University of Exeter
COUNCIL STRATEGIC AWAY DAY

MINUTES AND ACTIONS – APPROVED BY COUNCIL
30 October 2024
10am-5.30pm
South Cloisters, St Luke's Campus

NB text in BLACK for publication; text in BLUE will be redacted for publication

CONTENTS:
Council Meeting

Attendees:

MEMBERS PRESENT

Quentin Woodley	Pro-Chancellor and Chair
Professor Lisa Roberts	President and Vice-Chancellor
Professor Tim Quine	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience)
Professor Dan Charman	Senior Vice-President and Provost
Sir Richard Atkins	Pro-Chancellor and Deputy Chair of Council
Sally Cabrini	Pro-Chancellor and Senior Independent Governor
Damaris Anderson-Supple	Independent Member
Nicholas Cheffings	Independent Member
Andrew Greenway	Independent Member
Karime Hassan	Independent Member
Professor Malcom Skingle	Independent Member
Alison Reed	Independent Member
Tim Weller	Independent Member *(online)*

Glenn Woodcock	Independent Member
Sarah Matthews-DeMers	Independent Member
Dr Sarah Hodge	Senate Representative
Professor Sue Prince	Senate Representative
Elaine Cordy	Professional Services Representative
Alex Martin	Guild President, Exeter Students' Guild
Connie Chilcott	President Exeter, Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union

SECRETARY

Mike Shore-Nye	Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary

APOLOGIES

Rebecca Boomer-Clark	Independent Member
Ali Chambers	Chief Executive Officer, Exeter Students' Guild
Salam Katbi	Independent Member (until 12.30pm)
Professor Karen Knapp	Senate Representative (from 2pm)
Professor Adrian Harris	Standing Attendee (until 3.30pm)

STAFF IN ATTENDENCE

Dave Stacey	Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Executive Divisional Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Commercial Services
Imelda Rogers	Executive Divisional Director of Human Resources (online)
Dr Jeremy Diaper	Assistant Director, Governance (minutes)

IN ATTENDANCE

Minute Item 3 – Admissions 2024: Forecasts, Confirmation & Clearing Plans

Alicia O'Grady	Executive Divisional Director, External Engagement and Global
Professor Richard Follet	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Global Engagement

Minute Item 8 – Faculty of Health and Life Sciences, Strategic Faculty Away Day

Professor Sallie Lamb (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean)

Professor Jo Bowtell (Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor)

Professor Richard Holland (Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Dean of the UoE Medical School)

Professor Rich Smith (Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Planning and Projects)

01. Chair's Welcome and Declarations of Interest

1.01 the Chair welcomed Council members to the meeting and noted that:

1.01.1 apologies had been received from Rebecca Boomer-Clark and Ali Chambers for the duration of the Council Strategic Away Day.

1.01.2 apologies had also been received from Salam Katbi, Professor Karen Knapp, and Professor Adrian Harris for the beginning of the meeting but they would join later in the afternoon.

1.01.3 the members of the Faculty of Health and Life Sciences who would join the meeting for the Strategic Faculty Away Day.

02. President and Vice-Chancellor's Strategic Introduction and Strategic Look ahead at 2024-25
(CNL/11/24-25 Strictly Confidential)

02.1 the President and Vice-Chancellor noted that the Academic Year 2023-24 had been a difficult period for the University and UK Higher Education sector as a result of wider geopolitical issues, financial issues and industrial action. Nevertheless, it was noted that the University had also had some notable successes that would enable continued progress towards delivery of Strategy 2030;

02.2 key achievements in 2023/24 included: ranking 10th globally in the Times Higher Education Impact rankings and 38th for International Outlook in the Times Higher Education World University Rankings; joining the prestigious World Universities Network; continued excellent performance in research awards and income, including improved research cost recovery of 72% (compared to 67% in 2021/22);

02.3 the University was operating in the context of an increasingly uncertain and volatile external environment in the Academic Year 2024/25 and it was imperative to adapt and change to address the challenges ahead. There remained a pressing need to deliver efficiencies to maintain the financial position of the University in the face of significant sector-wide funding challenges. A number of institutions had publicly announced they were expecting substantial financial deficits including the Universities of Sheffield (c. £50m), Sussex (c. £44m), Cardiff (c. £30m) and York (c. £24m);

02.4 key priority areas for 2024/25 included: enhancing international student recruitment; driving forward global reputation, rankings and partnerships; improving education, student experience and research quality; enabling strategy 2030; delivering financial efficiencies; increasing the pace of development of new programmes;

02.5 in relation to the UK HE sector landscape and new government:

02.5.1 there had been a shift in the tone of engagement with the new UK Labour government and a greater emphasis on the value of University education and research;

02.5.2 UUK had published a blueprint for financial sustainability which presented a package of reforms to stabilise, mobilise and maximise the contribution of UK universities. The blueprint reaffirmed the need for a sector-wide transformation and focus on increased efficiency;

02.5.3 the 2024 autumn budget was expected to deliver significant tax changes and measures to raise revenue for government, but there had been no indication from either the Russell Group or UUK that the HE sector was expecting a material intervention to address the significant funding challenges facing Universities. There was the possibility of a modest uplift to home tuition fees but this was not anticipated to exceed £10,500;

02.5.4 Skills England had recently been launched in July 2024 to meet the skills need across all regions over the next decade. The UK government had announced that level 7 apprenticeships (equivalent to a masters) would no longer be funded by the Growth and Skills Levy, which could impact on the University's planned growth in Degree Apprenticeship income;

02.5.5 the new UK government had indicated there were no plans to reverse the new rules introduced for student visa dependants in January 2024, which would result in a sustained impact on international students' ability to bring family members to the UK as dependents;

02.5.6 Devon and Torbay's devolution deal would result in the University being one of the few Russell Group organisations not situated within a region that was part of a Mayoral of Combined Authorities and could result in a risk regarding reduced investment from government;

02.5.7 it would be important to remain alert to potential changes to the size and shape of the sector, through mergers, acquisitions and increased sector collaboration. It was understood that the Department for Education had engaged in initial discussions with Universities UK to reflect on bold and transformative measures that may be required to put universities on a firm financial footing and secure their long-term future;

02.5.8 it was anticipated that any additional support from the UK government would be predicated on a commitment to delivering economies of scale, generating efficiencies, and transforming current modes of operation and ways of working. Other options which might be explored included shared use of research facilities;

02.6 in relation to industrial action:

02.6.1 institutional performance in the National Student Survey (NSS) had been impacted by the Marking and Assessment boycott. UCEA's offer of a 2.5% pay uplift to be implemented in two phases during the 2024/25 year had been rejected by UCU who had invoked the new JNCHES dispute resolution procedure. There remained the possibility of further industrial action in 2024-25;

02.7 in relation to Strategy 2030:

02.7.1 the University remained committed to the overarching mission and ambition of Strategy 2030, but there would be a need to recalibrate on the pace and scale in light of the challenging financial landscape. The University would continue to focus on delivering scale, efficiency and margin across all activities;

02.7.2 it would be important to ensure that the University's greener, healthier, fairer strategy underpinned all of the University's activity. The most recent global partnerships in India (IAT Delhi) and Arizona State University (ASU), for example, were focused specifically on the University's greener and fairer mission. The curriculum for change programme would also be aiming to embed Sustainability into the UG curriculum;

02.8 in relation to Transnational Education (TNE):

02.8.1 the importance of TNE on global rankings and reputation, including: enhancing brand recognition and profile to improve QS and THE world rankings. It was noted that the University currently had no major global presence unlike the majority of the Russell Group and that TNE enabled engagement with senior government, education, research and business stakeholders, and improvement within academic and employer engagement;

02.8.2 TNE activity also enabled financial benefits through income generation, increased size and diversity of international student population and a reduction in the University's carbon footprint;

02.8.3 that it would be beneficial to develop a clear focus on the strategic aims, objectives and intended outcomes from TNE investment activity;

02.8.4 it was highlighted that whilst a couple of institutions (including Bristol University and Durham University) were still above the University in the QS league table and had less TNE Students in 2022/23, they had either invested heavily in enhancing their global reputation or developing larger research cohorts to build research power. The University needed to foster a multifactorial approach to development of global reputation, including growth in research power, educational excellence and TNE partnership activity in order to enhance its global brand and reputation;

02.8.5 as TNE partnerships and securing a global top 100 QS position would be critical to enhancing the University's global presence and brand it would be important to develop a clearer sense of long-term strategic vision for TNE partnerships in relation to wider global opportunities;

02.8.6 571,000 students were currently undertaking a UK degree through TNE (66% UG, 34% PG). The University only had 190 TNE students in 2022/23 which was markedly behind the rest of the Russell Group and included articulation and progression agreements. A number of Universities that had secured larger TNE student recruitment numbers achieved this through delivery in country and also had a higher ranking in QS, including Liverpool, Nottingham and Queen Mary's University;

02.9 in relation to international recruitment:

02.9.1 it would be important to retain ambition on international recruitment, whilst ensuring realistic targets aligned with strategic growth areas in Engineering, Computer Science and AI. It was reaffirmed that the University remained close to the bottom of the Russell Group for Postgraduate Taught international recruitment so there remained opportunities to take market share from competitors;

02.9.2 the student number plans would be reconsidered in the light of the current drop in international student recruitment;

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02.11 in relation to education and the student experience:

02.11.1 a key area of focus was maintaining institutional improvements in NSS. The Pro-Chancellor and Deputy Chair of Council would be chairing a series of deep dives into Assessment and Feedback and a further report and series of recommendations would be scheduled for Council approval;

02.11.2 other key areas of focus included the Curriculum for Change programme and increasing teaching efficiency through programme and module rationalisation; diversification of the education portfolio via online, CPD and executive education; responding to the changes to level 7 Degree Apprenticeship income and pivoting to selling directly to students for Life-Long Learning Entitlements or to employers for Degree Apprenticeships; enhancing the quality of research income and cost recovery alongside enhancing research quality and REF outputs;

02.12 the strategic imperative to keep apprised of the latest technological innovations in the private sector and learning from emerging best practice in relation to the latest digital enhancements including Generative AI) was affirmed. It was noted that the University had formed a strategic alliance with Arizona State University, one of the world's leading universities in digital technology, innovation and online provision which would provide further opportunities to learn from wider sector best practice;

02.13 in relation to business engagement and industry partnerships:

02.13.1 in the context of the challenging Higher Education environment and increasing international competition there was a need to consider bolder and more innovative approaches to engagement with business and industry, including exploring private sector partnerships;

02.13.2 as there were only c. 200 small and medium enterprises across the South-West region it would be important to develop a more ambitious approach to engaging with industry internationally. It was highlighted that there were excellent strategic opportunities to expand the University's engagement with business and industry by drawing on existing sustainability, climate change and ESG expertise, including the expansion of the University's degree apprenticeship programme;

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02.14 the importance of the following: looking outside the sector to draw on wider expertise and best practice from big tech and consultancy companies; recognising the need to keep-up-to speed with rapid technological change and latest developments in AI; supporting the mental health and wellbeing of students in light of the continued challenges of the cost-of-living crisis.

ACTION: to schedule an update report for Council outlining key findings and proposed recommendations for approval from the series of deep dives on Assessment and Feedback chaired by the Pro-Chancellor and Deputy Chair of Council.

ACTION: to schedule a horizon scanning and scenario planning session at Council in May 2025 to enable consideration of the potential strategic implications of increasing pressure on HE finances in various regional, national and international scenarios, such as continued long term reduction in international students, financial insolvency of individual providers, and shift towards mergers, consolidations and acquisitions of institutions.

03. Global Rankings: Strategic Approach to enhancing QS World University Ranking (CNL/12/24-25 Strictly Confidential)

03.1 the University's ranking was lagging in international league tables where the methodology was dominated by reputation, as opposed to research quality and citations. For example, the University was currently ranked 169th in the World in the QS league table, which compared to the Leiden ranking in which the University was ranked 38th in the world;

03.2 other comparator institutions such as Birmingham and Lancaster were ranked higher than the University in the QS league tables, even though they performed worse in terms of research quality;

03.3 the QS league table ranking was determined by perceptions of research, teaching and employment outcomes, coupled with research impact as measured by citations. The continued focus of Chinese Universities on international rankings and the QS league table in particular was one of the determining factors behind its strategic importance;

03.4 government and funding body scholarship opportunities were increasingly linked to QS ranking. In China the Ministry of Education had determined that funding for students studying overseas necessitated the institution having a top 100 position in the QS league table. Likewise, in August 2024, the Malaysian government also determined that sponsorship for students would only be provided to those studying at a top 50 University in the QS league table;

03.5 the number of institutions included within the QS World University rankings had significantly increased in recent years, with the 20th edition featuring 1,500 institutions across 104 locations including most of the leading Latin American Universities, and institutions in Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates.

03.6 the Chinese government had significantly increased the level of funding in Higher Education with billions invested into enhancing research strength and increasing the number of research citations. This was part of a strategic drive to ensure Chinese universities were ranked highly in international league tables to solidify their reputation as amongst the top institutions in the world. A number of Higher Education institutions in Australia were struggling to maintain their previous dominance as a result of the significant level of investment from China and South East Asia;

03.7 the employer reputation survey provided an opportunity to influence rankings via local and regional employers. The number of employers engaging in the QS employer survey more widely had significantly increased from less than 10,000 respondents a few years ago to over 40,000. The University continued to enhance efforts to secure nominations and positively influence perception of the institution over a wide range of other global institutions;

03.8 further work was being undertaken to examine the data from the Academic Ranking of World Universities (ARWU) to improve the institutional understanding and develop more insights as it was recognised the University should be higher in this league table;

03.9 in terms of relative performance in the 2025 QS World University Rankings the University had outperformed competitors in relation to International Faculty, International Students, International Research Network and Sustainability, but this only amounted to 20% in total of the overall ranking. The University performed less well in areas that had a larger impact on the overall ranking including academic reputation (30%), employer reputation (15%), citations per faculty (20%) and employment outcomes (5%);

03.10 both academic reputation and employer reputation were assessed via a questionnaire asking individuals to assess the employer, graduates and quality of education. A deep dive was being undertaken on employer outcomes to assess this in further detail;

03.11 in relation to the academic reputation survey:

03.11.1 the global academic reputation survey asked academics to provide their informed view on which institutions excelled in the disciplines that they were familiar with. Each academic was required to nominate 10 institutions from their own country which they believed produced top research in their field of study, but they were not allowed to nominate their own institution;

03.11.2 it was important to raise wider awareness of the specific criteria for the academic reputation survey, as it was not commonly understood that all of the nominations that were shared had an equal ranking and that Professors did not have a higher weighting than Early Career Researchers or that lab technicians and professional services staff were also eligible to contribute;

03.11.3 the University had maintained a relatively stable position in the face of increasing global competition. Of the 90 institutions included in the QS league tables, the University was currently ranked 23rd of 90 and in the top third of institutions, but it was recognised that there remained a strategic opportunity for further improvement;

03.11.4 that it would be important to make significant gains in the number of international nominations secured for the category of Engineering and Technology. The investment in Data Science and new engineering programme would help with raising wider awareness of the institution;

03.11.5 in terms of the split of nominations, the University currently secured c. 46% from domestic institutions and c. 54% from international institutions. There was a need to enhance the current scale of nominations, as Exeter was currently the smallest in its benchmark set with the lowest proportion of international nominations. This was particularly important to address as international nominations carried a higher weighting;

03.11.6 an increase in the number of international nominations would see a significant increase in overall international ranking. Other competitor institutions (Eg Liverpool) only had a marginally larger number of nominations but ranked significantly higher, which affirmed the strategic importance of developing an institution-wide approach to ensure there are sustainable systems and approaches in place for securing more nominations as a small increase in nominations could have a significant proportional impact;

03.11.7 in spite of the fact most of the leading Latin American Universities featured (c. 418 institutions) in the QS league table, the University had received limited nominations from this area;

03.11.8 more nominations were also required from Chinese institutions, who were the biggest partner of international students. Through TNE partnership activity in China it was intended that the University would grow its footprint and enable increased brand recognition and global visibility, which would result in further nominations. The University's highest share of global nominations were currently secured in Australia, which was partly attributable to the

QUEX institute which was a pioneering collaboration between the University of Queensland and the University of Exeter. This reaffirmed that professional long-standing and deep-research based partnerships helped enhance global reputation and awareness;

03.11.9 the University had submitted more invitations to individuals to participate in the 2025 QS survey than ever before, but a number of individuals had been nominated recently and were therefore ineligible as although the Academic Reputation and Employer reputation metrics were run annually they took into account responses from the previous five year. A more robust database documenting the timeframes for when individuals would become eligible to be nominated to participate was in the process of development, including identifying which academics nominated 6-8 years ago could be invited to participate again and analysis of where nominations for the University have typically been received over the last 5 years;

03.11.10 it was noted that every discipline area had a different set of weightings. For the humanities, citations were weighted significantly less to account for outputs which were typically cited less frequently. For example, in History the academic reputation survey was double-weighted vs other STEMM subjects, which meant it was easier to leverage double-weighting and to secure a strong outcome for core humanities subjects in Arts and Humanities and Social Sciences;

03.11.11 a UEB oversight group, supported by the Ranking Working Group had been established to Develop a strategic plan for building the University's global profile through consistent and coherent communications and engagement to enhance the University's academic reputation;

03.11.12 colleagues were being reminded to update their Scopus, Google Scholar and ORCID to ensure they were affiliated with the University and to use social media channels to reshare their research and drive wider engagement;

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4. Annual Performance Report, Strategy 2030 KPIs and Targets for the Academic Year 2024-25
(CNL/13/24-25, CNL/13a/24-25 and CNL/13b/24-25) A presentation (CNL/13/c/24-25 Strictly Confidential) was also delivered on the day and has been filed with the record of the meeting;

04.1 the Senior Vice-President and Provost delivered a presentation which accompanied the first annual performance report to Council and provided a performance assessment for the 19 KPIs against institutional targets for Strategy 2030. The report also recommended a series of institutional KPI targets for 2024-25 and highlighted where the 2030 target was at risk or under review;

04.2 the performance framework was a key element of the Strategy Delivery Plan that had been agreed with Council in July 2023. The KPIs and the performance framework had been finalised and approved at Council in May 2024 and it had been agreed that Council would routinely receive an annual performance report in October;

04.3 the annual performance report was presented to Council to provide an opportunity to reflect on the direction, progress and trajectory towards Strategy 2030 for each of the KPIs, set targets for the 2024-25 academic year and identify any areas of particular success or concern to help drive priorities;

04.4 in relation to the KPIS it was noted that further discussion would be scheduled at Council in

February 2025 to reflect on whether there were alternative measures in relation to the following:

04.4.1 *Digital*: the Digital Engagement KPI was currently being reviewed under the leadership of the new Director of Digital Transformation as it was felt that the current KPI did not adequately reflect the University's digital aspirations. It would be important to develop a more appropriate measure that was closely aligned with the University's institutional ambitions, which might include for example the number of students studying online; development of online programmes; delivery of executive education or CPD; or a measure of Professional Services digital efficiency;

04.4.2 *Operating Surplus*: further consideration was being given to changing the measure of Financial Sustainability to an Operating Cash Flow Measure rather than operating surplus;

04.5 Council reviewed the KPI performance and key priority areas to address in order to achieve 2030 targets and noted the following in discussion:

04.5.1 in relation to % international:

a) that the 2030 target of 40% was extremely challenging in the current volatile and uncertain international student recruitment market. This target may need to be recalibrated to identify a suitably ambitious target, whilst ensuring that the University continued to budget in alignment with more conservative expectations;

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04.5.2 in relation to average fee per student:

a) this provided one measure of the financial margin on education and the development and delivery of further portfolio diversification (eg online, Executive Education, TNE) was anticipated to impact on the delivery of this KPI in future years;
b) further consideration would be undertaken by Council to determine if this was the right measure and target as it did not currently equate to a financial margin.

04.5.3 in relation to the Net Zero target

a) the trajectory towards net zero 2030 would need to be reviewed in 2024/25 in light of the recent change in formal methodology to include international student travel in emissions, the move away from offsetting and the costs associated with decarbonisation of estate.
b) further discussion would be facilitated at a future Council meeting to reflect on the net zero target and the development of an impactful institutional contribution to tackling climate change more widely;

04.6 in relation to the 2024/25 targets:

04.6.1 the 2024/25 target for % international was considered ambitious but realistically achievable based on the latest up-to-date market data and sector intelligence;

04.6.2 the 2024/25 target for % research income per FTE had been stretched beyond the original target to ensure it was suitably ambitious and continued to drive departmental activity and behaviours;

04.6.3 as the Race Equality Charter bronze award and Athena Swan institutional silver award had already been achieved it would be important to reflect on how progress towards achieving institutional silver and gold awards respectively could be measured in the interim years. It was noted that there was a subset of KPIs which would enable clearer focus on monitoring progress, but that the timeframes for achieving Race Equality Charter gold award were constrained by the overarching process and it would not be feasible to achieve by 2030 irrespective of the action undertaken by the University;

04.6.4 that as Council had recently approved the KPIs in May 2024 it would be important to avoid adding to the 19 KPIs;

04.6.5 that the QS ranking target for 2030/31 would need to be appropriately recalibrated later this academic year to ensure the target remained realistic, whilst ensuring that the change to the timeframe did not change the overall scale of ambition to reach the top 100. In terms of the 2024/25 target it was noted that this should be changed to 150-169 to avoid setting a target which accepted worse performance;

04.6.6 in order to achieve the 2024/25 target for excellent academic experience (NSS), it would be critical to improve areas of underperformance including Assessment and Feedback. That historically there had been a lot of actions undertaken surrounding NSS but this had not embedded a continuous upward trajectory of continuous improvement in the NSS. An NSS improvement strategy group had been constituted which was being co-chaired by the Senior Vice-President & Registrar and Secretary and Senior Vice-President and Provost.

04.07 the following was noted in discussion:

04.07.1 as a general working principle it would be important to ensure that when setting targets of the forthcoming academic year these were not worse than the previous year other than in exceptional circumstances and when there was a clear and justifiable rationale. This would be important to set a clear institutional signal and ensure the University was continuously aiming for improvement on an annual basis;

04.07.2 in the increasingly challenging financial environment the University was operating in it further consideration may need to be given to whether the targets reflected financial margin and efficiencies alongside financial revenue;

04.07.3 consideration of the annual performance report would continue to be supplemented by additional assurance reports to Council in key areas, including research, education and global which would provide an opportunity to review progress in closer detail;

04.07.4 that it was recognised that the ‘People’ measures were particularly focused on ‘inclusivity’ (including gender pay gap, % professoriate female, Race Equality Charter, and Athena Swan), and that there was currently no consideration of the 9 protected characteristics or wider staff perception of working at the University. There were a series of WICC subgroups which had oversight of protected characteristics (including disability, race and gender) which could be surfaced in wider discussions on particular strategic discussions on EDI, culture and inclusion rather than within the institutional KPIs;

ACTION: that a rag rated system would be incorporated in the template to provide a clearer visual summary of progress against the 19 KPIs and to signpost in red where the target would require recalibration.

AGREED: to approve the 2024/25 institutional KPI targets, subject to amendments to the QS ranking target.

AGREED: that the 2024/25 institutional KPI target for QS ranking would be amended to 150-169 to clearly signal that the Council recognised the importance of not falling further behind in the rankings.

AGREED: that a further discussion on the 'review and reset' of Strategy 2030 would be scheduled in February 2025 which would reflect on appropriate recalibration of 2030 targets, any required changes to institutional KPI measures alongside the long-term strategic implications of financial challenges facing the sector on successful delivery of strategy 2030.

05. Supply and Demand Review of Learning Environments to Support Strategic Ambitions (CNL/14/24-25 Strictly Confidential) and a presentation delivered on the day which has been filed with the record of the meeting (CNL/14a/24-25 Confidential)

05.01 availability of adequate and sufficient learning spaces was a key enabler of the University's Strategy 2030 objectives, including focus on student growth, efficient delivery, and an engaged learning experience which would contribute to NSS improvements;

05.02 over the last 10 years the University had increased the non-residential estate by 16%, whilst students numbers had grown by 69%. This had been accommodated through densification of spaces, resulting in an estate which was 40% more efficient than the Russell Group average;

05.03 the University needed to continue to evolve its estate to support its future growth and shift from passive learning in traditional lecture theatres, to active learning in group tables and flexible furniture. This required more space per student and was restricted by capacity in key areas;

05.04 following Council approval of the reshaped capital plan in early 2024, it had been identified that a more detailed supply and demand analysis was required to ratify the high-level space requirements and establish the quantity and mix of learning spaces required across each of the three campuses;

05.05 a high-level space model has been developed, incorporating student growth projections (adjusted to reflect 2024/25 recruitment trends) and assumptions from the University's emerging Curriculum for Change and Portfolio Efficiencies strategy including proposed changes to the academic year (teaching over three terms) and consolidation of smaller modules into larger, more immersive on-campus experiences. To ensure robust analysis, we engaged CPB, an external consultancy to assist with the modelling, provide comparative insights and best practices;

05.6 the modelling had determined that on the Streatham campus the timetable was at capacity in terms of total number of sessions and there was a poor fit between group and room size which pushed activity into larger spaces and compounding timetabling challenges and limiting student experience due to incompatible teaching environments. Streatham's demand for small groups often overflowed into medium-sized rooms, straining overall capacity and had led to a reliance on inappropriate spaces like Northcott Theatre for larger groups which had attracted negative student feedback;

05.07 at St Luke's there was lower overall demand and capacity was available in certain spaces, but key spaces had significant peak demand and the largest cohorts were now larger than the biggest space. In Penryn overall supply and demand remain balanced with some capacity depending on needs;

05.08 the issues surrounding availability of learning spaces and timetabling constraints would become an impediment to growth and implementation of C4C efficiency and pedagogical enhancements if not address;

05.09 key new campus space requirements to deliver our Curriculum for Change strategy and planned growth to 2030 included:

a) *Streatham:* 26 medium and 8 large additional active learning spaces (5,000 sqm total) were needed. There are limited opportunities to combine the smallest rooms and it is likely newly constructed space is best suited to this requirement;

b) *St Luke's:* One larger learning space to accommodate growth in vocational health education and three medium spaces are needed, totalling 1,000 sqm. Potential conversions include repurposing 242 sqm of IT workspace in South Cloisters;

c) *Penryn***:** Existing spaces can be repurposed to accommodate proposed changes;

d) *Specialist Spaces:* A more detailed review is required across all specialist areas, but there is a strong case for consolidating activity to a single new super lab in Exeter of c. 1,800 square meters (c. 300 capacity) to significantly enhance efficiencies and create capacity for future growth. Further exploration and options analysis would be required to determine whether additional lab space should be located at St Luke's or Streatham;

05.10 in discussion:

05.10.01 that it would be important for any future capital developments to incorporate full ongoing cost within business case, including: heating, lighting and long term maintenance costs. The benefit of new builds was that planned maintenance could be accurately incorporated in costing;

05.10.02 that in terms of widening access and participation it would be important to ensure that the future pedagogical delivery did not impede the learning of students unable to afford their own electronic devices;

05.10.03 when additional investment in teaching space had previously been deferred it had resulted in the requirement to lengthen the teaching day, dissatisfaction amongst the academic community and restrictions to pedagogical delivery;

05.10.04 high-quality, well-designed and pedagogically enhancing learning facilities were a key expectation of international students and would be critical in increasing international student recruitment in an increasingly competitive environment;

05.10.05 that it would be important to ensure there was corresponding high-quality additional student spaces (including social spaces and catering provisions) to ensure an excellent wider student experience on campus;

05.10.06 accessibility requirements would need to be considered carefully to ensure students were timetabled into appropriate facilities and that teaching sessions were well-designed from the outset to avoid any retrospective changes and to ensure space was effectively utilised;

05.10.07 that it would be important to sweat assets more creatively and draw on space utilisation data alongside qualitative feedback from students on the user experience;

05.10.08 the continued need to actively reflect on wider drivers to secure financial sustainability of the sector and potential impact on space utilisation from direction of travel towards mergers, acquisitions and shared services (including research and lab facilities);

05.10.09 in light of constraints on the current timetable, further consideration could also be given to whether a more innovative approach to Degree Apprenticeship teaching could be adopted;

05.10.11 in addition to the pressures on teaching space it was also important to reflect on the increasing pressures on examination spaces and ensuring appropriate space for students with individual learning plans and specialist requirements;

05.10.12 that with regards to timetabling, further consideration could be given to scheduling more classes for students to travel from Streatham to St Luke's campus and vice versa;

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AGREED: to finalise modelling of the specialist spaces which requires more detailed analysis due to the different activity types that can be accommodated in the various spaces.

AGREED: that further analysis would be presented to Council on the timing and potential impact of the Strategy 2030 Teaching Portfolio efficiencies and Curriculum for Change implementation on ability to adapt spaces in line with demand.

AGREED: Consolidate feedback and refine analysis to assess optimum delivery options for new space within existing estate and present to Council in February 2025 alongside an update on the Capital Plan and affordability and phasing considerations.

AGREED: Complete the more detailed review of specialist space requirements and their potential solutions.

06. Chair's Update on Council Performance and Effectiveness (CNL/15/24-25 Strictly Confidential)

06.01 at the beginning of the Academic Year 2022/23, three success metrics had been presented for Council to ensure continued focus on the University achieving the following outcomes, including: i) increasing the University's impact and reputation; ii) strengthening of financial resilience; iii) improving the University's strategic position;

06.02 Council were reminded of the effectiveness framework which had been previously agreed which was based on the premise that effective boards made outstanding decisions and excellent and timely interventions, which was in turn enabled by a high-performance culture and well-designed governance and information systems;

06.03 Council were reminded of the effectiveness framework which had been previously agreed based on the premise that effective boards made outstanding decisions and excellent and timely interventions, which was in turn enabled by a high-performance culture and well-designed governance and information systems;

06.04 the Chair provided an overview of areas of effective decision making in the Academic Year 2023/24, including: Enabling strategy; Capital Strategy; ADA Innovation Centre; Draft 24/25 Budget; Reprofiling international student numbers; Global Reputation; Council Assurance Review;

06.05 it was noted that there been a number of enhancements to Council governance processes in the Academic Year 2023-24:

06.05.01 enhancing Council's review process of the annual budget and final budget approval moved to October to enable consideration of final admissions position and cost efficiencies;

06.05.02 the development of a cascaded set of cascaded KPIs for all critical Strategy 2030 activities that Council and the University can use to monitor delivery and emerging risks;

06.05.03 implementation of the recommended actions of the Council Assurance review, including constitution of new Council sub-committees in the Academic Year 2024-25

06.05.04 enhancing optimal use of time in board meetings and business scheduling to ensure Focus on decision making, areas for improvement, key challenges and risks and strategic issues;

06.05.05 utilising Council awaydays to build knowledge and encourage teamwork;

06.06 it was noted that there been a number of enhancements to Council processes, including: recruitment of new members, induction process and improved board papers and circulation of papers in advance;

06.07 the areas where Council had been less effective in 2023/24 and areas of continued improvement in the forthcoming academic year, including a continued focus on consistency of high-quality board papers and ensuring sufficient time for discussion and debate on key strategic issues;

06.08 that the primary purpose of the newly constituted Council committees was to enable a more informed, detailed and impactful discussion at Council and to debate and discuss early versions of Part I Council Papers.

06.09 the Chair noted that a new programme of guest dinner speakers was being developed for Council members to hear directly from leading researchers at Council dinners. The inaugural talk would be delivered by Professor Tim Lenton (founding Director of the Global Systems Institute and Chair in Climate Change and Earth System Science).

07. Update on the Parliamentarian's Guide to Climate Change (CNL/15/24-25 Strictly Confidential)

07.01 the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Business Engagement and Innovation) was invited to join the meeting to provide an update on the recently published Parliamentarian's Guide to Climate Change. The publication had been produced by the University in partnership with Peers for the Planet (a cross-party group which included many parliamentarians active on climate and nature);

07.02 the publication aimed to provide authoritative scientific evidence and analysis to help guide politicians and decision makers in delivery of vital climate and nature targets. It included world-leading climate experts from the University, the Met Office, two UN High-level Climate Champions and a chapter from Professor Lord Stern;

07.03 the publication had been launched on Wednesday 16 October 2024 in the House of Commons and copies had been issued to every member of the House of Lords. There had been strong levels of attendance and engagement including the Chair of Committee on Climate Change and the Minister for Climate Change.

Closed Minute – Confidential

07.05 a conference on Climate Science was also being scheduled for summer 2025 to bring together ministers, government, Confederation of British Industry (CBI), GLOBE and other parliamentary groups to call upon politicians to work across party lines to tackle the climate and environment crises.

07.06 consideration was being given to funding research fellows to enable our academic expertise to debate and influence climate and environment legislation in the UK and beyond;

07.07 the University would need to continue to build on momentum to capitalise on further opportunities to engage on a global platform at COP and other events to raise awareness of climate expertise within the University in key areas (including China, Brazil and USA) to influence QS league tables;

07.08 that opportunities were being explored to engage directly with influential leaders in business and industry to engage in discussion on climate change and to raise awareness about the University of Exeter's research.

08. Faculty of Health and Life Sciences (HLS): Strategic Away Day (CNL/15/24-25 Strictly Confidential)

The Chair welcome Professor Sallie Lamb (Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean), Professor Rich Holland (Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor and Dean for the Medical School), Professor Rich Smith (Deputy Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Planning and Projects) and Joanna Bowtell (Deputy Pro-Chancellor) to the meeting.

a) Introduction to HLS and Faculty Performance

08.01 that the vision of the Faculty of HLS was to accelerate and scale our ability to make remarkable differences to the lives of millions of people across the world by:

i) Discovering how genes, cells and molecules evolve and behave and therefore affect disease and our planet
ii) Understanding how diseases, infection, disability and disadvantage develop
iii) Tackling important health challenges using cutting edge science and technology

08.02 the Faculty of HLS was dispersed across more sites than any other Faculty. This included the University's campuses at Streatham, Truro, St Luke's and Penryn, alongside three sites co-located as part of the partnership with NHS Royal Devon University Hospital at the Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital (Wonford), Royal Devon and Exeter Hospital (Heavitree) and Royal Cornwall Hospital. The Faculty also worked with other NHS trusts across the peninsula so it had a far and wide-ranging reach;

08.03 the Faculty had made progress year on year in securing a solid income stream, securing 8% income increase overall and 11% increase in research income, but this had not kept pace with the increase in Professional Services and Estates cost (21%). Although the Faculty was projected to make a deficit this year, this was below the original forecast;

08.04 in relation to research applications and awards 2023/24:

08.04.1 we are hosting at Exeter and co-leading a number of National hubs and strategic infrastructure, including the NIHR/UKRI funded UK Hub for One Health Systems to realise the health co-benefits of achieving Net Zero, which was the only centre award in the UK;

08.04.2 there was a continued focus on driving research power and develop a critical mass of globally excellent research by increasing the number of researchers and quality of the research;

08.04.3 94% of Education and Research academics had a recent application or live award in the last 12 months. Approximately two thirds of these grants were funded by UKRI or NHRI grants and the Faculty were continuing to focus on enhancing overall levels of cost recovery. 19% of the research funding secured by the Faculty was from UK Charity research (including Wellcome Trust) which carried prestige and commissioned high-quality research but did not historically have good levels of cost recovery. By contrast industry funded research could generate a full economic cost recovery of 120%, especially in consultancy. The Faculty was focusing on ensuring it had a balanced eco-system of research;

08.04.4 in REF 2021 the faculty had been returned within Unit of Assessment 1 (including Oxford, Cambridge, Imperial, King's College London, Leeds and Imperial) for the first time and performed well.

08.04.5 that the Faculty of HLS had accounted for half of the University's citation portfolio (49%) in the QS league table;

08.05 in relation to NSS and Graduate Outcomes it was noted that healthcare related programmes perform well in graduate outcomes and that key areas of focus for improvement included assessment and feedback, experience and student voice;

08.06 in terms of commercial activity, the majority of the income in the Faculty was secured through collaborative research, contract research and consultancy;

08.07 the Faculty had secured philanthropic donations to support clinical / non clinical Professorships and student ships to drive research agenda, but there was a need to secure more significant donations and to develop a philanthropic strategy to help facilitate significant growth;

08.08 in discussion:

08.08.01 that precision medicine was still strongly in alignment with the research focus on genetics, including precision genetic diabetes research and application to clinical practice to transform healthcare. The Exeter 10,000 Project had collected information and samples from 10,000 volunteers for research into various health care issues, including diabetes;

08.08.02 the drop in the overall number of students applying to study nursing across the sector in the past year reflected the challenging financial position facing the NHS, the continued lack of investment in the nursing profession and cost of living crisis. In collaboration with local partners, the University had developed a 2 year programme to provide a pathway into nursing which had seen an increase in the number of applications;

b) <u>HLS Faculty Roadmap and Strategic Priorities</u>

08.09 the overarching strategic priority for the Faculty of HLS was to make breakthroughs to transform human health and well-being, recognising the intersections between health, the climate and a socially just society;

08.10 the key strategic growth opportunities and priorities were in STEM-MED 2030, Psychology 2030, and accelerating Data Science and AI, including Healthcare Data Science;

08.11 there was a sustained focus on Developing Departments, including external reviews to continue to improve performance informed by external insights and expertise. Operational budgets were also being reshaped to deliver efficiencies through a focus on pay and non-pay savings;

08.12 in relation to the HLS SWOT Analysis:

08.12.1 there were clear strengths in terms of strong undergraduate recruitment in key areas (eg Biosciences, Psychology, Neurosciences) and a mixed education portfolio, with strong online programmes, degree apprenticeship models alongside traditional programmes;

08.12.2 in terms of weakness there was a small or restricted international market for some disciplines and under recruitment in some areas;

08.13.3 key threats included balancing research growth ambitions with financial sustainability, particularly in light of the high-cost base required in delivering STEMM education and research;

08.14 work was underway to understand implementation of Curriculum for Change principles for clinical programmes and how to embed whilst maintaining regulation by with healthcare bodies;

08.15 in order to grow reputation and research power there was a need to strengthen clinical capacities, research expertise and enhance investment in teaching and research infrastructure;

08.16 in discussion the importance of the following: actively reviewing and reflecting on lessons learned from recent investments to determine direct return on investment alongside indirect enhancement on reputation, global rankings, student recruitment and other elements, including wider significant of investment for the health outcomes of the city and wider region; highlighting the transformational impact the University on the life and health outcomes of the wider city and region; recognising that the breadth and depth of different areas of research expertise helped foster new research ideas and solutions.

c) <u>Research Spotlight</u>

08.17 Council Members were invited to attend a series of research spotlights on i) the use of

Virtual reality in teaching; ii) the Exeter sequencing service; iii) Clinical Skills teaching; iv) Facilities for sports science education and research.

09. Chair's Closing Remarks

09.1 the Chair extended a sincere thank you to the Faculty of HLS for holding an engaging and informative strategic faculty away day meeting.