

College Council Minutes - Approved

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

Date 12 May 2022, 17.00

Location Council Room

Present Nhuoc Lan Tu (Vice-Chair); Vivek Ahuja; Dr Hillary Briffa; Paul Cartwright; Donna Catley; Sir Jon Coles; Michael D'Souza; Paul Goswell; Steve Large; The Rt Revd and Rt Hon Dame Sarah Mullally; Kat Thorne; Clare Sumner; Zahra Syed; Professor Richard Trembath, Professor Guy Tear; and Professor Evelyn Welch

Apologies Lord Geidt (Chair); Sir Ron Kerr

In attendance Rebecca Seling, KCLSU Vice-President Education (Postgraduate) (*standing attendee*)
 Professor Mike Curtis, SVP (Academic)
 Annie Kent, CFO/Vice President (Finance)
 Professor Reza Razavi, VP (Research) (*Items 6 and 8.2*)
 Professor Adam Fagan, VP (Education) (*Item 6*)
 Robin McIver, DVP Operations (*Item 6*)
 Bronwyn Parcell, Director of Strategy, Planning and Analytics (*Item 6*)
 Dr Ian Barrett, Director of Strategy (*Item 6*)

Secretariat:

Irene Birrell, College Secretary
 Xan Kite, Director of Governance
 Joanna Brown, Governance Manager
 Paul Mould, Deputy College Secretary & Chief Compliance Officer

1 Welcome, apologies and notices

The Chair welcomed members and attendees to the meeting.

2 Declarations of Interest

No notice of conflicts of interest had been received. Members were asked to confirm that the currently published register of interests was accurate. No conflicts of interests in relation to any of the agenda items was declared.

3 Approval of agenda

Approved.

4 Unanimous Consent Agenda (including Minutes of the Previous Meeting) [KCC-22-05-12-03]

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

5 Matters Arising from the Minutes

None.

6.1 Roadmap to 2026 [KCC-22-05-12-06.1] & Financial Plan to 2025-2026 [KCC-22-05-12-06.2]

The Principal reported that the current strategy refresh would provide a five-year roadmap to get to the objectives already approved as Vision 2029. It planned only as far as 2026 because it was likely that there would be changes in the context by that time and because this was the end date of the Principal's term of office. The paper developed the high-level points discussed by Council at its September 2022 away day taking account of the extensive cross-university consultation exercise undertaken in the meantime. The report presented to Council provided a first draft of directions plus broad financial realities, in preparation for a viable financial plan which would reflect current financial context and outlook, with a view to the organisation's needs beyond 2026. Feedback on the current direction was sought from Council and a further developed version with precise KPIs and individual accountabilities would be presented in September 2022.

The four key goals were concerned with: ensuring student success; a thriving King's community; sustainable research and innovation excellence; and service through our strengths:

- 1) The most important of these was student success. Students would be entering universities over the next few years having had a disrupted education journey because of the pandemic. The Covid experience had also changed university delivery with new blended and hybrid methods emerging. In addition, the job market had changed following Covid. At the very heart of student success plans was a critical need to get the basic elements and systems right.
- 2) A thriving King's Community: King's community is about King's talent. Covid had changed the employer/employee relationship and all universities faced intractable differences of position on pensions which indicated that some kind of revision was needed for the employment contract. Consideration needed to be given to the pathways provided for non-teaching/research staff and professional staff.
- 3) King's had proven research excellence and the strategy would address how to sustain that excellence. There were a number of different challenges to address regarding sustainability, including finances, for example reliance on international student fees; the pursuit of net zero, which was an area that King's was not as prominent in as desired; and finding better ways of developing research talent.
- 4) Service through our strengths: Service was a deep ethos at King's and King's service ethic needed to be based on the knowledge it generated and on its students and staff. King's would continue to work in partnership to ensure that strengths in education and research were applied to local, national and global challenges, including supporting a just global transition to a net-zero carbon future.

The four key goals would be supported by three key enablers: a simple, nimble, efficient King's; a transformed physical and digital estate; and sustainable finances.

Members commended the updated roadmap and its progress since September, acknowledging the breadth of the ambition and that it was a work in progress. The following key points were made in discussion:

- Defining student success was complicated and challenging: all students on entering King's were successful, and King's had good employability data, but it was critical to understand how students viewed success and to be qualitative as well as quantitative in measuring success. Students were looking for a variety of skills and opportunities. The offer of a flexible curriculum and how the university managed expectations at the beginning of the degree journey was critical, for example helping students to understand what they needed in order to succeed, in addition to bringing everything together in the last few months of
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their degrees to help them understand what comes next and what the challenges might be. The KCLSU President added that success was also about finding ways to stand out and develop a critical perspective; and that mental health, building life-long relationships and a sense of belonging contributed to the quality of experience.

- Quantitative data was useful in recognising attainment gaps, and for this purposed needed to be developed and used more effectively. It should be possible to identify and measure who does well and who needs individual intervention.
- A member commented that the enablers needed more definition. The four key goals were clear but there was currently less information about what the institution had to do to achieve them, how success would be tracked and what the specific measurable actions were. The financial implications were considerable.
- On financial sustainability a member queried whether the margin of six percent as a target was realistic. The document read “we will strive to reach a 6% margin” and it was suggested this needed to be more exact.
- The focus on ensuring student success was commended but would require a shift of time and resources. Therefore, more clarity was required on the balance between the four goals, how the priorities would impact on one another and what the key elements were as there was only so much financial and executive resource. It was noted mental health must not be a tag on. Equipping students to understand how to maintain health and quality of life was considered crucial. It was noted that the impact on students of both the cost of living and the increase in student numbers could receive more attention.
- What was the differentiating deliverable? It had been thought that the social impact idea did make King’s different, and that perhaps that could be explored more across the various elements. It was noted that the section on King’s community, while it captured everything, could be applicable to any organisation. What was the impact of King’s doing the same as other institutions? What was uniquely critical for King’s, versus what was good to have? What was it King’s was doing to play to King’s strengths? For example, one of the things that made King’s distinctive was its Department of War Studies and such strengths should be capitalised.
- It was noted that the roadmap contained focus on climate change but that a lot of King’s expertise lay in health and a lot of society challenges would be around health issues and human value in a society driven by technology.
- The document acknowledged staff concerns about workload affecting health, but workload could also have the impact of loss of opportunities for advancement and progression. How were staff going to be invested in to enable them to help achieve Vision 2029.
- How the impact of changes in senior leadership on the road map would be managed, and management capacity to achieve the ambitions.
- The importance of ensuring that students continue to play an active role in strategy discussions.
- Could culture be a key enabler? For example, the shift to digital was a significant cultural change, as was a move to standardised processes and devolved decision making.

Regarding the financial margin the Principal agreed the need for clarity and accountability, and for measurable plans. The current situation was a focus on reaching six percent by 2026, noting that inflation had made the extra two percent more difficult. In an organisation with more than 50 percent of expenses being people it was hard to see how the required savings

could be achieved just by cutting costs and it was expected that trade-offs would be much clearer in September.

Student success was at the heart of the roadmap to 2026, and the Principal agreed mental health and wellbeing should be a primary focus, adding that King's should be sector leading in this area. It would take up more time at Council if it was a key imperative. Student success would require a lot of investment in time and money.

The Principal commented on social impact and its unique place at King's: one way King's was making that real and distinctive was to have every King's student take King's First Year, and at the heart of that programme was the idea of social impact and helping students to understand their ability to make disruptive change.

The DVP (Operations) stated that regarding education, the aim was for more consistency and standardisation, focusing on quality for both staff and students. Council member concerns about trying to do too much and needing confidence in delivery plans and getting the basics right had been heard. The key enabler was simple, nimble, efficient. The central three priorities for investment were education, student support and HR.

The SVP (Operations) stated that the Roadmap to 2026 would return to Council in September with a full list of actions and tradeoffs and how they would be prioritised. There was already a good sense of where transformational change and investment would be needed. There would be a need to change behaviours and culture across professional services to provide value for money and make King's more customer focused and the "Ways of Working" project would be involved in this.

7 Report of the Chair

Charter & Statutes Amendments [KCC-22-05-12-07]

Council had been provided with two weeks notice of the first request for approval of proposals to amend the Charter and Statutes in accordance with the special resolution requirements; and also received notice of the second request for approval scheduled for its 13 July meeting.

The Amended Supplementary Charter and the revised Statutes require the approval of the Privy Council. The amendments proposed had been approved by Council at meetings held over the last two years. The initial proposal was to gain "university title" along with many other colleges of the University of London. Additional amendments have been added, including the one substantive change to the Statutes to reconfigure the membership to allow a second student to serve on Council. All Government department approvals are now in place in order that the proposals can be put forward to the Privy Council.

Decision: That Council approved by Special Resolution to petition Her Majesty:

- (i) for an Amendment Supplemental Charter to amend and replace the College's existing Supplemental Charter of 2009 subject to any amendments required by Her Majesty; and
- (ii) for amendments to the Statutes, and to request that Her Majesty approve the revision of the Statutes as noted subject to any amendments required by Her Majesty.

8 Report of the President & Principal

8.1 Summary Report on Key Issues [KCC-22-05-12-08.1]

The President & Principal presented his report to Council. Updates not included within the report included:

Industrial action: A further UCU ballot had resulted in the potential for a marking boycott.

Emergency provisions authorised by the Academic Board would ensure that students progress and graduate with classifications.

Admissions: While application interest in King's continued, there had been a slight dip in the number of British applicants, especially at post graduate level.

Senior Leadership changes: Professor Rachel Mills has been appointed as Senior Vice President (Academic) and would join King's in August.

Budget: Three-year projections (rather than annual) to be received at the July meeting of Council.

External visitors: Several external visits were highlighted, including the Principal's recent trip to India. King's had a strong reputation in India but was not the first location of choice for Indian students mainly because of visa issues and the perception of lack of opportunities beyond graduation.

Media stories: King's co-hosted the Defence of Europe conference in May at Bush House, and it was highlighted that King's academics and researchers were contributing significantly to the global discussion around the Ukraine war.

[REDACTED]

The KCLSU President noted that students graduating this year had had a frustrating experience, exacerbated by the latest issues around marking, and that a large number of students were seeking reimbursement.

8.2 REF2021

The Vice President (Research) presented a comprehensive report on the REF2021 (Research Excellence Framework) results (attached as **Annex 1**). King's had sustained its position among the world's best universities for research excellence and the outcomes reflected the depth of quality and impact of King's research. REF is an exercise that determines funding allocations that universities will receive from Research England.

The Principal put on record his thanks to Professor Razavi and his research colleagues for the huge amount of work involved in the process. It was noted that until this year, REF submissions were tactical in that universities could decide what to submit. This year the process had changed and everything had to be submitted. The Principal noted the narrow difference in research quality scores between King's and the other leading universities, and the much larger power difference driven by size, and that this indicated the possibility that King's had reached the natural limits of its current size given that research had such high costs.

Council congratulated the Vice President (Research) for the excellent REF2021 results and resolved to send a message of congratulations to the university community in acknowledgement.

9 Report of the KCLSU President

The KCLSU President presented her report to Council (attached as **Annex 2**) highlighting in particular the following areas of KCLSU sabbatical officer work:

- The strategic relationship agreement with the College to improve continuity
- The seven focus areas for KCLSU as a critical friend in order to co-create improvements: academic representation, advice services, wellbeing and mental health, post graduate experience, freedom of expression, harassment, and careers
- “Take Time Out” and how it was co-created
- Student wellbeing and supporting students during exam time: tents at the various campuses to relax and unwind. It was noted these were resource heavy and that extra support would be needed and sought
- Challenges: sense of belonging; cost of inflation; increased student numbers; value for money.

The Principal stressed the importance of the long-term strategic relationship agreement and continuity of engagement with senior management. During discussion of the report points raised by members included:

- That themes of value for money, cost of living and financial sustainability ran through the KCLSU report but did not appear in the overarching strategy paper - Roadmap to 2026 [KCC-22-05-12-06.1]. Could this be noted and considered.
- Sense of belonging was a key strategic goal for the KCLSU – students entering higher education with a hybrid experience has impacted that sense of belonging. Social skills had been impacted because of the lack of face-to-face interaction in classrooms; social media was physically and emotionally draining. Planning events with purpose and creating opportunities for connections at a deeper level would be important going forward.
- The importance of developing social spaces and opportunities for connection, especially being a London university and not having a central campus. The pedestrianisation of the Strand would help with this and would be an opportunity to create a student hub.
- It was noted that KCLSU had become much more of an influencer in the past few years enabling Council's understanding of the student journey. The KCLSU President was working to improve representation and build this sort of relationship at faculty level too.

10 **Report of the Joint Meeting of the Finance Committee and Estates Strategy Committee**
[KCC-22-05-12-10.1]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

The following report had been approved on the Unanimous Consent Agenda

10.2 Report of the Academic Board [KCC-22-05-12-10.2]

Items noted on the Consent Agenda:

- (i) Education Strategy – decolonising the curriculum
- (ii) Strategy Refresh – world-class education
- (iii) Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Update
- (iv) Academic Board Committee reports

11 Adjournment

There being no other business, the Chair adjourned the meeting.

Nhuoc Lan Tu

May 2022