU President and student governor, presented an update on UWSU's recent activity (Document COG 211006J).

248.11.2. The UWSU President reported that UWSU is progressing an Engagement Strategy and the outcome of the Quality Students' Union Audit was 'Very Good' with elements of 'Excellent'.

APPROVED

- 248.11.3. She also reported that the UWSU EDI plan is in line with the University's EDI Strategy, UWSU has received funding from the Quintin Hogg Trust for four strands of EDI enhancement work, and UWSU have appointed an EDI consultant.

248.12. MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND MATTERS ARISING

- 248.12.1. **AGREED** Members confirmed that the minutes of the Court of Governors meeting held on 17 July 2021 (Document COG 211006K) are an accurate record.

- 248.12.2. Members received and noted the summary of actions and matters arising from previous meetings (Document COG 211006L).

- 248.12.3. **Adoption of the IHRA working definition of antisemitism (Actions 246.3.8.1 and 246.3.8.2, Minute 247.1.12)** The Chair briefed members the recent correspondence from the petitioners (Document COG 211006R) and members discussed the petitioners' response in detail.

Members noted that the petitioners' response did not provide examples or evidence of freedom of expression being curtailed at the University, or of existing policies on racism and discrimination being challenged or diminished, following adoption of the definition.

Members discussed the Freedom of Expression Working Group, which was recently established by UEB to review how the University protects freedom of expression within the law for our academic community (students, colleagues, visitors, and the institution itself), and to explore where policies and practice may be enhanced to protect academic freedom as well as to create an environment free from prejudice, bigotry, and discrimination.

AGREED Members upheld the decision taken on 17 March 2021 to adopt the IHRA definition of antisemitism.

AGREED The Court will receive reports from the Freedom of Expression Working Group and will act should the outcomes of the Group impact on the policies and other matters within the remit of the Court.

- 248.12.4. **University budget 2021/22 (Action 247.6.5.1)** The Director of Finance provided a report (available in the Court of Governors online Reading Room) that draws from Higher Education Statistics Agency data and reports where the University is operating in line with benchmark in terms of staff costs.

248.13. DRAFT SCHEDULE OF BUSINESS 2021/22

- 248.13.1. **AGREED** Members confirmed the schedule of business for 2021/22 (Document COG 211006M).

248.14. RISK MANAGEMENT POLICY

- 248.14.1. **APPROVED** Risk Management Policy (Document COG 211006N) to be implemented with effect from 7 October 2021, as recommended by the Audit Committee.

248.15. COURT EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ANNUAL UPDATE REPORT 2020/21

- 248.15.1. Members noted the Court Equality and Diversity annual update report (Document COG 211006O), previously considered by the Governance and Nominations Committee.

- 248.15.2. Members supported a member's suggestion that Court vacancies are shared with government departments and local authorities in and around London, as well as to corporate firms as these and other public agencies encourage their staff to participate in the wider community.

248.16. SUMMARY OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL DECISIONS 2020/21

- 248.16.1. Members noted the summary of Academic Council decisions for 2020/21 (Document COG 211006P).

APPROVED

248.17. ANNUAL DATA RETURN SUMMARY REPORT

248.17.1. Members noted the Annual Data Return summary report (Document COG 211006Q), previously considered by the Audit Committee.

248.18. USE OF THE COMPANY SEAL

248.18.1. Members noted that the Company Seal had not been used since the last meeting.

248.19. DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

- Wednesday 24 November 2021 3.00pm¹
- Wednesday 16 March 2022 3.30pm
- Wednesday 25 May 2022 3.30pm
- Wednesday 13 July 2022 3.30pm

Formal meetings will take place onsite with the option of participation via Microsoft Teams and may be preceded by a briefing/training session.

248.20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

248.20.1. On behalf of the Court of Governors, Matthew Smith thanked the Chair for her service to the University, the Court and its committees.

¹ Start time corrected after the meeting