



University of Exeter

COUNCIL STRATEGIC BRIEFING SESSION

MINUTES AND ACTIONS – APPROVED BY COUNCIL

10 December 2024

10am-11.05am

Reed Hall, Streatham Campus

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

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Council Meeting

No: Item:

24.28 Chair's Introduction and Welcome

24.29 Curriculum for Change: Progress Report

24.30 Project Review: Innovation Centre 2 Refurbishment - Incorporating ADA ('Accelerating Data Science and AI') and PS Workplace

24.31 Chair's Closing Remarks

Attendees:

MEMBERS PRESENT

Quentin Woodley	Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council
Sir Richard Atkins	Pro-Chancellor and Deputy Chair of Council
Sally Cabrini	Pro-Chancellor and Senior Independent Governor
Professor Lisa Roberts	President and Vice-Chancellor
Professor Dan Charman	Senior Vice-President and Provost
Professor Tim Quine	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience)
Damaris Anderson-Supple	Independent Member
Rebecca Boomer-Clark	Independent Member
Andrew Greenway	Independent Member
Karime Hassan	Independent Member
Professor Malcom Skingle	Independent Member
Tim Weller	Independent Member
Sarah Matthews-DeMers	Independent Member
Dr Sarah Hodge	Senate Representative
Professor Karen Knapp	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

STANDING ATTENDEE

Professor Adrian Harris	Chief Medical Officer (Royal NHS Devon)
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SECRETARY

Mike Shore-Nye	Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary
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STAFF IN ATTENDANCE

Dave Stacey	Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Executive Divisional Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Commercial Services
Ali Chambers	Chief Executive Officer, Exeter Students' Guild
Dr Jeremy Diaper	Assistant Director, Governance (minutes)

APOLOGIES

Nicholas Cheffings	Independent Member of Council
Salam Katbi	Independent Member of Council
Alison Reed	Independent Member of Council
Malcolm Skingle	Independent Member of Council
Glenn Woodcock	Independent Member of Council
Imelda Rogers	Executive Divisional Director of Human Resources

28. Chair's Welcome and Introduction

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

28.01.1 apologies had been received from Nicholas Cheffings, Salam Katbi and Imelda Rogers for the duration of the Council Strategic Briefing Session and Council Business Meeting;

28.01.2 apologies had also been received from Alison Reed and Malcolm Skingle for the Council Strategic Briefing Session, but they would subsequently join the Council Business Meeting online via Microsoft Teams.

29. Curriculum for Change – Progress Report (CNL/37/24-25 Strictly Confidential)

- 29.1. the Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) presented an update on the Curriculum for Change (C4C) programme which was designed to realise the University's strategic commitment to develop a distinctive and financially sustainable model for education by 2030 that supported students to become highly employable graduates and effective change-makers and leaders;

- 29.2. in the process of the consultation and development of the Education Strategy which had launched in September 2019, a commitment had been made to create a distinctive model for Exeter. The Covid-19 pandemic had resulted in a necessary diversion towards digital transformation of education, which had stimulated University-wide innovation and adaptation across the university to respond with immediacy to this global challenge;
- 29.3. as a result of the financial challenges facing the sector there remained a strategic imperative to change the curriculum and create a distinctive model of education at the University. With the flatlining of the home undergraduate fee, the University and wider Russell Group institutions were in a position where it cost more per capita to deliver Undergraduate education than the current tuition fee. It was noted that the financial challenges facing the sector would not be resolved by the recently announced uplift to the home undergraduate fee and that this would only marginally offset the recent increases to employers' National Insurance rates;
- 29.4. the Curriculum for Change programme was focused on boosting graduate employability and enhancing the inclusivity and flexibility of education, with the overarching main strategic drivers outlined as follows:
- 29.4.1 optimisation of undergraduate (UG) honours programmes to ensure sustainability of delivery and consistency of offer to prospective students;
 - 29.4.2 enhancing belonging, engagement and immersion into the University academic community;
 - 29.4.3 adopting a sustainable delivery model that allowed departments to generate sufficient margin from UG education, address differential student experience and graduate outcomes gaps, and close gaps on continuation and completion;
 - 29.4.4 supporting mental health and wellbeing by smoothing workload and assessment across the academic year for staff and students.
- 29.5. other key components of the C4C programme included smoothing the academic year to reduce peaks and troughs in workload which would provide mental health benefits and greater flexibility for innovative options, including facilitating international exchange and enabling access to the Lifelong Learning Entitlement (LLE);
- 29.6. a critical element to the success of the delivery of the programme would be securing widespread buy-in, engagement and adoption of the Curriculum for Change principles across the academic community through continued University-wide consultation, collaboration and communication. The following was noted in discussion in relation to communications:
- 29.6.1 the need to enhance the communications regarding Curriculum for Change to help highlight the strategic significance of the programme across the wider institution;
 - 29.6.2 that it was important to ensure University-wide clarity surrounding the elements which were not included in the Curriculum for Change Programme (eg Postgraduate taught programmes, marking and assessment activities);
 - 29.6.3 that it would be helpful to ensure the key communications in relation to Curriculum for Change

were focused around the 3 key elements of employability, inclusivity and flexibility to help provide clarity of purpose at a strategic high-level;

- 29.6.4 effective communications would also be a critical mechanism to foster a sense of collaborative endeavour and co-creation amongst the University community and to instil a sense of advocacy across individual Departments and Programmes;
- 29.6.5 University-wide communications would also need to be nuanced to ensure the curriculum for change was considered the next phase of evolution and affirming that the institution would need to continue to change, adapt and embed continuous improvement to respond to the challenges facing the higher education sector;
- 29.6.6 it would be critical to ensure that communications also signposted the improvements to the student experience that would be facilitated through the curriculum for change programme;
- 29.6.7 articulating the ambitious institutional vision behind curriculum for change could present an opportunity to entice the wider University community in engaging in an innovative and forward-thinking University-wide strategic change initiative;
- 29.6.8 providing a clear sense of the strategic aims and objectives of the curriculum for change programme could also help to foster a sense of collective ambition to help realise the institutional vision;

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29.7 the following in relation to Departments, programmes and modules:

- 29.7.1 that the specific implications of the Curriculum for Change programme for individual academics and departments would vary on a programme-by-programme basis. In certain areas of the University where a limited range of modules were being delivered at scale to a larger cohort of students the amount of change would be less palpable than in other Departments that were delivering a large number of specialist modules to small cohorts of students;
- 29.7.2 certain programmes and modules were at different stages of 'readiness' to deliver the required C4C changes. A detailed implementation plan and approval process for minor pathways was in development to enable the strategic ambition for minors to replace the current approach to enhanced modularity, which had resulted in some instances in an unconstrained choice of modules outside single honours programmes;
- 29.7.3 further guidance and consultation was being undertaken to carefully consider the timeline for implementation of each aspect of C4C in light of CMA guidance and existing course information published in the University prospectus.

29.8 the following in relation to the Academic Year:

- 29.8.1 the Curriculum for Change programme was exploring the redistribution of assessment windows within the academic year and integration of teaching into term 3 to enable smoother accumulation of credits. It was considered inadvisable to make changes to the timing of assessments within the Academic Year at this stage as a new Curriculum Management System

was still awaiting implementation, which would be critical to ensuring there was a suitably robust and fit-for-purpose mechanism for processing and storing student information on programmes and modules;

29.8.2 a commitment had been made to undertake further engagement with the community regarding proposed changes to the timing of assessment within the academic year to develop a more deep-seated understanding of potential concerns and variation in perspectives;

29.9 in relation to Professional, Statutory and Regulatory Bodies (PSRBs):

29.9.1 whilst it was noted that it would be important to align with the requirements of PSRBs to maintain accreditation of programmes and that there would be a need for ongoing dialogue around potential changes this was not considered to be insuperable to enabling the curriculum for change programme;

29.9.2 it would be critical to demonstrate to PSRBs that learning outcomes were clearly embedded as part of the design of programmes and continued to ensure proficiency of educational training and skills development;

29.9.3 in some instances the current constraints were not necessarily in relation to the rules and regulations stipulated by PSRBs but as a result of logistical challenges, including co-ordinating 4-6 months in clinical practice;

29.10 in relation to monitoring successful implementation:

29.10.1 it would be important to develop effective mechanisms for measuring the successful implementation of the curriculum for change programme, including key performance indicators and milestones;

29.10.2 it was noted that one of the key measures of success in the early stages of implementation would be monitoring how many students there were per module/credit;

29.10.3 a potential medium-term indicator of the level of engagement could be the number of students enrolling on minors over a specific period of time. Over a longer timeframe there was also the potential to monitor the success of the curriculum for change programme via improvements in graduate outcomes;

29.10.4 alongside surveys and data collation exercises further opportunities for adopting a more sophisticated approach to monitoring the effective implementation of the curriculum for change programme should be explored to ensure there was an informative qualitative and quantitative dataset;

29.11 the importance of the following:

29.11.1 providing bespoke training, development and supporting materials for current academic staff accustomed to teaching smaller groups of students to help build their pedagogical skills and confidence in effectively transitioning to delivering teaching to larger cohorts;

29.11.2 continuing to explore opportunities to deliver employability partnerships and placements

within modules to booster employability prospects of students;

29.11.3 exploring opportunities to develop further educational partnerships with QS following the successful implementation of the Future 17 Sustainable Development Goals Challenge Programme that had been delivered in partnership by the University and QS with leading global organisations to empower and enable a future generation of students;

29.11.4 undertaking further modelling and analysis on timetabling requirements to deliver the Curriculum for Change programme within the current space constraints on campus;

29.11.5 developing a community of practice, to help embed continuous improvement, instil pedagogical innovation and encourage continuous engagement within the Curriculum for Change programme;

29.11.6 reflecting on the possibility of utilising Curriculum for Change pilots in specific Departments and Faculties to help showcase exemplars of best practice and raise institutional awareness and understanding;

29.11.7 recognising the level of cultural change that would be required institutionally to successfully implement the Curriculum for Change programme;

29.11.8 drawing on lessons learned from other areas where the University had adopted an innovative and pioneering approach such as Degree Apprenticeships;

29.12 the following was noted in discussion:

29.12.1 that as graduate employers were seeking students with key skills in data, digital and Artificial Intelligence it would be increasingly critical to ensure skills development in these areas were mapped to the curriculum to help bolster employability and enhance graduate outcomes;

29.12.2 following extensive consultation and engagement in panel discussions and focus groups with the student community they had been increasingly positive regarding the Curriculum for Change programme as greater clarity and understanding in relation to the specific proposals had emerged. In particular students had been positive about the enhanced focus on employability, a more balanced workload during term time and greater value for money;

29.12.3 in relation to whether the reimagining of educational provision at the University would receive any external challenge from government, employers or other wider stakeholders, it was noted that positive feedback had been received from recent QS education conference and that it was recognised there were opportunities to enhance employability of graduates and enable them to be effective change-makers and leaders. It was anticipated that there most pushback and challenge would likely be received from the academic community where there could be a difference of perspectives on the role of the University in skills development and embedding employability in modules and programmes;

29.12.4 whilst it was recognised that the implementation of the Curriculum for Change would help to enhance staff wellbeing by distributing teaching over all three terms and help to provide greater flexibility over workloads, it was acknowledged that further consideration should also be given

to the potential impact on the additional workload for Professional Services and particularly in the implementation phase.

AGREED: that to help achieve the strategic ambition and institutional vision of the Curriculum for Change programme, Council would be provided with enhanced strategic oversight of the framework, project plan and route map for Curriculum for Change to ensure sufficient rigour in the overall programme approach, collective understanding of the pace of delivery, and assurance surrounding effective delivery across Departments and Faculties.

30. Project Review: Innovation Centre 2 Refurbishment - Incorporating ADA ('Accelerating Data Science and AI') and PS workplace (CNL/38/24-25 Strictly Confidential)

- 30.1. The Senior Vice President and Registrar and Secretary delivered a presentation to provide a project review of the recent capital investment to extend the current ADA Departmental home through the modification of existing office and learning spaces in Innovation Centres 1 and 2 on the Streatham Campus. The Full Business Case had been approved by Council in April 2024 to enable growth in data science and AI courses;
- 30.2. Construction had commenced on site on 13 May 2024 and delivered a 60 seat dual operating collaborative teaching lab, including new specialist IT equipment, AV facilities and a breakout whiteboarding room which had reduced repeat teaching and enabled alternative use of the space;
- 30.3. a new 120 seat pc lab had also been developed for flexible and multidisciplinary use, which was now the biggest PC lab on campus and had facilitated collaboration and innovative teaching methods;
- 30.4. a redesigned community space on the ground floor had also increased study and informal meeting space to provide flexible spaces for student collaboration, including an additional 100 study spaces which could be utilised for seminar or event use;
- 30.5. in order to create space for Data Science and AI teaching and research within the existing floor area, the workspace in the building for Professional Services teams across Research, Exeter Innovation, and External Engagement and Global had been consolidated. The Professional Services workspace was now the largest concentration of agile office users on campus and had highlighted the potential scope for further collaborative spaces in Northcote House and other areas on campus;
- 30.6. the expedited 6-month refurbishment in Innovation Centre 1 and 2 to create teaching and remodelled office accommodation had put the university in a strong position to increase the proportion of students in Data Science and Artificial Intelligence, which was a key strategic priority growth area;

Closed Minute – Commercial in Confidence

AGREED: that a Streatham campus tour would be scheduled for Council in due course to showcase the recent investments, including: the new-purpose built facility for Wellbeing Services, the Multifaith Centre and Innovation Centre 2 Refurbishment.

31. Chair's Closing Remarks

31.1 the Chair concluded the Council strategic briefing session in Reed Hall and indicated that the formal business meeting of Council would commence shortly in the Council Chamber (Northcote House).