
College Council Minutes - Approved

Date	31 March 2021, 17.00
Location	Online via Microsoft Teams
Present	Lord Geidt (Chair); Dr Angela Dean (Vice-Chair); Vivek Ahuja; 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; Kat Thorne; Dr Susan Trenholm; and Professor Evelyn Welch.
Apologies	Professor Guy Tear; and Nhuoc Lan Tu
In attendance	Professor Richard Trembath, Senior Vice President (Health) Bronwyn Parcell, Director of Strategy, Planning & Analytics (for Item 4) Richard Salter, Director of Analytics (for Item 6.2) Denis Shukur, Chief Executive KCLSU (for Item 8)
	Secretariat: Irene Birrell, College Secretary Joanna Brown, Governance Manager Xan Kite, Director of Governance Services Paul Mould, Deputy College Secretary & Chief Compliance Officer

1 Welcome, apologies and notices

Apologies had been received from Council Members Lan Tu and Guy Tear

No notice of conflicts of interest had been received.

2 Approval of agenda

It had been requested that the KCLSU report be taken higher up the agenda from time to time, and it was agreed that it would be moved to follow the Principal's report for this meeting. With that amend, the agenda was approved, noting that the Remuneration Committee Report would be taken at the end of the meeting after any other business, and that item 7.6 was reserved.

3 Unanimous Consent Agenda (including Minutes of the Previous Meeting) [KCC-21-03-31-03]

The reports on the Unanimous Consent Agenda were taken as read and noted or approved as set out in the papers.

4 Matters Arising from the Minutes

Strategic Planning & Priorities – Decision Framework

Council received and noted a report arising from its discussion about strategic issues held at its January meeting, setting out preliminary first steps in moving forward. There had been a diverse range of views at the meeting around assessing success. Council members agreed that a briefing on the various ranking systems would be welcome. *[ACTION LOG]*

Members also indicated interest in receiving breakfast briefings on the university's role in a number of areas of significant impact on society as we emerge from COVID including: climate change and

planetary health, climate justice, emerging and disruptive technologies, data science, mental health and economic inequality. [ACTION LOG]

5 Report of the Chair

None.

6 Report of the Interim President & Principal

6.1 Summary Report on Key Issues [KCC-21-03-31-06.1]

The report of the Interim Principal outlined key current issues, and she provided updates to the meeting on the following matters:

- Concern that students would not be permitted a general return to campus until after 17 May which was disappointing given that exams take place at the end of May.
- The government's requirement that testing on campus get to at least 70 percent being tested before they could have confidence about student movement.
- An all-staff forum conducted earlier in the day and attended by approximately 1700 staff from which it was clear that while some staff are anxious to return to campus, others remain concerned about health and safety.
- Confirmation of the government's intent to eliminate London Weighting.
- The potentially devastating impact of recently announced cuts to research funding for overseas development work and for support of the UK's continued involvement in Horizon. Taken together these could amount to an approximately £1bn cut in research support in the UK.
- The proposed National Security and Investment Bill, which would give the Government the right to interrogate any agreements or partnerships made with countries it deemed of concern. A similar bill in Australia had resulted in a very unhelpful scrutinising bureaucracy.
- Completion of King's submission to the REF2021 (Research Excellence Framework), the system for assessing the quality of research in UK higher education institutions. The Council recorded thanks to Professor Reza Razavi and Jo Lakey for all their efforts in getting the quality of King's work recognised and in achieving income for the quality of this work. Results and ratings would be received in April 2022, and funding would be based on those results from August 2022.
- KEF (Knowledge Exchange Framework) outcomes had just been published and King's had been ranked among the top universities in the UK.

The Senior Vice President and Provost (Health) reported on the review of the governance of King's Health Partners (KHP), the key recommendations of which were to expand the membership of the KHP Executive to allow for greater alignment of interests between the Trusts and the university, and to revert to an independent chair.

During discussion, points raised included:

- While King's had a large number of offers for the next academic year, students were sitting on offers much longer than in previous years, and what mattered was the difference between offer and acceptance.
 - The politics of vaccination had been a key issue at the Staff Forum and there was much to do to counter staff concerns. The university would not mandate vaccination but would be working with its NHS Trusts to understand the range of reasons why some people were nervous.
 - Blended learning would continue, and plans for one metre social distancing meant that much more could be timetabled both in laboratories and for onsite education.
 - In terms of student experience, the university would continue to liaise with KCLSU as well as making its own assessments in order to be able to adapt rapidly to address student and staff
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needs rather than waiting for NSS results at the end of the year. For example, in a blended teaching environment, the costs of data affected the ability to teach effectively and build community when students felt compelled to leave their cameras off in order to save money.

- There was a discussion on Climate Change Risk and the importance developing a more prominent featuring of this in the university's strategy and curriculum led in tandem with the Finance Committee Chair. Council asked to be updated on these in conjunction with Finance Committee. *[ACTION LOG]*

6.2 Balanced Scorecard Update [KCC-21-03-31-06.2]

The Interim President & Principal noted the challenges of measuring long term progress whilst pivoting quickly and regularly to respond to current needs and circumstances. It was necessary to understand clearly both what it is we value that we want to measure, and what is not possible to measure but needs to be accounted for somehow in the balanced scorecard.

The Director of Analytics presented the bi-annual Balanced Scorecard update. It was the first time that the Balanced Scorecard had used year-end forecasts for the current year. Their use had succeeded in reducing lag in some indicators. The Scorecard also included updates to targets made through this year's business planning round and indicated who was responsible and accountable for the various targets. A more in-depth review would be carried out when the new President & Principal was in post.

The overall movement was positive: the data showed the best ever non-continuation rate since 2002, the reasons for which were many and varied; and research and EDI measures were moving in the right direction. There was a mixed picture in reference to benchmarks. A number of indicators had been directly impacted by COVID-19, and the usual data was not available in some areas, for example the post graduate survey had been suspended.

During discussion, points raised included:

- Between the balanced scorecard and the Principal's Report members expected to see something about risk and risk management. It was noted that this had been included in the Principal's report to the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee and could be included as an annex for Council if deemed useful. *[ACTION LOG]*
- More current information against the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) would be valuable in order to construct some sort of numerical understanding on progress/state of play.
- Productivity was an area that needed data improvement, and the timeliness of data could also be improved upon.
- Student attrition was higher in some faculties than in others and should be investigated, particularly the move to online/blended learning and its impact on attrition levels. Student attrition could be an indicator of bigger issues.
- Members found the balanced scorecard useful, and if it could be dashboarded and updated in real time it would be even more so. A lot of the data already was dashboarded internally and thought would be put to what level of access might be provided to Council. Much of it was at faculty level, and university level data masked faculty variations.
- It was requested that thought be put into whether to integrate sustainability with financial productivity measures.

6.3 Access and Participation Plan Monitoring Report [KCC-21-03-31-06.3]

The Senior Vice President (Operations) presented a report summarising the university's monitoring return to the Office for students (OfS) on the 2019/2020 Access and Participation Plan. It was the last year of the current Access and Participation Plan. The BAME attainment gap had improved but remained higher than the target and this issue would be put to the business planning round for greater focus and

attention at faculty level. It had also been given more visibility in the race equality work. Otherwise, good progress had been achieved against targets.

8 Report of the KCLSU [KCC-21-03-31-08]

8.1 Report of the KCLSU President

Council discussed a report from the KCLSU President which highlighted results from a number of innovative ways in which the KCLSU had been trying to understand the rapidly evolving student perspective on a range of issues in such a challenging year. Council members welcomed the report and the valuable information it contained.

The President highlighted that:

- Students who started their first year in the pandemic would soon be entering their third year of studies.
- Students were still not clear about what 'blended' learning actually meant.
- A massive increase in loneliness and issues with respect to well-being should be anticipated.
- The BAME gap was likely to widen. KCLSU was doing its own submission to the Office for Students regarding this.
- KCLSU were grateful to members of staff who had attended the student Town Hall which had discussed issues including accommodation, tuition fees, freedom of speech and expression and improving the student voice. The KCLSU President invited members to join the termly town halls as observers and members asked that the Town Hall dates be sent to them.
- Tuition fees were a nationwide struggle. The NUS (National Union of Students) conference the following week would be pushing for a tuition fee strike for the following year. The KCLSU President had been coordinating a group of student unions through the Russell Group on this topic.

Council Member Kat Thorne, also Director of Sustainability, said that the Student Success Team would also be happy to send its dates to governing body members, and that Council may also be interested to receive reports from King's 100, a group of 100 students who met four times a year.

In response to a question about potential links between the BAME attainment gap and access to IT resources, the KCLSU President stated that King's had a good policy on digital poverty, but working through the processes to get the resources could be difficult. The KCLSU President confirmed there were examples of students not having a laptop; that the costs of data in some international locations were crippling; and that five percent had reported that they did not have access to email. However, as it was an online survey and thus required IT resource, the full picture was hard to determine.

It was noted that the black student attainment gap was different from the larger BAME group gap. The KCLSU President reported that a black students' network had been initiated and that there was an intention to use this for attainment gap research. Decolonising the curriculum was a key element to BAME attainment, as was the issue of commuting time. The Interim President & Principal also referenced the First Class degree attainment gap, which was one of the key themes being raised in the next business planning round.

The KCLSU Chief Executive stated that it should be acknowledged that there had been some narrowing of the attainment gap, but it was a complicated issue, and the gap narrowing did not in any way mean that the problem was over. He highlighted the lack of BAME academics as a big issue; as well as the fact that BAME students face further problems in finding employment once they graduate, and that it would be helpful for the university to have a role post-graduation.

8.2 KCLSU Returning Officer's Election Report

Council received a report from the Deputy Returning Officer, and the Chief Executive of the KCLSU was in attendance to present the report. A new student leadership had been elected for the 2021-2022 academic year. The highlights were that:

- there had been a considerable drop in the number of complaints;
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- Measures had been put in place to ensure voter coercion was not happening and to ensure the validity of votes in an online environment. This may be one reason for the drop in the number of individual voters;
 - There had been improvement in the representation of women in the leadership teams;
 - The biggest area of diversity challenge was to elect more non-Asians;
 - Another big issue was digital fatigue. Students were losing interest in engaging online;
 - Percentages: 65% of the voters were BAME; 74% were home students; 62% self-identified as women. There had been a percentage increase in postgraduate voters from 7% to 11%.
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7 Reports of Committees

7.1 Report of the Finance Committee [KCC-21-03-31-07.1]

The Chair of the Finance Committee thanked the Finance team for the extra hard work they had put in over the pandemic. The focus of the Committee throughout the pandemic had been: cash preservation; ensuring sufficient spending capacity to enable staff and student wellbeing to be prioritised; and spending appropriately to keep the university going. As the country is beginning to emerge from the COVID lockdown and the Finance Committee concurred with management that the cash position was better than anticipated at the earlier planning rounds, the Committee was now returning to focusing more on strategy.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

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[Redacted]

[Redacted]

(iv) Update on Pensions

The Interim President & Principal proposed that this discussion be postponed until the May meeting of Council as the UUK (Universities UK) fourth option had not yet been received.

All remaining items of the Finance Committee report were noted on the Consent Agenda:

(v) Productivity Improvement in Health

(vi) Size and Shape

(vii) Research Recovery Costs

(viii) Climate related risks

7.2 Report of the Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee [KCC-21-03-31-07.2]

The Chair of the Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee introduced the report.

(i) Interim Annual Health & Safety Report

The Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee had considered the interim Annual Health & Safety report and were satisfied that it was sufficiently far advanced that it could be recommended to Council for approval.

Decision: That the Interim Annual Health & Safety report be approved.

(ii) Risk presentation and discussion: Equality, Diversity & Inclusion

The Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee considered the annual Equality, Diversity & Inclusion report from a risk perspective and were satisfied that the actions were right and that the governance framework was appropriate.

Decision:
That the Annual Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Report be approved.

[REDACTED]

All remaining items of the Audit, Risk & Compliance Committee report were noted or approved on the Consent Agenda:

- (iv) *Annual Research Integrity Statement (approved)*
- (v) *Internal Audit Update*
- (vi) *Value for Money*
- (vii) *Enterprise Risk Management*
- (viii) *Compliance report*

7.3 Report of the Academic Board [KCC-21-03-31-07.3]

All items were noted on the Consent Agenda:

- (i) *Matters Arising Updates*
- (ii) *COVID-19 (Education) update*
- (iii) [REDACTED]
- (iv) *King's Education Institute*
- (v) *Fair Assessment Policy*
- (vi) *Academic Strategy for Research*
- (vii) *Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Committee report*

7.4 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]



7.5 Report of the Governance & Nominations Committee [KCC-21-03-31-07.5]

The College Secretary presented the report.

(i) Ordinance Amendment to the Standing Orders

While it had been a long-standing practice for committee chairs to approve urgent matters between meetings of their committees by Chair's action, the authority to do this is not referenced in the Ordinances.

Decision:

That Ordinance B9.7 be amended to provide for standing committee decisions to be taken by a Committee Chair's Action in the same way that decisions of Council can be taken by Chair's Action.

(ii) Petition re Council Membership

The Interim President & Principal reported that there had been further correspondence from a member of faculty regarding the composition of Council. It was the second time that this petition had been put before Council, and in the meantime had grown from 600 to 800 signatures (in the context of circa 40,000 students and 8000 staff). The Governance and Nominations Committee considered the new correspondence but remained of the view that there was distinct value in independent objective expertise. It was noted that King's met advice from the Committee of University Chairs on what good governance constitutes for university councils.

A member of GNC noted that if the aim of the petition was to get more students and staff involved in decision-making processes, there were a lot of different and more effective ways that that could be achieved. It was important, however, that Council become more visible to and better understood by the university community.

Council members agreed with the position of the Committee and looked forward to receiving a paper articulating its views more fully for the July meeting of Council.

All remaining items of the Governance and Nominations Committee report were noted or approved on the Consent Agenda:

- (iii) *Member Reappointments (approved)*
- (iv) *Staff Member Appointment (approved)*
- (v) *Meeting Cycle 2021-2022 (approved)*
- (vi) *Update on the University of London Act*
- (vii) *Search for New Members*
- (viii) *Process for selecting second student member*
- (ix) *Annual Council Review Process*
- (x) *September Away Day – Preliminary Planning*

7.6



[Redacted text block]

10 Any Other Business

None.

At this point in the meeting, all observers and executive staff members of the Council, aside from the Interim President & Principal, left the meeting.

7.7

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