

BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

TUESDAY 1 APRIL 2025
11 AM IN CSH 11 and VIA MS TEAMS

Present

Alison Brown
 Julia Chippendale
 Bishop Stephen Conway
 Dr Stephen Critchley
 Rebecca Crooks
 Tom Dannatt
 Anne Frost (*Chair*)
 Stephen Galjaard
 Max Gordon
 Prof. Marianne Howarth
 The Very Rev'd Dr Simon Jones
 Rev'd Canon Dr Sarah Lawrence
 Dr Sacha Mason
 Rachel McLafferty
 Rebecca Midgley
 Jaidip Sen
 Elise Temple
 Kate Truscott

In attendance

Leanne Chancellor, Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office (*Minutes*)
 Jonathan Cheeseman, Director of Corporate Services (Item 9)
 Rachel Crane, Head of Campus Operations (Item 9)
 Craig Ferguson, Secretariat, Alumni Relations and Ceremonial Officer
 Dr Nick Gee, Executive Dean of Faculty
 Kym Gill, Students' Union Vice-President: Education
 Dr Andrew Gower, Vice-Chancellor Designate
 Amy Hare, Head of Finance (Item 8)
 Jonathan Lidster, Director of CIS, Strategy & Performance (Item 7)
 Connor Short, Safeguarding, Contention & Project Officer (Item 10)

Action

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| <p>1. Welcome</p> <p>1.1 The Chair, Anne Frost, welcomed members to the second University Council Meeting of the 2024/25 academic year.</p> <p>1.2 The Chair formally welcomed Bishop Stephen Conway, The Very Rev'd Dr Simon Jones and the Vice-Chancellor Designate, Dr Andrew Gower, to the University Council meeting.</p> | |
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2. The University Prayer

2.1 The Chair invited Rev'd Canon Dr Sarah Lawrence (SL) to lead the University Prayer.

3. Apologies

3.1 Apologies for absence were RECEIVED from:

- Russ Coulter; and
- Walter Leschenko.

4. Declarations of interest

4.1 There were no new declarations of interest.

5. Minutes of Previous Meetings

5.1 18 December 2024

5.1.1 The minutes of the University Council Meeting held on 18 December 2024 were APPROVED as a true and accurate record of the meeting and the Chair was authorised to sign them.

6. Matters Arising

6.1 Action Table

6.1.1 Members RECEIVED the action table from 18 December 2024 and progress against actions was NOTED.

6.2 Any Other Matters

6.2.1 There were no other matters arising.

7. Critical Path 2 (CP2) Update and Deputy Vice-Chancellor's Report

7.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the Deputy Vice-Chancellor's Report which was circulated to members on 13 February 2025, which included a CP2 update.

7.2 Deputy Vice-Chancellor's Report:

7.2.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Operations), Tom Dannatt (TD), HIGHLIGHTED the following to NOTE:

- *Budget Setting for 2025/26* – the process for setting the budget for 2025/26 was now underway, with a UEG review of the first draft by the end of April. The proposed draft would be presented to University Council in July, following an internal process and review by the FE&GP Committee in June.
- *Governance Bulletin* – an external governance professional, Catherine Sykes (CS) was commissioned to bring in some external capacity to support UEG and University Council on any matters relating to governance as a monthly roundup of current issues and development in the HE sector. The bulletin was received well when presented to Governance & Nominations Committee in February 2025.

- *Recruitment* – it was noted that BGU’s base target for students was 846. Recruitment was currently going well with approximately 550 firm accepts.

The Executive Dean for Faculty, Dr Nick Gee (NG) REPORTED that it was important to note that this academic year our offer making strategy this year has changed. Whereas in the past, BGU used to make lots of Unconditional Offers for the majority of the undergraduate courses, this year we have moved away from that approach and are making Conditional Offers and therefore the vast majority of undergraduate applicants will receive an offer conditional on getting certain grades – which has implications in terms of the speed with which people will make decisions. Therefore, recruitment was going to be slower this cycle compared to previous cycles.

NG NOTED that some subject areas were doing exceptionally well in recruitment, for example, the BA Primary Education (BAPE) programme were already over target, and which were all ‘home’ students.

7.3 Members RAISED the followed questions and comments:

- With regards to the Governance Bulletin, members would find it valuable for the external governance professional, CS, to provide her own views and comments on items such as Government policies.
- Would members be able to receive on a regular basis an update on recruitment in form of a table, with the international students included?
 - TD NOTED that this could be included in the Monthly Report to University Council.

**TD/
CSykes**

TD/AG

7.4 The Chair SUGGESTED that a recruitment update should be on the agenda for the University Council meeting in July 2025.

**Council
Office**

7.5 CP2 Update:

7.5.1 The Director of CIS, Strategy and Performance, Jonathan Lidster (JL), HIGHLIGHTED the following key points to NOTE:

- The general direction and achievements of CP2 continued to track against expectations and there were no major risk elements to note.
- *Workstream 1* – there has been a big movement towards the adaptation of the Integrated Student Services with the formation of The Student Hub, and work continues to drive this forward.
- *Workstream 2* – there has been a lot of staff development work happening, particularly with the recently completed Skills Bootcamp, which was well attended.
- *Workstream 3* – progress continues with the rentals of the LORIC Building and the sports pitches. An agreed lease with the Lincolnshire Football Association (FA) has been signed until July 2027 for the first floor of LORIC – and then a view to the disposal of LORIC will commence in 2027 once ERDF funding restrictions are lifted.
- *Workstream 4* – there has been a huge amount of work completed within the portfolio review, with the development of new products, services and new ways of approaching our courses, especially around postgraduate taught, undergraduate and online provision, all of which are currently going through the validation process.

- *Workstream 5* – our partnership development and management approach continues to strengthen through the development and implementation of the new governance structure.
- *Workstream 6* – work continues to develop and enhance our understanding, tools, and use of AI. Pilot work continues on the use of AI across the university, both in teaching and professional services.

7.5.2 Members RAISED the following questions and comments:

- At the last meeting it was asked whether a business cycle plan could be established, to ensure the right information is presented through the relevant committees. Were colleagues any closer to planning this business cycle?
 - It was NOTED that JL and the Head of the Vice-Chancellor’s Office, Leanne Chancellor (LC) had started work on a business cycle plan.
 - LC NOTED that the 2025/26 meeting dates for University Council and its Committees had been drafted, taking into account the quarter ends that feed into the FE&GP and Audit Committees and the Office for Students (OfS) reportable deadlines.
 - JL NOTED that there had been an issue with the Audit Committee in previous years around Q4, but this has now been resolved with the amendment of Audit Committee meeting dates in the Autumn Term.
 - JL and LC NOTED that they would develop a cycle of business for next academic year.
- Although an item was included on the sports development, members had not yet seen a business case for this.
 - TD NOTED that the developments/discussions were still in the early stages with the FA and Lincoln City and was not at a stage to bring to University Council yet.
 - Once ready, the next step would be to bring to a future FE&GP Committee to present the framework.

JL/LC

Jonathan Lidster, Director of CIS, Strategy & Performance, left the meeting.

Amy Hare, Head of Finance, joined the meeting.

8. Financial Outturn (Q2) Update

8.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the Financial Outturn Report (Q2) update.

8.2 TD HIGHLIGHTED the following key points to NOTE:

The following items of business are redacted in accordance with Section 43 (2) of the Freedom of Information Act - Commercial Interests



[REDACTED]

8.3 Members RAISED the following questions and comments:

[REDACTED]

Amy Hare left the meeting.

The Director of Corporate Services, Jonathan Cheeseman and Head of Campus Operations, Rachel Crane, joined the meeting.

9. Accommodation Strategy Report

9.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the Accommodation Strategy Report for 2025/26, which included an overview of BGU’s accommodation portfolio, the challenges faced, and next step plans.

9.2 The Chair provided new members of Council the background and history of the Student Village. She NOTED that it was fair to say that since the decision to go ahead with the accommodation, the world had changed around us including the demand for accommodation from students across the sector, which has now put us in a situation where we need to consider how we use our accommodation.

9.3 The Director of Corporate Services, Jonathan Cheeseman (JC) and the Head of Campus Operations, Rachel Crane (RC) PRESENTED their Accommodation Strategy which sets out

the approach BGU will take to achieve growth of students housed and supported by BGU accommodation and PROVIDED updates on the following:

- An overview of BGU’s current accommodation.
- An overview of the challenges faced at BGU internally and externally.
- Provided a breakdown of the proposed pricing strategy, contract lengths for 2025/26 and initiatives that will be introduced to increase occupancy across the accommodation.
- An overview of current commercial activities across the accommodation.
- An overview of income across the accommodation for 2024/25, projected income for 2025/26 and the operating models across the accommodation.

9.4 JC NOTED that he was currently exploring opportunities with the landlord of Longdales Lodge to bring forward the break clause date forward to August 2025. It was NOTED that the lease break was August 2026.

9.5 The Chair gave THANKS to JC and RC for their work on this and appreciated the detail that went into the report for members – it was very useful.

9.6 The Chair of FE&GP Committee, Stephen Galjaard (SG) NOTED that at the FE&GP meeting in February 2025, the Accommodation Strategy was also discussed, and the headlines were around increasing the room demand of students in offering accommodation to second and third year students, which had been well received, and also the use of rooms for commercial use in the future.

SG also mentioned that whilst conversations are taking place about the break-clause with Longdales House, whether conversations should start to take place to see if a renegotiation on the Student Village could be made.

- JC NOTED that he was starting to get legal advice on this before an approach is made to the investors.
- SG NOTED that if conversation were to take place, it was hoped that investors would recognise that the market and demand for accommodation has changed and moved on.

9.7 Members RAISED the following questions and comments:

- Appreciated the detail in the ‘Operation Models’ in Appendix 4 and noted that a level of optimism can be seen.
- It was good to see that BGU can make a fuller offer to all students, which was positive in terms of enhancing the student experience.
- It was good to see that a range of external commercial stakeholders were starting to use the Student Village - but noted that the financial benefits would not be seen yet.
- The mitigations that are being put in place have cost implications and what percentage of rise do you need to see so those cost implications like freezing of rent and catering vouchers do not become a further liability and add to that deficit?
 - RC NOTED that there was a ‘cut-off date’ for the catering voucher incentive to adequately budget for 2025/26.
 - RC NOTED that regarding the ‘freeze of rent’, as students request a two or three year lease, the team will calculate costings and forecast into consecutive years.

- With regards to the lease being reduced from 46 weeks to 40 weeks – will this apply to new students or current students?
 - RC NOTED that the 40-week contract applies to those students only in the Student Village, which helps reduce the cost to them and puts us in line with other sites.
 - RC NOTED that students were able to extend their contract beyond 40 weeks if required.
 - RC NOTED that students were able to book accommodation on short term/flexible contracts – as some students require accommodation for placement purposes.
- Will you be keeping blocks for different student cohorts or will students be mixed?
 - RC NOTED that flats will house specific year groups together, unless requested differently by the student.
- Could more commercial partners be sought for the Student Village?
 - JC NOTED that there was quite a lot of interest being received about the Student Village for events.
 - JC NOTED that he was also looking into potentially establishing another subsidiary company to sit alongside our Limited company for an area of growth and investigate the potential Airbnb market.

9.8

The Chair NOTED that this had been a really useful discussion item and would be interested in seeing how much income was being made through commercial work.

9.9

It was SUGGESTED that an Accommodation Working Group be established in the short term, to continue conversations and monitor the accommodation.

- TD CONFIRMED that he would look at getting the Working Group established.

TD

Jonathan Cheeseman and Rachel Crane left the meeting.

The Safeguarding, Contention & Project Officer, Connor Short, joined the meeting.

10. Safeguarding Update

10.1

Members RECEIVED and NOTED Uniac’s Safeguarding Audit Report, which was completed in October 2024.

10.2

The Chair NOTED that following Uniac’s audit, conversations had taken place between herself, TD and the Link Governor for Safeguarding, Elise Temple (ET), and it was agreed that it should all be presented to Council members.

10.3

The Safeguarding, Contention & Projects Officer, Connor Short (CS), NOTED that this was his first day in his new role supporting permanently safeguarding, which was something that had come from the audit and work he was already completing in his previous role

10.4

CS PRESENTED to members the following safeguarding updates:

- Safeguarding data overview to date.
- Noted the ‘Report and Support’ service, which is a central system utilised by BGU to allow students to make known or anonymised reports to the institution for either complaint or safeguarding purposes.
- Report and Support metrics to date and a comparison to last academic year.
- Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct data to date and any trends.

10.5

CS UPDATED members on actions that had been completed and/or were in the progress of completing following the audit, which ET had also followed up on were:

- A single central store of risk management specifically for safeguarding, separate to the institution risk register, but would feed into it.
- The establishment of a dedicated Safeguarding and Prevent Committee, which is chaired by TD and focuses on safeguarding for our students, how the institution is training staff in safeguarding, mapping trends, identifying progressions of safeguarding and how, as an institution, can be more responsive to issues faced locally.
- A more detailed safeguarding case process, especially when managing allegations.
- New training procedures are currently being implemented for students and staff specifically on sexual harassment and misconduct – PEACHY - “*Permission, Enthusiastic participation, Active bystander, Communication, Honesty and You*”.

10.6 CS NOTED that he had recently become a member of the Independent Advisory Group for Lincolnshire Police, which means that he has the opportunity to gather data directly from Lincolnshire Police on what is happening within the city locally and to compare that with what is being seen on campus with our students. CS also NOTED that he forms membership on three other Lincolnshire Police Committees; ‘Safer Streets Committee’, ‘Evening Safety Wardens Committee’ and ‘Violence Against Women and Girls Committee’, which all help with his role here at BGU.

10.7 Members RAISED the following questions and comments:

- Are the safeguarding report cases our students’ reporting things that have happened to them or is it students reporting things that they have observed happening?
 - CS CONFIRMED that the number of cases reported currently were predominant issues that are happening directly to the complainant themselves.
- Are there specific issues around safeguarding and legislation when it comes to our duty of care to our students?
 - CS NOTED that BGU do follow the “Keeping Children Safe in Education Act” in all placement activity, but the institution does not apply the same regulations to non-placement activity with students.
 - CS NOTED that from his perspective, what BGU is doing is protecting and safeguarding our students where possible and upskilling them to safeguard themselves and other when needed.
 - ET NOTED that is about recognising when the university needs to ‘draw the line’ and refer it to the relevant external agencies where needed.
- With regard to the 20 high level cases, how many of those related to children and vulnerable adults?
 - CS NOTED that 50% of cases had children as part of the case, but only two had a risk factor relating to children, for example, child protection orders (Section 7).
- 90% of the cases were closed, what were the outcomes in general terms?
 - CS NOTED that is depends on the nature of the case. Some cases result in permanent or temporary suspension of study (pending investigation), while others offer an opportunity to improve both staff and student training and development.
- Are there two separate policies for staff and students making bullying, harassment and sexual misconduct allegations?

- CS NOTED that there are multiple policies that intrinsically work together under the umbrella of BGU’s Prevention of Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy.

10.8 ET NOTED that she meets regularly with CS and following the audit, she was assured that BGU had good solid approaches implemented to close the gap when it came to safeguarding.

10.9 ET NOTED that it was good practice to make sure that internal training was embedded within the institution, so she was pleased to see current training being reviewed and relevant training implemented, for example, the new sexual harassment and misconduct training.

10.10 CS NOTED that he was currently working closely with the Head of Human Resources on the changes to the OfS E6 regulations for harassment and sexual misconduct and the revised BGU Prevention of Bullying, Harassment and Sexual Misconduct Policy would be presented to University Council for approval at its meeting in July 2025.

CS

10.11 The Chair THANKED CS for his presentation, it was good for members to be fully briefed on safeguarding.

10.12 The Chair ASKED CS that when he presents the revised BGU Policy for approval that he also updates members on new regulatory changes within the sector and the work that is being completed around E6 – PEACHY.

CS

10.13 BGU’s Prevent Accountability and Data Return for 2023/24:

LC NOTED that an email had been received from the OfS on 18 March 2025 confirming that they had received BGU’s Prevent Accountability and Data Return for 2023/24 and they had no further queries at this time following an initial review.

Connor Short, left the meeting.

11. To Receive the Students’ Union President’s Report

11.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the Students’ Union President’s Report.

11.2 The Students’ Union President, Max Gordon (MG), HIGHLIGHTED the following key points to NOTE:

- Work was commencing on the Students’ Union Five-Year Strategy.
- New Voluntary Officer structure.
- Update on the Student Leader elections for 2025/26:
 - President – Stefan Bolton.
 - Vice President, Education – Kym Gill.
- Update on the events that were held for LGBTQ+ History Month.
- “Refreshers” – to reengage current and potential new students arriving on campus, following the Christmas break.
- MG had attended the NUS Campaign Day on 20 February 2025.
- BGU would be hosting the NUS England Conference on 3 April 2025.
- Clubs and Societies will be hosting an Awards Night on 23 April 2025 at The Drill Hall. Lincoln.

11.3 The Chair gave THANKS to MG for his work and support as Students' Union President this academic year and wished him all the best for the future.

12. Committee Chair's Updates

12.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED updates from the Chairs of the Committees of University Council.

12.2 FE&GP Committee

SG HIGHLIGHTED the following key points for Council to NOTE:

- Reviewed the financial outturn for Q2.
- Received a 'deep-dive' report into accommodation.
- Received a student recruitment update for 2025/26.
- Received the Student' Union Accounts.
- Received the Management of the Wickham Fund proposal.
It was NOTED that the designation of the Wickham Fund would be presented to the FE&GP Committee in June 2025.

12.3 Audit Committee

The Chair of the Audit Committee, Dr Stephen Critchley (SC), HIGHLIGHTED the following key points for Council to NOTE:

- To note the additional Audit on the Work Allocation Model (WAM).
- The end of Q2 Risk Register had been reviewed.

12.4 Governance & Nominations Committee (G&N)

The Chair of G&N, Anne Frost HIGHLIGHTED the following key points for Council to NOTE:

- The first of the Governance Horizon Scanning documents had received by External Consultant, Catherine Sykes.

The Chair INFORMED members that on 20 March 2024, she had received a resignation from SL from 31 July 2025. It was NOTED that the following next steps had begun:

- LC had informed the Diocesan Secretary of the resignation, so the Diocesan Office was able to look at a further nomination for BGU.
- LC to circulate to members information regarding the Link Governor for Students, which included the information on the membership of the Students' Union Trustee Board.

12.5 Academic Assurance Committee (AAC)

The Chair of AAC, Professor Marianne Howarth (MH), HIGHLIGHTED the following key points for Council to NOTE:

- AAC's Approval of the Academic Health of the Institution Report, Degree Outcome Statement and Research Integrity Statement.
- Received the OfS' approval of BGU's Access & Participation Plan.
- Received an update from the ITE area on progress on the development areas following the Ofsted Inspection in 2024.
- Received an update on the new Ofsted ITE Framework consultation.

13. Any Other Business

13.1 There were no items of other business.

Council Office

14. Reportable Events

- 14.1 Since the last University Council meeting on 18 December 2024 to the present meeting (1 April 2025), it was NOTED that there have been no Reportable Events to the OfS.

At this point of the meeting, the Chair was invited to leave the meeting.

15. Council Approval of Chair of Council's Second Term of Governance

- 15.1 LC INFORMED members that the Chair of Council's first term of governance was due to end on 31 July 2025.
- 15.2 LC NOTED that she had received an expression of interest from the Chair on 7 February 2025 indicating that she would like to be considered for a second term of governance, which would start on 1 August 2025 to 31 July 2028.
- 15.3 LC NOTED that the Chair's expression of interest for a second term had been presented to the G&N Committee on 24 February 2025 for consideration.
- 15.4 It was NOTED that G&N were recommending University Council to approve the Chair's second term of governance.
- 15.5 Members were CONTENT to APPROVE the Chair of Council's second term of governance.

16. Date of Next Meeting

- 16.1 The next meeting of University Council will take place on Wednesday 2 July 2025 from 11:00-1:00pm, followed by the Development Afternoon from 1:30-16:00pm.

17. Key Items from Committees**17.1 FE&GP Committee**

- 17.1.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the minutes of the FE&GP Committee from its meeting on 26 February 2025.

17.2 Audit Committee

- 17.2.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the minutes of the Audit Committee from its meeting on 4 March 2025.
- 17.2.2 Members NOTED the end of Q2 Risk Register Report Update.

17.3 Governance and Nominations Committee

- 17.3.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the minutes of the Governance and Nominations Committee from its meeting on 24 February 2025.

Academic Assurance Committee

- 17.4 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the minutes of the Academic Assurance Committee from its meeting on 20 March 2025.
- 17.4.1
- 17.4.2 Members NOTED the approved Academic Health of the Institution Report, including the Degree Outcomes Statement and the Research Integrity Statement.

17.5 To Note the Senate Minutes

17.5.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the minutes from the Senate meetings from 27 November 2024 and 19 March 2025.

18. To Note the Record of Decision in Writing – Data Protection Policy

18.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the record of decision in Writing for the Data Protection Policy which was approved on 17 February 2025.



2 July 2025

Signed Date