

King's College Council

Meeting date 9 October 2025

Paper reference KCC-25-10-09-04.1

Status Unconfirmed

Access Members and Committee Staff Resource



Minutes

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

Date 21 July 2025, 17.00

Location Bush House 8th floor, North, Strand Campus

Present Lord Stevens of Birmingham (Chair); Nhuoc Lan Tu (Vice-Chair); Professor Shitij Kapur; Vivek Ahuja; Dr Natasha Awais-Dean; Tom Berry; Professor Susan Brain; Paul Cartwright; Vinay Jha; Sir Ron Kerr; Professor Rachel Mills; Sheeba Naaz; Professor Kim Piper; Clare Sumner; Steve Weiner; Jon Zehner

Apologies Dr Hillary Briffa; Sir Jon Coles; Dr Joanna Davies

In attendance Malcolm Ace, CFO/ Vice President (Finance)
Julia Kosowska, KCLSU student representative
Professor Adam Fagan, VP Education & Student Success – item 5 (via MS Teams)
Robin McIver, DVP Operations – items 6 and 7
Denis Shukur, CEO KCLSU – item 11 (via MS Teams)

Secretariat Dr Sinéad Critchley, University Secretary & Director of Assurance
Christine Cartwright, Governance Manager

1 Welcome, Apologies and Notices

The Chair welcomed members to the meeting and noted the apologies received.

2 Declarations of Interest

There were no changes to the declarations of interest.

The Vice Chair noted that since the last meeting of Council, it had been announced that she had been appointed to the role of Chair of Council at Queen Mary University of London. The Chair asked for confirmation that members were content for the Vice Chair to remain for this meeting, and this was agreed.

3 Unanimous Consent Agenda (including Minutes of the Previous Meeting) [KCC-25-07-21-03]

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

4 Report of the Chair

The Chair updated members that since the last meeting, amongst other duties, he had concluded his meetings with the Faculties, officiated at graduation ceremony at Shrotonham and had taken part in an event hosted by the School of Security Studies. He had also, along with other Council members, concluded the interviews and recruitment process for the new independent members, to be addressed later in the agenda.

5 Report of the Vice-Chancellor & President [KCC-25-07-21-05]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

NSS results

The Vice-Chancellor introduced Professor Fagan to speak to the very positive NSS results which had recently been released. Professor Fagan relayed that he had spent a significant amount of time speaking with final year medical and nursing students and in doing so was able to confirm King's had identified the correct issues on which to focus to improve student experience for this group. He reflected that if King's had been able to see success with these students, the same should be possible with students in all other faculties. The Vice-Chancellor thanked Professor Fagan and his team for their work in achieving these scores and noted that these students had not received the benefits of Student Futures' work which would start to have an impact from the next academic year.

King's Health Partners

The Vice-Chancellor drew members' attention to the King's Health Partners Strategy which had been launched and advised that the detail on King's work in this regard would follow.

Access and Participation

An update on the progress against the Access and Participation Plan was provided, which showed that while Access had improved, the data regarding Student Success was less positive and required renewed focus. King's had not fully anticipated the impact of the greater and complex needs of the students brought in through improving Access and the measures necessary to support them to achieve success.

It was noted that a further report would be delivered to Council in May 2026, and it was requested that data was presented to clearly show the starting, current and target positions for all metrics.

STRATEGIC ITEMS

6 Duties arising under the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Act 2023 [KCC-25-07-21-06]

The Vice-Chancellor set out the legal requirements which necessitated the approval of these documents, and the Chair noted that as a member of the House of Lords he had been part of the revising process for this legislation. The Chair recommended members read the Office for Students' Regulatory Advice 24, particularly the case studies which illustrated the application of the law.

The Vice-Chancellor introduced Robin McIver, Deputy Vice Principal (Operations), who had led this work for King's. Mr. McIver set out that while the principles of freedom of speech, academic freedom and academic excellence were clear in the abstract, they were complicated in their application. Through the external review of its provision in this area, King's had sought

to scrutinise its well-functioning but informal arrangements and to establish formal management and governance structures to provide assurance to Council of compliance with the legislation.

King's would establish a management group reporting to University Executive which would be led by an Assistant Principal who would report to both the Senior Vice Presidents (Academic) and (Operations). Both Academic Board and Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee would receive reports on a regular basis from which Council could draw assurance.

In discussion, the following points were considered:

- Re previous and future consultation of the documents, noting that while they had been reviewed by University Executive, discussions with the staff and student unions was still to take place, though this would not be prior to 1 August.
- The need to take action regarding protests in certain circumstances, including where they posed a risk to health and safety or where the protest or protestors may cause a chilling effect on the free speech of other staff or students. ("Example 6" in the OfS guidance).
- The restriction on tents, and the ability of King's Security to engage protestors using face coverings where the intention of wearing them was judged to be intimidation rather than for a legitimate religious, medical or cultural purpose. It was confirmed that neither of these points were new for this iteration of the Code. Guidance on these points would be drafted and reviewed in September.
- The engagement of Report + Support with the issues covered by these documents. It was clarified that this would form part of a wider review of the complaints process, to which a commitment had been made but was challenging because of the burden currently on the team and process through the volume and complexity of the current case load.
- Whether academic freedom gave an academic licence to speak on any matter outside their discipline using their credentials as a King's academic. It was confirmed that no restrictions were placed on King's academics as to the topics on which they may publicly speak within the law.
- The boundary between academic freedom and academic excellence, and the need for further discussion of this topic. ("Example 30" in the OfS guidance makes clear, for example, that academic freedom does not prevent universities taking action to ensure competent teaching).

The Chair requested that Council should receive reports from Academic Board and Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee on the application of these documents in practice, and that Council should receive a report on the outcome of the discussion on academic freedom and academic excellence.

The following amendments would be required to the Procedures for events, protests and open space gatherings at King's:

- The definition of FESAG at 2.6 omitted a word in relation to the FESAG Operations Group.
- Section 3 'Scope' required re-numbering.

- The creation of a new 10.23 'Protest on-campus is limited to normal campus opening hours, as defined for UG and PGT students. These opening hours are normally visible at the entrances of buildings. Protest outside of normal opening hours amounts to occupation, which is prohibited at King's. This is to protect the safety of those participating in protest.'
- Where stated, to place a limit on the Security costs which would be incurred by King's in supporting events covered by these documents.

Decision:

Noting these amendments, the Council endorsed the Code of Practice and the associated policy statement and procedures document.

7 Update on Strategy 2030 [KCC-25-07-21-07]

The Vice-Chancellor set out that the paper provided members with an update on the Strategy but did not require approval at this time.

In discussion, the following points were considered:

- The need for King's to be clear in the Strategy about what makes it distinctive and successful.
- That where it had been identified that more work was required, and where feedback had already been received, clarity was required on the timeline to address these.
- More information was required on the role of the Faculties in achieving the aims of the Strategy.
- The need to review and update the commitment made around climate change.
- Recognition of the impact of AI across the University, and that it was not limited to the education space.
- That the student aspect of the Strategy should stretch beyond the academic, considering the wider community and residential experience.
- That the link between teaching and research was not fully apparent, and that research undertaken at King's could inform internal policies and practices.

The Vice-Chancellor invited Council members to submit any further written comments to him and that Council would next have the opportunity to review the Strategy in October.

SIGNIFICANT PROPOSALS FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL

8 Recommendations of the Finance Committee [KCC-25-07-21-08]

The Chair of the Finance Committee presented the results of the Integrated Planning Process 2025/2026 – 2027/2028. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] Appendix 1 of the paper was commended, and the data presented in Appendix 2 enabled comparison between the Faculties. It was noted that while there were some concerns about efficiency and productivity, benchmarking across other Russell Group universities showed there was scope for progress, and a steady state should be reached by 2027/2028.

It was confirmed that more data on the Faculties would become available, as they would benefit from the restructuring of the Marketing and Admissions team to receive more support in planning over the next three-year cycle.

The Chair requested a sensitivity table be produced, to illustrate the main financial risks King's faced. The Chair requested that surplus/deficit be shown by Faculty and Department, to complement the contribution comparison provided in Appendix 2 and to illustrate where intentional cross-subsidisation took place [**ACTION**].

Decision:

That the operational and financial plans including the budgets for individual areas for 2025/26 be approved.

9 Recommendations of the Joint Finance and Estates Committees [KCC-25-07-21-09]

The Chair of the Estates Committee set out the Financial Case and the Full Business Case for the development of Bush House South-West Wing, which was recommended to Council by both the Finance and Estates Committees. The Chair of the Estates Committee advised that the total financial commitment was £168.5m. It was noted that there was an assumption in the cash balance that £20m would be received through philanthropic activities but this was not a part of the economic appraisal of the case. The financial analysis did include the addition of 3200 students to King's, and it was noted it may not be possible to include student number growth as a factor in financial analysis for business cases in the future.

The Chair of the Estates Committee confirmed the sensitivity analysis was clear and while it stressed the potential problems, the case still delivered a positive NPV.

The Chair of the Finance Committee noted that the redevelopment would provide the student hub which would be the front door of Student Futures. He advised that the committees had also seen a multi-year Capital Expenditure plan and following the conclusion of the work on Bush House, it was anticipated that there may be short-term cash concerns in 2028/2029.

The Chief Financial Officer advised Council that following the conclusion of the commercial discussion with Kier (the main contractor), King's was now able to enter the contract and asked that the Vice-Chancellor and the Senior Vice President (Academic) be empowered to do so.

The Council members confirmed their enthusiasm for the project and agreed that communications about this project should be carefully planned to clearly articulate the opportunities being developed by this expenditure.

Decision:

That the Financial Case and the Full Business Case for the development of Bush House South-West Wing be approved and that the Vice-Chancellor and the Senior Vice President (Academic) be empowered to enter the contract.

10 Report of the Governance, Performance and Remuneration Committee [KCC-25-07-21-10]
Independent Member appointments

The Chair presented Council members with the five names recommended for appointment following the conclusion of the recruitment process. The University Secretary provided brief details on the background of each recommended candidate, with further information available on request.

Decision:

That the recommendation to appoint the following individuals as independent members of Council, for a three-year term from 1 August 2025 unless otherwise indicated be approved:

- Jennifer Duvalier (from 1 January 2026)

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- Rachel Howarth
 - Diana Kennedy
 - Jerome Misso
 - Paul Spanswick

Independent Member re-appointments

The Chair advised Council that several members were due for reappointment, but it was proposed their second terms of office would be of varying lengths to avoid the cliff edge situation encountered this summer with the departure of several members.

Steve Weiner, Tom Berry and Vinay Jha left the meeting.

Decision:

That the recommendation to re-appoint the below named individuals for a second term be approved:

- Vinay Jha – from 1 August 2025 to 31 December 2025
- Tom Berry – from 1 January 2026 to 31 July 2027
- Steve Weiner – from 1 January 2026 to 31 December 2028

Steve Weiner, Tom Berry and Vinay Jha rejoined the meeting.

Staff member appointments

The Chair advised that three members of staff conclude their terms of office on 31 July; one of whom was appointed by the Council and two of whom had been elected from the membership of the Academic Board.

Professor Rachel Mills left the meeting.

Decision:

That the recommendation that Professor Rachel Mills be reappointed for a second three-year term be approved.

That the recommendation that the process for filling two staff member seats created by the departure of the two staff members of Council should be the same process used to elect them as Academic Board Members to Council be approved.

Professor Rachel Mills rejoined the meeting.

Council Committee structure

The Chair set out the request regarding the Academic Committee in Common, noting the terms of reference had been provided.

Decision:

That the recommendation that the joint Academic Committee in Common, established between KCL, King's College Hospital (KCH) and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust (GSTT) as a sub-committee of Academic Board be approved.

11 Report of the KCLSU [KCC-25-07-21-11]

The Chief Executive Officer of KCLSU presented the KCL/KCLSU Memorandum of Understanding and Code of Practice 2025. The documents set out the relationship between the two bodies and reflect the maturity of that relationship.

In discussion, the following points were considered:

- How the document managed the relationships between KCLSU and its clubs and societies, ensuring they could continue to operate in the face of any and all issues.
- The need for KCL and KCLSU to be in alignment on the issue of Freedom of Speech, and for policies to support but not impinge upon the expression of speech. It was noted that ongoing conversations were required to articulate the division of responsibilities between the two bodies for ensuring compliance with the requirements of the legislation and as understanding of the duties evolved, particularly in the promotion of academic freedom.
- The need to review the Memorandum on an annual basis, to ensure the articulation of duties remained accurate, while the Code of Practice would be reviewed every five years.

Decision:

That the Memorandum of Understanding between King's College London and the King's College London Students' Union be approved, to be effective 1 August 2025

ASSURANCE REPORTS FOR REVIEW AND APPROVAL

12 Recommendations of the Academic Board [KCC-25-07-21-12]

The Vice-Chancellor set out the rationale for King's to have Student Protection Plans for its own students and the students contracted under the partnership with JEI SUSTech, to comply with the Office for Students conditions of registration.

The Terms and Conditions for students had been reviewed by the Academic Board at its meeting in July, and were presented to Council for final approval, and for Chair's action to be taken with regard to the two final remaining sets.

Decision:

That the King's Student Protection Plan be approved

That the JEI SUSTech Student Protection Plan be approved

That the Student Terms and Conditions 2026-2027 presented be approved, with Chair's approval to be granted for the remaining sets.

13 Recommendations of the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee [KCC-25-07-21-13]

The Chair of the Audit, Risk and Compliance Committee presented the report which recommended the approval of the annual fundraising report for the 2024-2025 Academic Year. He noted the transition to the new relationship with the health foundations had been well-managed.

The Chair of Council noted that a new philanthropy campaign was under discussion with the senior team, and Council would hear more about this in the autumn.

Decision:

That the annual fundraising report for the 2024-2025 Academic Year be approved.

ITEMS FOR NOTING

14 The Council noted the following reports:

Report of Council Committees [KCC-25-07-21-14i]

KCLSU Report [KCC-25-07-21-14ii]

CLOSING ITEMS

15 New Risks and Issues Identified

16 Any Other Business

17 Reflections on the Meeting

18 Meeting Adjournment

The Chair expressed his thanks to all members who concluded their time on Council with this meeting – Lan Tu, Sir Ron Kerr, Clare Sumner, Professor Kim Piper and Dr Natasha Awais-Dean.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 19:00.

In camera meeting of Chair, Independent Members, Vice-Chancellor, University Secretary

Lord Stevens of Birmingham
July 2025