

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

Wednesday, 27 November 2024

MINUTES

Author:	Ms Alison Jones, University Secretary, 2 December 2024
Present:	Mr Jonathan Thornton (Chair), Mr Ajaz Ahmed, Mr Wamick Aijaz, Mr Bernard Ainsworth, Ms Sally Baines, Professor Sarah Bastow, Mr Robert Cox, Ms Sally Crosland, Professor Bob Cryan, Dr Sara Eastburn, Mrs Clare Morrow, Mr Krish Pilicudale, Baroness Kathryn Pinnock, Professor Isobel Pollock-Hul, Bishop Smitha Prasadam
In attendance:	Dr Laura Chambers, Ms Lydia Devenny, Ms Alison Jones, Professor Tim Thornton, Mrs Munira Usman, Mrs Salma Younis (KPMG, for item 9.6 only)
Apologies:	Rhys Davies

PRELIMINARY ITEMS

PAPER REFERENCE

Members were welcomed to the meeting.

1. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

1.1 The Vice-Chancellor and the University Secretary declared an interest in item 19 (Senior Postholder Remuneration Committee minutes). The Vice-Chancellor also declared an interest in item 9.9 (the Annual Remuneration Statement).

2. APPOINTMENT OF NEW MEMBERS OF UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

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2.1 The University Secretary informed members that there had been a need to appoint a replacement academic member of staff as a representative of Senate to University Council, following the expiry of Professor Sarah Bastow's term of office for Senate in July 2024. Eligible individuals had been contacted by the Director of Registry, and a candidate had been subsequently nominated. This appointment had been considered and recommended for approval by Governance and Membership Committee and Senate.

2.2 Council noted that the current postgraduate student representative was eligible for a second term of office of one year, and this had also been recommended for approval at Governance and Membership Committee.

2.3 Members resolved to **approve** the following appointments with immediate effect:

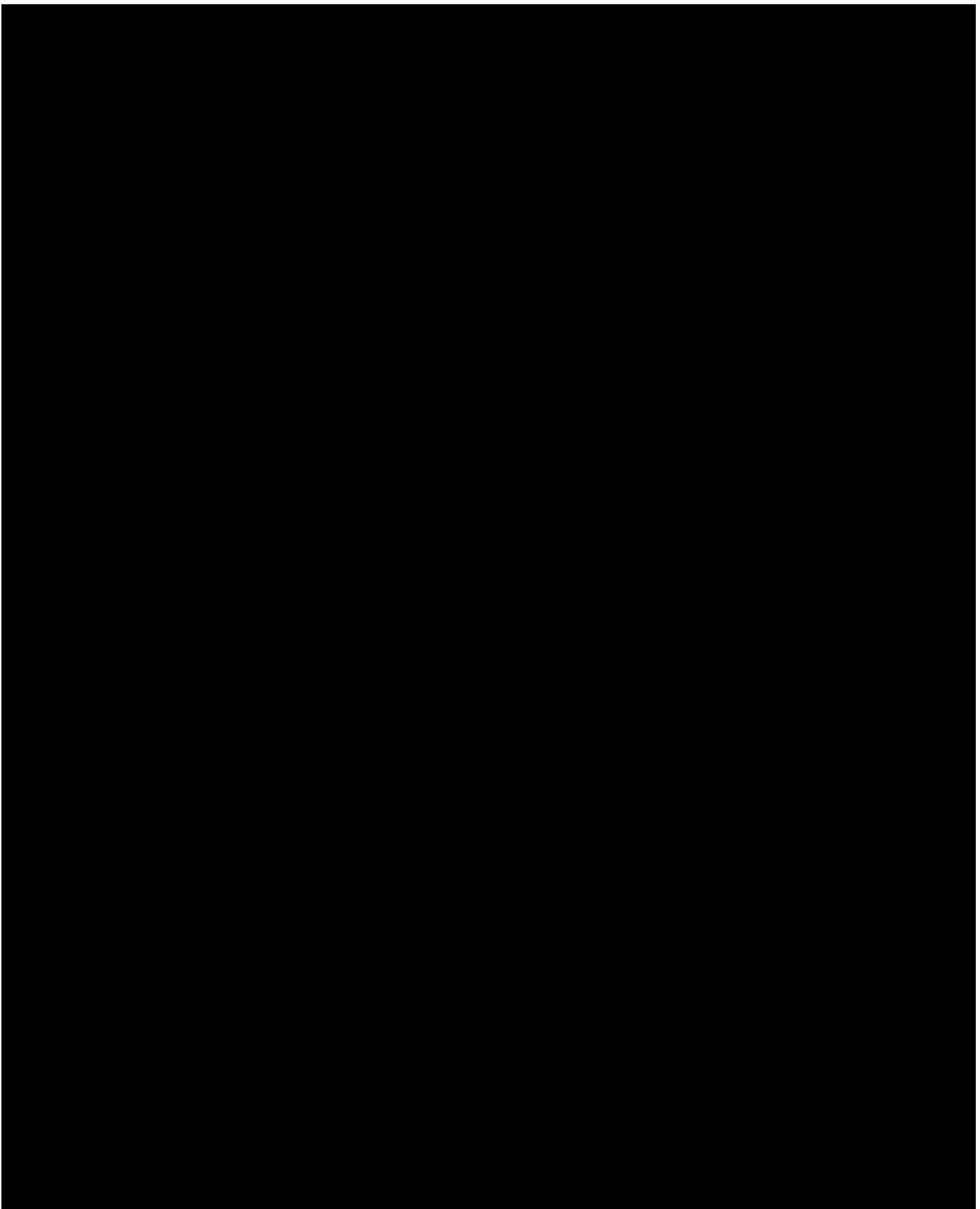
- the appointment of **Dr Sara Eastburn** to University Council as the academic Senate representative, including as a member of Governance and Membership Committee and Honorary Awards Committee, for an initial three-year term of office.
- the appointment of **Ms Sally Crosland** to University Council as the postgraduate research student representative, for a second one-year term of office.

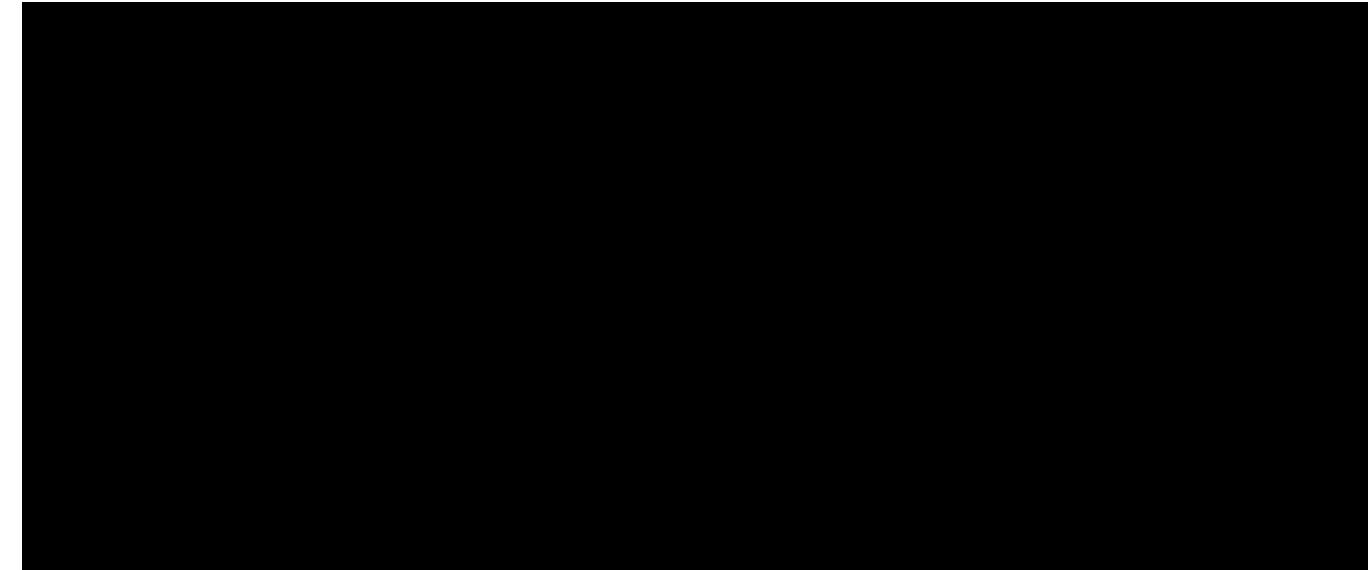
Dr Sara Eastburn and Ms Sally Crosland joined the meeting and were formally welcomed to University Council by the Chair.

3. MAJOR ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

Review of Performance against the 2025 Strategy Map

Presentation





3.3 Members commended the Executive team on progress to date in achieving its KPI targets despite sector pressures and noted the challenges in areas such as growth and efficiency, financial sustainability, and international. Council resolved to **approve** the RAG-rated summary as presented.

4. MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

4.1 **Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2024 and the notes of the Council Strategy Day on 24 October 2024 be accepted as correct records.

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4.2 There were no matters arising.

5. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

5.1 The Chair had no specific items of business to raise.

6. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS

Verbal report

6.1 The Vice-Chancellor briefed Council on recent government announcements regarding tuition fee regimes for HEIs in England. This included raising the tuition fee cap to £9,535 (equivalent to 3.1%, RPI-X) from 2025/26, subject to parliamentary approval. Several legal matters would need to be considered before universities could start to charge these fees, with due regard given to consumer protection law. The University was undertaking a full review of its terms and conditions for student offers to consider its legal position for increasing existing fees, and would continue to monitor regional competitors and sector-wide activity in this area. However, the government's changes to employer national insurance contributions were predicted to negate any benefit received from increasing tuition fees, therefore financial sustainability for the sector would continue to remain challenging. A recent report published by the Office for Students (OfS) predicted that around 72% of HEIs would be in deficit by the end of 2025.

7. UNIVERSITY SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

7.1 The University Secretary briefed members on a range of regulatory and governance matters which had been considered by the Governance and Membership Committee at its meeting on 5 November 2024, including:

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- The annual report on compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity. This detailed the University's approach to research integrity and its research environment. The report had also been considered and recommended by Senate.
- An update on the new OfS condition of registration (E6) concerning sexual misconduct and harassment.
- The annual Public Interest Disclosure (Whistleblowing) report.
- Minor revisions to the Public Interest Disclosure Policy, presented to Council for approval.
- Minor updates to Council committee terms of reference, including the proposal to include all School Deans as members of Honorary Awards Committee. All Council committee terms of reference had been considered at the relevant Committee and recommended for approval by Council.
- Recommendations for new members of Council and its Committees, following recent changes to Council membership (considered under item 2 above).
- Outcomes of the internal governance effectiveness review, and suggested actions to be managed by the University Secretary. These would form an action plan that would be regularly reviewed by Governance and Membership Committee.
- A schedule for governor engagement, designed to aid Council members' further understanding of the broad range of business undertaken by the University. All Council members were invited to submit further suggestions to the University Secretary.
- The application of the University Seal since the last meeting.
- Nominations for Honorary Doctorate of the University.

7.2 University Council resolved to **approve** the following:

- The annual report on compliance with the Concordat to Support Research Integrity.
- The updated public interest disclosure policy.
- Updated terms of reference for Council and its committees.

7.3 University Council further resolved to **approve** seven nominations for honorary awards as recommended by the Honorary Awards Committee and Senate.* Members were asked to keep the names of those proposed as strictly confidential until formally announced by the University.

GROWTH AND EFFICIENCY

8. HOME AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENT RECRUITMENT

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8.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor briefed members on September 2024 undergraduate Home enrolments, [REDACTED]

International student enrolments for September 2024 [REDACTED]

8.2 Members noted the current position for September 2025 Home applications and acceptances, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] The new Director of Marketing, Communications and Student Recruitment had recently started at the University, and had been tasked with reviewing all current activity with

prospective applicants (including engagement with students who had been unable to attend recent Open Days).

8.3 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor reported on January 2025 applications for international students, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

8.4 The Director of Finance confirmed that the assumptions outlined in the five-year forecast (considered under item 10) were in alignment with current recruitment performance. The Vice-Chancellor commented that further matters around recruitment and the overall subject portfolio would be considered at the next Strategy Day in February 2025.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

9. YEAR END ACCOUNTS AND PROCEDURES

9.1 The Director of Finance presented the highlights of the draft Financial Statements to 31 July 2024. The detailed scrutiny of the different aspects of the Financial Statements by both the Audit and Risk and Estates and Finance Committees was also highlighted by the respective Chairs. Council noted the following:

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Presentation

- Financial Strength - the University remained in the upper quartile for financial security amongst all UK universities based on 2022/23 data. Data for 2023/24 was not yet available.
- Loss for the Year before other gains [REDACTED]
- Income for the Year [REDACTED]
- Expenditure for the Year [REDACTED]
- Reserves and Balance Sheet Movements [REDACTED]
- Borrowings – the University continued to maintain its debt-free status.
- Cash generation – [REDACTED]

Financial Statements for the year to 31 July 2024: Members noted that these statements had been considered in depth at both Audit and Risk Committee and Estates and Finance Committee, and congratulated the Executive on its overall financial position and level of cash reserves in view of the challenging higher education market. Council **approved** the financial statements, subject to the remaining items under item 9 also being approved/authorised.

9.2	Financial Statements for the University of Huddersfield Enterprises Ltd: the accounts for the University of Huddersfield Enterprises Ltd (UHEL) were noted. Council agreed to continue the University's financial support for UHEL until at least November 2025 and authorised the Chair of Council to sign a letter addressed to KPMG to that effect. The Director of Finance reported that all three subsidiaries had taken advantage of an audit exemption under the Companies Act (as advised by the external auditors), and therefore the accounts had not been audited.	UC_2024_11_27_P9.2
9.3	Financial Statements for the Huddersfield Enterprise and Innovation Centre Ltd: the accounts for the Huddersfield Enterprise and Innovation Centre Ltd (HEICL, trading as 3M BIC) were noted. Council agreed to continue the University's financial support for HEICL until at least November 2025 and authorised the Chair of Council to sign a letter addressed to KPMG in response to the decision to take the audit exemption. A letter of support had been provided in previous years to sustain the company as a going concern.	UC_2024_11_27_P9.3
9.4	Financial Statements for the University of Huddersfield Health, Care and Wellbeing Innovation (UHHCI) Ltd: the accounts for the University of Huddersfield Health, Care and Wellbeing Innovation Ltd (UHHCI Ltd) were noted. Council agreed to continue the University's financial support for UHHCI Ltd until at least November 2025 and authorised the Chair of Council to sign a letter addressed to KPMG in response to the decision to take the audit exemption. A letter of support was provided to sustain the company as a going concern.	UC_2024_11_27_P9.4
9.5	Financial Guarantees: members reviewed the financial guarantees for the year to 31 July 2024, which remained in line with the previous year.	UC_2024_11_27_P9.5
The external auditor (from KPMG) joined the meeting at this point.		
9.6	External Audit Findings: the external auditor presented their audit findings for the University and its subsidiaries (including the University's responses), confirming that a clean, unqualified audit opinion had been awarded on the basis of the financial statements and associated use of funds. Council resolved to approve the audit findings, as recommended by Audit and Risk Committee.	UC_2024_11_27_P9.6
The external auditor from KPMG left the meeting.		
9.7	Letter of Representation: members received the draft letter to KPMG on management representations, which would be signed by the Chair following the completion and authorisation of the financial statements.	UC_2024_11_27_P9.7
9.8	Going Concern Assessment: Council noted that both Estates and Finance Committee and Audit and Risk Committee supported the proposals outlined. University Council approved the going concern assessment.	UC_2024_11_27_P9.8
The Vice-Chancellor stepped out of the meeting at this point.		
9.9	Annual Remuneration Statement: members considered and approved the Annual Remuneration Statement from the Senior Post Holder Remuneration Committee, which provided assurance to Council that the Committee had discharged its responsibilities, having had sight of detailed	UC_2024_11_27_P9.9

comparator information, and that the remuneration of the Vice-Chancellor was set at an appropriate level.

The following item (Senior Post Holder Remuneration Committee minutes) was considered out of the order of the agenda. The University Secretary stepped out of the meeting as her remuneration was being considered, and the Vice-Chancellor rejoined at that point.

19. COMMITTEE MINUTES

19.1 Members received the minutes of the recent Senior Post Holder Remuneration Committee.

UC_2024_11_27_P19

The University Secretary rejoined the meeting.

9.10 **Internal Audit Annual Report and Review of the University's Financial Statements for 2023/24:** members considered the Internal Audit Annual Report for 2023/24, noting its endorsement by Audit and Risk Committee at its November meeting.

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9.11 **Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report:** the Chair of Audit and Committee presented the Committee's draft Annual Report for the 2023/24 academic year, acknowledging the support of the external and internal auditors. The positive opinions on management responses to external and internal audit findings, risk management, control and governance, arrangements for financial sustainability, value for money, and the management and quality assurance of data were noted. Council resolved to authorise the Chair to sign the Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report.

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10. FINANCIAL FORECAST AND FINAL BUDGET FOR 2024/25

10.1 The Director of Finance reminded Council of the provisional budget for 2024/25 previously agreed at the July 2024 Council meeting and confirmed that no revisions had been made to the budget assumptions since that time.

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Presentation

10.2 Council received a presentation on the assumptions underpinning the five-year financial forecast to 2028/29.



10.3 The Chair of the Estates and Finance Committee confirmed that the Committee had discussed the Financial Forecast at its meeting on 15 November 2024 and had been supportive of the proposed budget. However, it had recommended that the timings of when the budget was brought forward for consideration and approval were reviewed.

10.4 Council resolved to approve the Financial Forecast for the period 2024/25 to 2028/29 for onward submission to the OfS.

11. STUDENTS' UNION ACCOUNTS FOR THE YEAR TO 31 JULY 2024

UC_2024_11_27_P11

11.1 University Council received the Huddersfield Students' Union (SU) Financial Statements and congratulated the SU for the clean audit opinion received. It was noted that these accounts would be fully approved at the Board of Trustees meeting on 29 November 2024.

12. REVIEW OF THE UNIVERSITY'S FINANCIAL REGULATIONS

UC_2024_11_27_P12

12.1 The Director of Finance summarised the updates to the University's financial regulations, which were largely minor in nature (such as updating nomenclature) and reflected current financial practice within the University. It was confirmed that these updates had been considered by the Senior Leadership Team and Estates and Finance Committee. Council members approved the regulations, which would be published on the University's website.

INSPIRING

13. STUDENTS' UNION REPORT

UC_2024_11_27_P13

13.1 The SU President presented the highlights in SU activity since the last Council meeting, namely:

- Progress against the SU's four primary objectives for the year, including a campaign for the ethical use of AI. The outcomes of this campaign had also been considered by University groups and committees.
- Engagement during Welcome Week, and a summary of sporting activity.
- Work on enhancing the student voice and representation within University academic governance structures, and an overview of some of the work undertaken by Student Networks.
- Meeting the local Member of Parliament as part of the SU's campaign on rights for renters.
- The launch of the SU's new Strategic Plan.
- Continued engagement with the University's Chancellor, Sir George Buckley.

13.2 Council congratulated the SU on the wide range of work already completed by the Executive Officer team, and queried if engagement with the SU by the student population as a whole had changed since the pandemic. The SU President confirmed that engagement was significantly higher than a few years ago, partly as a result of continued effort to engage with the international student population. Targets for engagement were in place for the SU, and the SU President would include reference to these in his update at the next meeting.

14. ANNUAL REPORT ON ACADEMIC GOVERNANCE

UC_2024_11_27_P14

14.1 Members considered the annual Academic Governance Report, which had been prepared in accordance with OfS Quality Assessment requirements and considered by Governance and Membership Committee and Senate. The report provided assurances that the University was meeting its responsibilities for the regulation, quality assurance and enhancement of educational provision thought its academic governance structures, and outlined the various mechanisms in place for doing so, including:

- professional statutory and regulatory body reports
- external examiner scrutiny
- annual evaluations
- quality appraisals
- thematic reviews

- continuous review of the academic portfolio
- student feedback and engagement
- trends in student casework.

14.2 Council queried whether there had been an increase in academic misconduct associated with the use of generative artificial intelligence (AI) by students. The University Secretary reported that significant work had been undertaken by academic staff, the Strategic Teaching and Learning Team and the SU to inform students about the appropriate and effective use of AI when producing assignments, and this had helped to mitigate the number of misconduct cases linked to AI.

14.3 Members further queried the underlying cause of the rise in student complaints. The University Secretary reported that this was a sector-wide issue, and that the majority of complaints referred to the Office of the Independent Adjudicator were not upheld. Work was underway by Registry to analyse the type of complaints received to understand the underlying reasons in more detail so that additional mitigation steps could be introduced at an earlier stage.

14.4 University Council resolved to **approve** the annual Academic Governance Report.

PEOPLE FIRST

15. **ANNUAL PREVENT REPORT** UC_2024_11_27_P15

15.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor provided members with an overview of the report and the internal mechanisms in place to meet the University's statutory obligations in relation to Prevent. Council also noted the work undertaken by the University Secretary this year to review procedures for external speakers in response to updated freedom of speech legislation, and by the Director of Student Services in overseeing the University's response to the revised Channel Process.

15.2 Council reviewed and **approved** the 2024 Annual Prevent Report and **authorised** the Chair of Council to sign the Prevent annual accountability statement for onward submission to the OfS, together with the data return. It was noted that the risk register and associated action plan would be considered for approval at the next meeting of Audit and Risk Committee.

16. **HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT** UC_2024_11_27_P16

16.1 The University Secretary provided Council with a brief update on recent health and safety work undertaken within the University, including policy development and risk management.

16.2 Members noted that the Estates and Finance Committee received regular updates on actions taken in response to the fire safety review conducted by OveArup, and these updates would now be considered at each meeting at the Committee Chair's request.

16.3 In response to member queries, the University Secretary confirmed that the policy on e-vehicles would be reviewed to clarify the University's position on charging batteries for such vehicles inside campus buildings. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor also reported that discussions would shortly take place regarding the creation of a smoking-free campus.

OTHER COUNCIL MATTERS

17. APPOINTMENT OF EXTERNAL AUDITORS

17.1 In line with the Audit and Risk Committee's recommendation, Council resolved to **approve** the re-appointment of KPMG for the year ending 31 July 2025, and to delegate the remuneration setting to the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee, Vice-Chancellor, and Director of Finance.

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18. COUNCIL COMMITTEE ANNUAL REPORTS

UC_2024_11_27_P18

18.1 Council noted the annual reports for Estates and Finance Committee and Governance and Membership Committee, and concurred that they were an effective way of reviewing the business conducted by these committees over the course of the previous year.

19. COMMITTEE MINUTES

UC_2024_11_27_P19

19.1 The minutes of the following meetings were noted:

Audit and Risk Committee, 26 September and 14 November 2024
Estates and Finance Committee, 27 September and 15 November 2024
Governance and Membership Committee, 5 November 2024
Honorary Awards Committee, 24 October 2024
Senior Post Holder Remuneration Committee, 6 November 2024
A summary of the Senate meeting on 6 November 2024.

OTHER BUSINESS

20. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

20.1 The Vice-Chancellor thanked all Council members for their continued engagement, and acknowledged the volume of work that had been required into producing and finalising the various papers packs by the Director of Finance, University Secretary, and Senior Governance Officer.

20.2 University Council formally thanked for Senior Governance Officer for the support she had provided to Council and its committees over the previous three years, and wished her success in her new role.

21. AVAILABILITY OF AGENDA, PAPERS AND MINUTES

21.1 **Resolved:** to exclude the following papers from the open version under Standing order 11.8.

Agenda item 3	Major Item for Discussion	UC_2024_11_27_P3
Agenda item 7	Report on the Concordat to Support Research Integrity	UC_2024_11_27_P7
	Honorary Award Nominations	
Agenda item 8	Home and International Student Recruitment	UC_2024_11_27_P8
Agenda item 9	Financial Statements – summary and commentary only	UC_2024_11_27_P9.1
	Letter of Support for UHEL	UC_2024_11_27_P9.2
	Letter of Support for HEICL	UC_2024_11_27_P9.3
	Letter of Support for UHHCWI Ltd.	UC_2024_11_27_P9.4
	Financial Guarantees	UC_2024_11_27_P9.5
	External Audit Findings	UC_2024_11_27_P9.6
	Going Concern Assessment	UC_2024_11_27_P9.8

	Annual Remuneration Statement	UC_2024_11_27_P9.9
	Internal Audit Annual Report and Review of Financial Statements	UC_2024_11_27_P9.10
Agenda item 10	Audit and Risk Committee Annual Report	UC_2024_11_27_P9.11
	Annual OfS Financial Return 2024/25 and five-year forecast	UC_2024_11_27_P10
Agenda item 11	Students' Union Accounts for the Year to 31 July 2024	UC_2024_11_27_P11
Agenda item 14	Annual Report on Academic Governance	UC_2024_11_27_P14
Agenda item 15	Prevent Duty Annual Accountability Return 2024	UC_2024_11_27_P15
Agenda item 17	Appointment of External Auditors	UC_2024_11_27_P17
Agenda item 18	Council Committee Annual Reports	UC_2024_11_27_P18
Agenda item 19	Senior Postholder Remuneration Committee Minutes	UC_2024_11_27_P19

22. DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETINGS

Thursday 27 February 2025, Council Strategy Day (exact details to be confirmed)

Thursday 27 March 2025, 13.00 in the McClelland Suite

(* = Further details in the Confidential Supplement to these minutes, excluded under Standing Order 11.8)