

King's College Council	
Meeting date	31 March 2021
Paper reference	KCC-21-01-21-03.1
Status	Unconfirmed
Access	Members and senior executives
FOI exemption	Redacted Sections: s.43, commercial interests



Minutes

The Council is asked to approve the minutes of the previous meeting.

Date	21 January 2021, 17.00
Location	Microsoft Teams
Present	Lord Geidt (Chair); Dr Angela Dean (Vice-Chair); Vivek Ahuja; Professor Sir Ed Byrne; Paul Cartwright; Sir Jon Coles; Michael D'Souza; Paul Goswell; Salma Hussain; Sir Ron Kerr; Ros King; Steve Large; The Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally; Clare Sumner; Professor Guy Tear; Kat Thorne; Dr Susan Trenholm; Nhuoc Lan Tu; and Professor Evelyn Welch.
Apologies	Annie Kent, VP (Finance)
In attendance	Chris Mottershead, Senior Vice President (Quality, Strategy & Innovation) Professor Richard Trembath, Senior Vice President (Health) Professor Nicola Phillips, Vice President & Vice-Principal (Education) Professor 'Funmi Olonisakin, VP (International) Professor Reza Razavi, VP (Research) Baroness Bull, VP (London) Professor Bronwyn Parry, VP (Service) Darren Wallis, Executive Director, Education & Students Richard Salter, Director of Analytics Bronwyn Parcell, Director of Strategy, Planning & Analytics Ian Barrett, Director of Strategy (Arts and Sciences) Joy Whyte, Strategic Director, Education and Students (for item 6.3) Juliet Foster, Director of Education, IoPPN (for item 6.3) Robin McIver, COO Arts and Sciences
	Secretariat: Irene Birrell, College Secretary Joanna Brown, Governance Manager Xan Kite, Director of Governance Services Paul Mould, Director of Business Assurance

1 Welcome, apologies and notices

The Chair opened the meeting on behalf of the Chair and welcomed members and attendees to the meeting.

No notice of conflicts of interest had been received.

2 Approval of agenda

The Chair noted that the papers had been distributed using a Council Team on the MS Teams software as part of the trial to see whether it would be feasible to replace the current system for storing and disseminating papers which would save £30k per year and address some problems experienced with the current system. Members would direct comments to the Secretariat.

Decision

That the agenda be approved.

3 Unanimous Consent Agenda (including Minutes of the Previous Meeting) [KCC-21-01-21-03]

The following two items were removed from the unanimous consent agenda and discussed at this stage in the meeting:

3.2 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Council noted corrections to be made to the attendees' names in the Minutes: Salma Hussain and Tasnia Yasmin. It also noted the editorial amendments made to the unconfirmed minutes concerning the report of the Finance Committee proposed by the Chair of that Committee.

Decision

That the minutes of the meeting of Council held on 10 November 2020 be **approved** as amended.

6.5 Modern Slavery Act Transparency Statement 2019-20

Council asked for further assurance of the training received by staff and their ability to discern the signs of slavery. The Vice President (Education) volunteered to investigate what could be done to strengthen the statement and would review what the suppliers/consortia do in terms of training and due diligence. It was noted that Council's Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee reviewed a report on procurement on an annual basis and would seek this assurance as part of that discussion. The date would be corrected to state the end of the current financial year.

Decision

That the Modern Slavery Transparency Statement 2019-20, with corrected date, be **approved**.

Decision

That the remaining reports on the Unanimous Consent Agenda be taken as read and noted or approved as set out in the papers.

4 Matters Arising from the Minutes

None.

5 Report of the Chair

None.

6 Report of the President & Principal

6.1 Summary Report on Key Issues [KCC-21-01-21-06.1]

The report of the Principal outlined key current issues. During discussion on this topic, points raised included:

- The increase in student admissions resulting in the highest number of applicants and enrolments seen at King's. This brought increased fee income and set King's apart from the majority of the Sector. Fees were being set at the same level as the rest of the Russell Group;
 - The phenomenal achievement of the academic community in delivering successful online teaching, evidenced by the 5% increase in students indicating that they strongly agree with statements about the quality of the modules;
 - The income loss from halls of residences during the pandemic. The halls were currently at around 25% occupancy;
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- The challenges anticipated in managing the admissions process without A-level results in 2021 and the need to manage postgraduate admissions carefully where there is dependence on students from particular international markets;
 - Successes seen in the Guardian awards and achievements in the Times Higher Impact rankings and strong rankings in employability where King's was 4th in the UK and 24th in the world;

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6.2 COVID-19 Update Overview [KCC-21-01-21-06.2]

- COVID infection rates at King's amongst students and staff had risen and a more stringent health and safety plan had been put in place on campus. Unison had mounted a campaign for staff who have limited choices about working from home being put at risk and the university was working closely with those communities of staff to ensure their safety;
- King's work with clinical partners and on the vaccination campaign had a significant impact on staff and students. All leave for NHS staff had been cancelled since Christmas; of the 6800 patients currently in hospital in the London region, 1250 required critical care and only 800 critical care beds were normally available. There was increased ongoing activity in the second lock down including trauma care which impacted particularly on King's College Hospital. King's clinical colleagues had been moved back into the hospitals and students from the Health Schools were making direct contributions to the NHS. The NHS community was exhausted and it was believed that the patient numbers were at their peak but would take a long time to descend from the plateau. The vaccination programme was the largest in history and vaccination sites were located on all three of the King's trust partners. The Science Gallery had taken on a new role in providing a waiting space for those waiting for vaccination.
- King's had responded to the student call for a safety net for their academic results impacted by the pandemic by introducing a Fair Assessment Policy that aimed to ensure that no students were disadvantaged as a result of COVID and that the integrity and quality of King's awards were protected. The Policy was comprehensive and proportionate and provided a range of measures that could be applied at the individual and cohort level as appropriate. Student views on the measures were polarised and KCLSU had called for module level mitigation rather than cohort level. The KCLSU Officers had participated in the committee discussions through which the Policy had been approved over a very short timeline and the university was extremely grateful to them for their candour and effort.
- The president of KCLSU highlighted a problem in getting some academic staff responses to individual student contact and Council noted that feedback was a continuing complaint from students and asked for information on measures to resolve this such as a contact point for students experiencing this issue. It was reported that King's had information online regarding contact points for students experiencing difficulty in getting responses which ranged depending on the level of need and urgency. The student concern process had been reviewed and strengthened by linking residences with campus services and there were systems to alert problems for the attention of senior tutors or heads of department, but it was not clear that students were fully aware of these. There was more work to be done on communications to improve this position.

6.3 Mental Health Strategy Update [KCC-21-01-21-06.3]

Council noted a paper that summarised the context, current situation and future issues for student mental health and wellbeing at King's. The report also included an update on current provision. A full report on the action points from the 2018-2020 Student Mental Health and Wellbeing

Strategic Plan would be provided in the next report and Strategic Plan. Particular attention was drawn to the Student Minds University Mental Health Charter, and the need to ensure a clear, ongoing reporting line from the Student Mental Health and Wellbeing Steering Group into King's governing structures. The concept was for a whole university approach to be taken, overseen by a Steering Group and including five workstreams: learn, live, support; work; enabling factors. In discussion the following points were raised:

- Council would like to see the quantification of the position - how many students are we talking about at different levels of severity, what's the volume of clients for services, what's the scale of resource. It was reported that data collection had been patchy, particularly with respect to the impact of intervention, but that work was underway to identify mechanisms to collect this.
- Council asked whether a focus was being placed on student wellbeing under pressure, mindful of the identification of isolation as a key issue in the KCLSU data. It was reported that extensive work was underway in this area. Data on the first term was available and would be circulated to Members.
- It was important to recognise the wellbeing services offered to students by King's residences and King's Sport.

6.4 2019-20 TRAC Return [KCC-21-01-21-06.4]

The Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC) was a statutory return made to the OfS, allowing them to compare the financial sustainability of universities across the sector. Previously, this annual return had been approved by the Chair of the Finance Committee via Chair's Action, but changes in the OfS requirements now preclude this and require approval by Council or by the Finance Committee at a meeting.

Decision

Council **approved** the 2019-20 TRAC Return.

7 Strategic Overview Discussion

The main section of the meeting was devoted to this strategic discussion, without specific decisions to be taken. Members had been provided with the following background reading in advance: Finance Update; Balanced Scorecard; Size and Shape Update; Framing a discussion on priorities and portfolio; Investment in Education and Student Experience. All the Vice Presidents were present to answer any questions together with the Directors of Strategy, Planning & Analytics, Analytics, and Strategy (Arts and Sciences).

7.1 Principal's Reflections

The Principal gave a high-level overview of the university's journey to its current position and his view of the key tasks for the future. He addressed increasing confidence and reputation; balance of academic strength noting recently strengthened areas in business and engineering; significant increase in size to becoming fourth or fifth largest in the UK with a budget of over £1bn; and differentiation as a civic university devoted to service. He identified two key tasks for the future: a focus on education and student satisfaction, and on margin creation.

The university would need to take a view on the growth of the natural sciences as this was the one remaining discipline area where development was needed to compete with the top universities in the world.

Council noted that it owed the Principal a debt of gratitude for his contribution and stewardship which had made a critical difference to the successful journey through sophisticated leadership in a complex political context.

7.2 Context

Professor Welch, the incoming Interim President and Principal, presented the context for the strategic discussion.

An additional £47m tuition fee income had been received above that expected following the increase in student numbers, which was balanced by a deficit of £42m in trading income from the residences. Occupancy levels in residences were at 25% and King's was the most generous in the Russell Group if not the whole HE Sector in giving students every mitigation possible in this respect including not charging for time not lived in the residences and providing extra support for those in the residences. King's was now subject to the national student rent strike despite this and KCLSU was organising a meeting to enable the senior managers to discuss this directly with students. The losses should be one-off occurrences for 2020/21 as students were keen to return to the campus and residences as soon as they were able. Costs continued to be managed very tightly across professional services, but staff resources would need to be put back into areas where we needed to strengthen for the future.

7.3 Decision Framework

The next phase of strategic vision planning would require decisions to be taken on priorities and available resources. A key area was education and student experience. There was also a compelling case for investment in the natural sciences as the final key discipline area required to match the profile of the top world universities. Decisions were required on the way the university wished to look in ten years' time. A portfolio view would be needed in deciding on priorities. The current environment presented a natural reflection point to address changes in the world and the HE Sector and it also coincided with the university's leadership transition. Courage, resilience and stamina would be needed, together with clarity on the metrics, targets and trade-offs to be made. In discussion the following points were raised:

- A key decision would be to define what King's aimed to be; is the goal still to be in the top 30 and what does that offer in terms of strategic directions? Moving further up the league tables will require exponential effort.
 - Natural sciences are critical to future international reputation; if we do not build on them, we will begin to go backwards.
 - What will students want in ten years' time? They will need routes to employment and entrepreneurship will be important. Is the balanced scorecard measuring the right things for the future?
 - We need to build on our research strengths and impact.
 - How do we engage students in discussions about what the future should look like?
 - Financial considerations would need to include the increasing provision required for pensions and further income streams. We have laudable goals and ambitions but need more money to carry them forward and that has to be a priority.
 - Staff are excited by the ambition and drive. Maintaining their wellbeing and keeping everyone on the journey together is critical.
 - Clarity is need on the targets, metrics and the trade-offs to be made in pursuing different paths.
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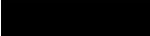
8 Reports of Committees

8.1 Report of the joint meeting of the Finance and Estates Strategy Committees [KCC-21-01-21-08.1]

Council noted that the Estates Strategy Committee and Finance Committee had met together on 19 January 2021 and reviewed options for capital raise and had reaffirmed that King's should continue with the private placement option. Council was reminded that only a very small number of projects had allocated capital at the present time and that further consideration was being given to alternative capital funding processes.

8.2 Report of the Academic Board [KCC-21-01-21-08.2]

All items were noted on the Consent Agenda:

- (i) *Decolonising the Curriculum*
- (ii) 
- (iii) *Portfolio Simplification Update*
- (iv) *UG External Examiner report*
- (v) *NMS Change of Faculty Name*
- (vi) *Student Engagement and Satisfaction*

8 Report of the KCLSU [KCC-20-11-24-08]

Council received a report from the KCLSU President which highlighted the four key issues on students' minds: tuition fee refunds; rent rebates and the need for improved communication on this; wellbeing and loneliness; and the student outcome safety net and differences of views between students and university leadership regarding the impact of this on their education and employment aspirations in a very difficult job market.

The President recorded her gratitude for the positive relationship between KCLSU and the senior management team and for inclusion in discussions at early stages.

10 Any Other Business

The Chair thanked Professor Sir Edward Byrne for his outstanding contribution to the College and specifically for the work of the Council as Principal. Members were attending a remote online farewell gathering for Professor Sir Edward following the meeting.

He also thanked Chris Mottershead for his contribution to the Council noting that he would also be retiring at the end of January.

Lord Geidt

February 2021