

UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

Thursday, 03 July 2025

MINUTES

Author:	Alison Jones, University Secretary, July 2025
Present:	Mr Jonathan Thornton (Chair), Mr Ajaz Ahmed, Ms Freya Askwith-Martin, Mr Bernard Ainsworth, Mrs Sally Baines, Mr Robert Cox, Ms Sally Crosland, Professor Bob Cryan, Mrs Clare Morrow, Mr Krish Pilicudale, Baroness Kath Pinnock, Professor Isobel Pollock-Hulf, Bishop Smitha Prasadam.
In attendance:	Mr Wamick Aijaz, Mrs Lydia Devenney, Ms Imogen Hale, Ms Alison Jones, Professor Jane Owen-Lynch, Professor Tim Thornton,
Apologies:	Mr Rhys Davies, Dr Sara Eastburn

PRELIMINARY ITEMS

PAPER REFERENCE

The Chair welcomed Freya Askwith-Martin, the current Huddersfield Students' Union (HSU) President, to her first meeting of Council.

1. APPOINTMENT OF NEW MEMBERS OF UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

- 1.1 The University Secretary confirmed this would be covered under Item 8; University Secretary's Business.

2. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

- 2.1 Baroness Pinnock declared a conflict of interest in Item 3.

3. MAJOR ITEM FOR DISCUSSION

CIVIC UNIVERSITY AGREEMENT

- 3.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the proposed Civic University Agreement, developed in collaboration with Kirklees Council and other regional partners. The presentation outlined the Agreement's purpose, guiding principles, key thematic areas, and the planned official launch in August 2025. The Agreement's six core elements had been designed to align with, and support the University's Strategy Map, the West Yorkshire Local Growth Plan, and Kirklees Inclusive Economic Strategy.
- 3.2 Members considered the Agreement's objectives; to define and maintain beneficial relationships between the University and its regional partners, to promote the University's civic and community connections, to foster collaborative and research opportunities, and to contribute to the region's strategic development.
- 3.3 In response to members' questions, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor advised that civic agreements were being employed across the higher education sector to strengthen regional and industrial connections.

- 3.4 The Committee commended the Agreement and endorsed its emphasis on stakeholder collaboration. The importance of maintaining momentum following the launch was raised. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor provided assurance that the University would conduct annual reviews to ensure continued relevance and impact.

4. MINUTES

- 4.1 **Resolved:** that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2025 be accepted as a correct record.

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5. MATTERS ARISING

- 5.1 There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

6. CHAIR'S BUSINESS

- 6.1 There was no Chair's business.

7. VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BUSINESS

- 7.1 The Vice-Chancellor provided an update on progress with the development of the new University Strategy Map. Senate considered the draft strategy at its meeting on 11 June 2025 and recommended it onwards to Council. Council would have the opportunity to consider the proposed strategy in depth at a Council Strategy Day, arranged for 2 October 2025. Council would be joined by members of the University Executive on the day, including new members.

- 7.3 The Vice-Chancellor delivered a sector update.

Office for Students (OfS) Sustainability Report

The recent OfS report found that sector finances had declined for the third consecutive year. Financial forecasts remained challenging, primarily due to the real time reduction in home student funding and the continued fall in International student numbers. The regulator would be monitoring institutions closely for financial sustainability.

Financial difficulties at the University of Dundee

Members were briefed on the recent report into the financial difficulties at the University of Dundee, necessitating a financial bail out from the Scottish government. The inquiry report identified that governance failures had contributed. In response to members' questions, the Vice-Chancellor advised that English universities could not expect equivalent financial support to that provided by the Scottish Government.

Considering this case and the OfS Sustainability Report, members reflected on the stewardship responsibilities of Council and its Committees.

UK Immigration White Paper in relation to student recruitment

The Vice-Chancellor briefed members on the UK Immigration White Paper. Members noted that it contained measures that, if implemented, could impact negatively on universities' recruitment, finances, and compliance requirements.

UUK Transformation and Efficiency Taskforce and the new UK Industrial Strategy

The Vice-Chancellor reported on the work being led by Universities UK (UUK) to coordinate and learn from best practice in sector transformation in response to the continued financial challenge. Their initial publication considered the potential for additional efficiency measures, institutional collaborations or mergers, service sharing, digital capacity, benchmarking efficiencies, and strengthening governance.

The Vice-Chancellor also briefed Council on a range of potential opportunities for the University arising from the UK's Modern Industrial Strategy and NHS ten-year plan, including research and innovation, skills and talent development, regional growth and leadership, business collaboration, and policy engagement.

Members requested that time be allocated during the forthcoming Strategy Day to explore the transformation opportunities in greater depth.

7.4 The Vice-Chancellor provided an overview of recent University news and achievements:

- The contribution of a University alumni to an album that won Reggae Album of the Year at the 2025 Grammy Awards.
- The University received the Digital Education and Development Award at the Educate North Awards 2025 for its Graduate Career Explorer tool.
- University-led research on brain tumours and cell migration was investigating drug combinations to develop new approaches to treatment.
- The University's Brass Band achieved success at the Annual Unibrass competition including Best Soloist, Spirit of Unibrass, and second place overall for the Huddersfield band.
- Since its launch, Huddersfield Health Innovation Partnership had supported over 450 businesses in the development of health-related products and services.
- The Future Advanced Metrology Hub for Sustainable Manufacturing had been launched, with major research funding from UK Engineering and the Physical Sciences Research Council.
- The Jo More in Common Centre had achieved Platinum Well Certification, becoming the third campus building globally to do so.
- The University recorded an 87.6% apprenticeship qualification achievement rate, the highest of all university providers in England with more than 100 apprentices, according to data released in March by the Department of Education.
- A five-year research project on amplified sound technology had commenced, supported by a Leverhulme Trust International Professorship.
- A senior lecturer from the School of Human and Health Sciences had been named Educator of the Year by the Flexitol Tomorrow Podiatry awards.

- In April 2025, the University hosted the second Serious and Organised Crime Local Conference in collaboration with the National Police Chiefs' Council and the Home Office.
- Higher Education Statistics Agency data confirmed that 98% of the University's teaching staff held higher degrees, the highest proportion amongst comparably sized English higher education institutions.
- The University received the Stonewall Gold Award and ranked 56th among UK employers for LGBTQI+ inclusivity.
- The Director of Digital Information had been named UCISA 2025 Chief Information Officer of the Year.
- The University ranked highest globally for reducing inequality in the Times Higher Education Impact Awards.

8. UNIVERSITY SECRETARY'S BUSINESS

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8.1 Members received a report from the University Secretary on proposed actions concerning Council membership and a verbal update from the recent meeting of the Governance and Membership Committee. Following consideration, Council **approved** the following appointments, as recommended by the Governance and Membership Committee at its meeting on 2 July 2025:

- The appointment of Professor Mark Radford as a member of Council, for an initial term of three years, effective from 1 August 2025.
- The appointment of Mr Rob Eastwood as a co-opted member of the Audit and Risk Committee, for an initial term of three years, effective from 1 August 2025. A co-opted member of the Audit and Risk Committee.
- The appointment of Rhys Davies as Vice-Chair of Council, effective from 1 August 2025.

8.2 The University Secretary provided an update on succession planning for the role of Chair of Council, with the current Chair due to step down in July 2026. Panel sessions involving students, executive members and Council representatives were being planned for late summer.

The opportunity would be advertised shortly via the usual platforms, with an application deadline set for August to enable the Chair-elect to participate in the October Council Strategy Day. Targeted outreach was underway to encourage applicants from female senior leaders and from ethnic minority backgrounds. Members were encouraged to promote the opportunity within their networks.

8.3 Council received an update on regulatory and legal matters:

- The Office for Students (OfS) decision to fine the University of Sussex in relation to academic freedom and freedom of speech matters. It was noted that this was the subject of legal challenge.
- The Supreme Court judgment regarding the Equality Act, and related legislation on sex discrimination and biological sex.

The University Secretary advised Council that, considering these developments and the accompanying OfS Regulatory Advisory Note,

an audit of the University's policies, procedures and regulations was in progress. A report on the outcomes of the review would be presented at the next meeting of Council.

- 8.4 The University Secretary briefed members on the forthcoming review of the Committee of University Chair's Higher Education Code of Governance and the anticipated White Paper on Higher Education. An update of both items would be provided at a future meeting of Council.
- 8.5 Council considered the Governor Engagement Schedule for 2025/26, Suggestions from members would be incorporated into the annual plan.
- 8.6 Council noted the report on the use of the University Seal.

INSPIRING

9. STUDENTS' UNION REPORT

- 9.1 Members received a report from the outgoing President on notable Students' Union activities and achievements, including:
 - Students' Union Awards
 - Big Ideas Initiative
 - Students' APPG Evidence Submission
 - Varsity
 - Data on student engagement, including demographic analysis

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10. HUDDERSFIELD STUDENT SURVEY RESULTS

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- 10.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor, Teaching and Learning presented the 2024/25 Huddersfield Student Survey Results. Members noted the increased response rate, and improved overall satisfaction compared to the previous year.
- 10.2 Members discussed the results, noting variances in satisfaction across all Schools. In response to questions, the Pro-Vice Chancellor provided assurance that with centralised oversight, each School had developed an action plan in response to the results. Deans and senior leaders were providing support to course leaders to deliver interventions and engagement strategies where needed. Timetabling improvements, endorsed by the Senior Leadership Team, would be implemented from September to improve the student experience.

GROWTH AND EFFICIENCY

11. HOME AND INTERNATIONAL APPLICATIONS, ENROLMENTS AND RETENTION

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- 11.1 Council received an update from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor on applications, enrolments, and retention figures for Home and International students.

11.2

[REDACTED]

11.3

[REDACTED]

11.4 The Chair of the Estates and Finance Committee (EFC) provided assurance that EFC had scrutinised the data at its meeting on 13 June 2025 and was satisfied that, subject to the planned interventions, student recruitment did not compromise the proposed budget.

12. NATIONAL HEALTH INNOVATION CAMPUS (NHIC) UPDATE

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12.1 The Deputy Vice Chancellor provided an update on progress with the National Health Innovation Campus (NHIC) development, including the Emily Siddon construction project and plans for next-stage development. Members noted that the Estates and Finance Committee had considered the report at its meeting held on 3 July 2025.

12.2

[REDACTED]

13.

[REDACTED]

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13.1

[REDACTED]

14. RE-APPOINTMENT OF THE INTERNAL AUDITORS

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14.1 Council considered the recommendation by the Audit and Risk Committee at its meeting on 19 June 2025 to re-appoint Uniac as the University's internal auditors for 2025/26. Members asked for some follow up action to be taken to address the feedback from the staff survey. Council **approved** the re-appointment of Uniac for 12 months.

FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

15. FINANCIAL REPORT

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- 15.1 The Director of Finance presented the latest report on the University's financial position and forecast for the period ending 30 April 2025. Members noted that this had been considered and approved by the Estates and Finance Committee at its meeting on 13 June 2025.

15.2



- 15.3 The Chair of the Estates and Finance Committee provided assurance that the Committee was satisfied with progress to deliver the budget. Thanks were expressed to colleagues across the University for efforts to manage costs.

16. ANNUAL UNIVERSITY REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET

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- 16.1 Members received the University's Revenue and Capital Budget for 2025/26, noting that it had been considered by the Estates and Finance Committee at its meeting on 13 June 2025, and recommended for approval.*
- 16.2 The Chair of the Estates and Finance Committee provided assurance that the Committee had carefully considered the budget, including its rationale and had been satisfied that contingencies were in place to enable its delivery.
- 16.3 Council resolved to **approve** the proposed 2025/26 budget and associated capital expenditure.

OTHER COUNCIL MATTERS

17. COMMITTEE MINUTES

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Members noted the minutes for the following meetings:

- Audit and Risk Committee, 19 June 2025
- Estates and Finance Committee, 13 June 2025
- Summary of the Senate meeting, 11 June 2025

OTHER BUSINESS

18. ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- 18.1 The Chair thanked members who were stepping down from Council for their service; Baroness Pinnock, Wamick Aijaz, and Krish Pilicudale. The Chair also thanked Professor Jane Owen-Lynch and expressed best wishes for the future.

19. AVAILABILITY OF AGENDA, PAPERS AND MINUTES

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

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| Item 10 | Huddersfield Student Survey Results |
| Item 11 | Home and International Applications, Enrolments and Retention |

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Item 12	National Health Innovations Campus (NHIC) Update	UC_2025_07_03_P12
Item 13	Brand Perceptions Project	UC_2025_07_03_P13
Item 14	Re-appointment of the Internal Auditors	UC_2025_07_03_P14
Item 15	Finance Report	UC_2025_07_03_P15
Item 16	Annual University Revenue and Capital Budget	UC_2025_07_03_P16
Item 17	Committee Minutes	UC_2025_07_03_P17

20. DATE, TIME AND PLACE OF NEXT MEETING

Thursday 2 October 2025, Council Strategy Day

Thursday 26 November 2025, at 13:00 in the McClelland Suite