

M20/85-M20/123

Minutes

Present:	Dame Margaret Hodge (Chair)	Professor Paul Layzell
	Ms Ann Ewing (Vice Chair)	Mr Jeremy McIlroy
	Professor Sarah Ansari	Mr Gerry O'Hagan
	Professor Michael Farthing	Mr Peter Saraga
	Professor Bob Fitzgerald	Mr Jack O'Neil
	Mr John Gregory	Professor Elizabeth Schafer
	Mrs Christine Goodyear	Mrs Chris Shoukry
	Mrs Margaret Jack	Mr Nick Perryman
	Mrs Hazel Jessop	Mr David Walker
	Ms Denise Keable	Mr David Williams
	Ms Sarah King	Ms Colette Wilson
Apologies:	Mr Hammad Chaudhry	Mrs Tina Harris
Secretary:	Dr David Ashton, Deputy Principal (Operations) and Secretary to Council	
In attendance:	Mr Nigel Alcock, Interim Chief Financial Officer	
	Professor Ken Badcock, Senior Vice Principal (Academic Strategy, Partnerships and Resources)	
	Professor James Knowles, Senior Vice Principal (Education)	
	Professor Katie Normington, Senior Vice Principal (Academic)	
	Mrs Pauline Martin, Executive Officer for Council, Minutes	
	Mr Rob Cutting, Administration Assistant, Secondary Minutes	

- 1. Apologies**
NOTED Mr Hammad Chaudhry and Mrs Tina Harris were unable to attend at short notice. M20/85
- 2. Declarations of Interest**
None M20/86
- 3. Minutes of Previous Meeting**
To address at the next meeting, the minutes and actions of the meeting held on 20 February 2020 (M20/13/M20/84) M20/87
- 4. Matters arising**
None M20/88

Major Business

5. COVID-19

NOTED that the purpose of this special meeting was to update Council on the operation of College during the Covid-19 pandemic, the short-term actions taken and planning underway for the medium and longer term and consider the financial sustainability of the College. M20/89

NOTED that Council would meet monthly during this period. M20/90

5.1 OBJECTIVES

NOTED the overall objective was to maintain a successful and viable university that would survive the current crisis in a good position and benefit from the recovery phase of this crisis. In practice, this means we have: M20/91

- a. to address short-term disruption to ensure that all our students successfully complete the current academic year in an ordered, sustainable, accountable and timely manner;
- b. to address the medium-term challenges of the new academic year and to ensure we can achieve 'dry land', i.e. continue to operate in potentially different circumstances until such time that we can return to something more normal;
- c. to ensure the College remains viable and sustainable during the response to the current crisis and its aftershocks, in order to build ourselves up in the recovery phase;
- d. to use the current new way of working as a springboard to bring further innovation into our medium-and long-term delivery of education.

5.2 CURRENT ACADEMIC YEAR

NOTED that College was working closely with the key lobbying groups and ensuring that it was aligned with the sector particularly with respect to academic standards and the student experience. Notably this included UUK and the OfS, and the guidance issued by the QAA to uphold standards. The College was a member of S10 Group of Universities which was meeting weekly to address key issues. M20/92

Operational Issues

NOTED the operational matters, with approximately 18% of student accommodation remaining occupied with those students who were unable to leave at the time of lockdown or chose to remain, mostly PGT students. Essential services remained open the shop, catering and welfare and counselling support services were available. M20/93

NOTED modelling of the long-term financial impact of £2.8m loss of halls income for term 3 was underway. M20/94

NOTED with regard to term two, the academic and professional services matters addressed: M20/95

- Teaching in term two had been rapidly moved to online delivery from mid-March.
- Steps were taken to mitigate the impact of the disruption to students at the end of term two by granting blanket extensions for assignments and the development of new policies to address Mitigating Circumstances of Covid-19 and a No Detriment Policy. RHSU sabbatical officers were members of the working group addressing these matters.

NOTED that for term three:	M20/96
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative assessment methods were in place which included assignments, problem solving and Moodle quizzes. • First year assessments would be replaced by a portfolio approach to determine progression. • Students were notified of changes at the beginning of April and an online central hub had been set up for students which provided information on the timetable for completion of assessments. • The College approach was to maintain a consistent approach with the HE sector. 	
DISCUSSED the examining process for final year undergraduates (mirrored for PGT students) and addressed the tracking of cohorts to compare performance and alignment of the approach with the sector, working with the S10 Group. This included the internal process of appeal against the degree outcomes and the legal right to submit an appeal to the OIA (under strict criteria) once the internal College process had been exhausted.	M20/97
DISCUSSED difficult employment prospects for graduating students and NOTED that plans to provide extra support were in development. The Careers service was being provided online.	M20/98
Research	
NOTED that with regard to research:	M20/99
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most facilities on campus were closed, with only essential maintenance ongoing. • Three Covid-19-related research projects were ongoing, none involving live virus. • REF was delayed but the 31st July census date was still in place. • PG Research students had been granted extensions for submission and College funded students would receive a three-month extension for delayed submission funded from next year's budget. • Research Council funding was extended by six months. 	
Staff Operations and Furlough	
NOTED the existing wellbeing support available for staff and additional steps being put in place, with an awareness that some staff may be vulnerable. All staff would retain full IT system access throughout the period and line managers would maintain contact managing reintroduction to the workplace at the appropriate time.	M20/100
DISCUSSED the continuous government updates to the Furlough Scheme and the development of the College submission under a collective agreement NOTING that 70% of the sector was planning to use the scheme and College would be making up staff pay to 100%.	M20/101
Finance – Current year	
RECEIVED a Financial Update (CL/20/19) which reviewed the potential impact of Covid-19 on the financial performance to the end of the current financial year.	M20/102
NOTED the mitigating actions taken to manage the cash position, including stopping all non-essential capital expenditure, and the expected end of year cash balance of £45m, up from £29m.	M20/103
NOTED reduced income due to reduced Hall fees consequent on not enforcing term 3 residential contracts and the loss of income from Commercial services, having consulted Finance Committee.	M20/103
DISCUSSED that all costs had been reviewed and would continue to be challenged recognising the need for investment in the long term. The current situation was likely to result in changes in the future operating environment with new ways of working.	M20/104

	NOTED that work to date had focussed on addressing the key issues in the immediate crisis and Management was now beginning to focus on the mid to long term recovery plan to ensure the future sustainability of the College and emergence from the current crisis.	M20/105
5-3	NEXT ACADEMIC YEAR	
	NOTED the financial planning scenarios, from best to worst case, in the Financial Update (CL/20/19).	M20/106
	The National Context	
	NOTED likely instability in the sector in the absence of international students in September, marketisation of the home student environment, restrictions placed on some institutions that were moving students from conditional to unconditional offers.	M20/107
	NOTED a call for support for the sector by UUK included a package of measures valued at £2bn to bring stability, support research, provide financial support to reduce uncertainty and allow the sector to adapt to the changed environment, in particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Student number controls to be applied allowing institutions to recruit up to their forecast population of Home/EU students in 2020/21. • additional support to preserve the research base, increasing QR funding by 100% in 2021. 	M20/108
	Recovery Planning	
	NOTED the College recovery plan development included 20 workstreams across four areas: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education • Staff • Students • Sustainability 	M20/109
	NOTED that other ways of working were being considered, the likely structural changes in the sector and the College position in the sector.	M20/110
	Planning Assumptions	
	NOTED the planning assumptions in the Financial Update (CL/20/19) first developed at the beginning of March and this would continue to be updated which included a number of possible scenarios.	M20/111
	NOTED the uncertainty around September and the plans to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasise flexibility to be able to respond to changing situations such as variable lockdowns. • Be able to give confidence to new students that their studies can continue on or off Campus by offering online teaching modules. • Allow the option of September or January starts in areas of study with a large international student presence e.g. PGT courses, Management, engineering and mathematical sciences. 	M20/112
	NOTED that for those graduating this year where the end of their student life had been disrupted a number of options were being worked on including help to upskill by offering discounted PG and masters courses and the Business and Management online programme through the University of London.	M20/113
	CONSIDERED that the worst-case scenario was a possibility if prospective students were not reassured that they could study in the face of uncertainty. The quality of offer equal also needed to be the same as previous years and include the option for all modules to be taught on or off campus.	M20/114
	Staffing	
	NOTED that all major changes to modules and exams were due to be in place online for September and staff were being upskilled to achieve this along with a change in staffing emphasis for 2020/21 towards teaching in order to facilitate the necessary changes.	M20/115

Applications

NOTED that subject to the UUK proposals being agreed September 2020 recruitment would aim to achieve the HESA plan +5%. M20/116

NOTED undergraduate applicants would be confirming first choice University in the next month, two weeks later than usual. At this time 40% of applicants had completed their first choice with 21.7% of students choosing RHUL as their first choice, approximately 2% lower than in previous years at this time. Work continued to encourage conversion though to mid-May with current conversion rates indicating the importance of confirmation and clearing to achieve student numbers for 2020/21. M20/117

DISCUSSED the flux in department applications, applicants delaying making a commitment and students potentially choosing to stay closer to home. M20/118

NOTED PGT applications, mostly from overseas students were still strong, currently 2,500 higher than the previous year and the main application period due in June. M20/119

FINANCE

DISCUSSED the financial implications of the worst-case scenario without mitigating actions and that preparation work was underway to prepare for this eventuality, including a detailed time horizon report which would detail the timing for decisions. The plan would be reviewed by Finance Committee. M20/120

5.4 Next steps

NOTED that the short-term situation was reasonably under control which now allowed time to plan for considered decisions for the medium and longer term. M20/121

Other Matters

6. Other Business

None M20/122

7. Dates of next meeting

Thursday 7 May 2020, 5.15pm MS Teams Conference Call M20/123
June: a meeting to be scheduled
Thursday 2 July 2020, 5.15pm MS Teams Conference Call



Dame Margaret Hodge DBE MP
Chair of Council

Date