

BISHOP GROSSETESTE UNIVERSITY

MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE UNIVERSITY COUNCIL

FRIDAY 22 NOVEMBER 2024  
 11 AM IN BG FUTURES 1 and VIA MS TEAMS

**Present**

- Alison Brown
- Julia Chippendale
- Russ Coulter
- Dr Stephen Critchley
- Rebecca Crooks
- Tom Dannatt
- Anne Frost (*Chair*)
- Stephen Galjaard
- Max Gordon
- Prof. Marianne Howarth
- Rev'd Canon Dr Sarah Lawrence
- Walter Leschenko
- Dr Sacha Mason
- Rebecca Midgley
- Kate Truscott

**In attendance**

- Leanne Chancellor, Head of the Vice-Chancellor's Office
- Phil Davis, Head of Student Success (Item 16)
- Craig Ferguson, Secretariat, Alumni Relations and Ceremonial Officer (*Minutes*)
- Dr Nick Gee, Executive Dean of Faculty
- Kym Gill, Students' Union Vice-President: Education
- Amy Hare, Head of Finance (Item 14)
- Jonathan Lidster, Director of CIS, Strategy & Performance (Item 9)
- Leigh Rengger, Interim Chief Commercial Officer (Item 10)

		<b>Action</b>
<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome</b>	
1.1	The Chair, Anne Frost, welcomed members to the first University Council Meeting of the 2024/25 academic year.	
1.2	The Chair formally welcomed the new Student Member of University Council, Rebecca Midgley (RM).	
<b>2.</b>	<b>The University Prayer</b>	
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:

- Bishop Stephen Conway; and
- Jaidip Sen.

### 4. Declarations of interest

4.1 There were no new declarations of interest.

### 5. Minutes of Previous Meetings

#### 5.1 3 July 2024

5.1.1 The minutes of the University Council Meeting held on 3 July 2024 were APPROVED as a true and accurate record of the meeting and the Chair was authorised to sign them.

#### 5.2 26 July 2024

5.2.1 The minutes of the Extraordinary University Council Meeting held on 26 July 2024 were APPROVED as a true and accurate record of the meeting and the Chair was authorised to sign them.

#### 5.3 28 October 2024

5.3.1 The minutes of the Extraordinary University Council Meeting held on 28 October 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 3 July 2024 and progress against actions was NOTED.

#### 6.2 Any other matters

##### 6.2.1 Update on Exempt Charity Status

6.2.1.1 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Operations) & University Secretary, Tom Dannatt (TD), CONFIRMED that Shakespeare Martineau received confirmation that the Privy Council had granted BGU with the Exempt Charity Order on 9 October 2024, which was effective as of 31 October 2024.

6.2.1.2 TD NOTED that he was awaiting confirmation from Shakespeare Martineau on whether the institution may have to prepare accounts for the period of 1 August to 31 October 2024, following Exempt Charity Status.

##### 6.2.2 Update on Name Change

6.2.2.1 TD NOTED that the Office for Students (OfS) had recently changed their consultation process to implement a more targeted approach, with specific questions being asked of

key stakeholders. It was NOTED that BGU would be one of the first universities to go through this process.

- 6.2.2.2 TD also NOTED that the completion of the process by December 2024/January 2025 was still the aim, with a follow up meeting with the OfS scheduled during week commencing 25 November 2024.

## **7. Election of Deputy Chair and Senior Independent Governor**

*Kate Truscott and Alison Brown were invited to leave the meeting for this item, due to their respective nominations.*

### **7.1 Deputy Chair**

- 7.1.1 The Chair NOTED that one nomination had been received from Kate Truscott (KT) for the role of Deputy Chair.

- 7.1.2 Members APPROVED KT as Deputy Chair of Council for the 2024/25 academic year.

### **7.2 Senior Independent Governor**

- 7.2.1 The Chair NOTED that one nomination had been received from Alison Brown (AB) for the role of Senior Independent Governor.

- 7.2.2 Members APPROVED AB as Senior Independent Governor for the 2024/25 academic year.

*Kate Truscott and Alison Brown were invited back to the meeting.*

## **8. Approval of the Diocesan Members**

- 8.1 The Chair NOTED that following the Lincoln Diocesan's Search and Nominations Committee, two nominations have been put forward for the two Diocese member vacancies on University Council. These nominations were for:

- The Very Rev'd Dr Simon Jones – The Dean of Lincoln Cathedral; and
- Ms Rachel McLafferty – Strategic Programme Manager.

- 8.2 The Chair NOTED that she had met with both nominees individually to discuss the responsibilities of University Council.

- 8.3 It was NOTED that the nominations had also been reviewed by our Governance and Nominations Committee on 4 November 2024 and were being RECOMMENDED for approval.

- 8.4 Members were CONTENT to APPROVE The Very Rev'd Dr Simon Jones and Ms Rachel McLafferty for membership of University Council. It was NOTED that their start date would be 1 December 2024.

*The Director of CIS, Strategy and Performance, Jonathan Lidster, joined the meeting.*

## **9. Critical Path 2 Update and Budget (Q1) Update**

- 9.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the Critical Path 2 (CP2) update.

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

- Progress on CP2 was included as an appendix to the monthly DVC Report to Council;
- CP2 comprised of seven workstreams, consisting of approximately 27 key objectives;
- The seven workstreams were:
  1. Integrated Student Services;
  2. Developing and Supporting our Staff Community;
  3. Our Future Campus;
  4. Our Portfolio;
  5. Building Research, Community Engagement & Partnerships;
  6. Our Ways of Working; and
  7. Financial Sustainability.

9.3 JL INTRODUCED members to the ‘Viva Goals system’, which monitors the progress of each workstream and the ‘Objectives and Key Results (OKRs) allocated to each staff member working on them.

9.4 The Chair REQUESTED for the CP2 Viva Goal slides to be circulated to members for their information.

Council Office

9.5 Members RAISED the following questions and comments:

- Was the intention to publish an annual planning cycle to support agenda setting for committees?
  - JL NOTED that conversations were underway the with Chair of the Audit Committee and Head of the Vice Chancellor’s Office, to explore the publishing of a planning cycle and to try and align committee dates with this for 2025/2026.
  - TD NOTED that it was important for information presented to Council to be relevant and timely.
  - It was agreed that a full annual planning cycle would be developed and implemented.
- How had the recruitment of an Organisational Development specialist increased the object achievement from 15% to 50%?
  - JL NOTED that the recruitment of an Organisational Development specialist was a single objective within the relevant workstream.
- How would Capital Expenditure being restricted to a maximum of £200k impact Health and Safety across the University estate?
  - TD NOTED that the limited expenditure was a concern, but a Conditions Survey Report had been recently received, which would now help with working out a five-year plan to ensure the estate remains up to standard.
  - TD also NOTED that the Conditions Survey Report set out that within the five-year plan, year one would cost approximately £3m to complete the necessary works.
  - TD CONFIRMED that the Conditions Survey Report noted BGU was “compliant” with Health and Safety regulation at the time the survey was completed.
- What was the status of the Estates Strategy and when could this be made available to Council?
  - TD CONFIRMED that work on the Estates Strategy had recently begun, with the objective deadline within CP2 specifying completion during the 2024/25 financial year.

DoCIS / HoVC

- Members NOTED that the immediate Estates Plan as part of CP2 was important, to be followed by a longer-term Estates Strategy.
- What was the aim of the Staff Hub referenced within Workstream 2?
  - JL NOTED that the Staff Hub focused on the centralisation and access of information and data across the staff community, with the aim of improving staff communication and information sharing.
- What was the status of the LORIC building?
  - TD NOTED that the building had been valued at approximately £2.5m should it be put up for sale.
  - TD HIGHLIGHTED that if the building were to be sold before August 2027, approximately £1m of grant funding would have to be repaid.
  - TD CONFIRMED that a case was being made for the £1m repayment requirement to be removed, with a decision yet to be made by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities.
  - TD also CONFIRMED that the plan was to identify an organisation to rent the space prior to a sale.

*Jonathan Lidster left the meeting.*

9.6 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the Budget (Q1) Update.

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

9.7 TD HIGHLIGHTED the following key points to NOTE:

[REDACTED]

9.8 Members RAISED the following questions and comments:

- Was there any prospect of the Student Village achieving full occupancy in the future?
  - TD NOTED that the Student Village had received positive reviews from parents and prospective students at Open Days, which may raise the confidence level that occupancy will increase in future.
- The Chair of the Finance, Employment & General Purposes (FE&GP) Committee, Stephen Galjaard (SG) HIGHLIGHTED concerns raised by FE&GP relating to the use of the £400k provision and National Insurance increases within the forecast budget.

- SG also NOTED the lease agreement for the Longdales Road Accommodation, which had a break-clause in 2026 which could be considered.
- The Chair NOTED that the financial figures should also be reviewed at each University Council meeting.
- Did BGU only recruit to undergraduate programmes to align with a September start and could additional entry points be considered?
  - The Executive Dean of Faculty, Dr Nick Gee (NG) NOTED that there was a January intake for BA (Hons) Business, offering a phased programme delivery where required.
  - NG also NOTED that MA Education (TESOL), MSc International Business and MA SEND had multiple intakes throughout the year.
- What was the demand for student accommodation likely to be in the future and how can students be encouraged to take occupancy in the accommodation?
  - TD NOTED that price points for future years were a key consideration, and analysis was underway to inform future decisions.
- Was there any legislation that prevented the use of ‘disruptor strategies’ when engaging in student recruitment activity?
  - TD NOTED that he was not aware of any specific legislation preventing such strategies, and that BGU should take the opportunity to investigate these strategies further.

*The Interim Chief Commercial Officer, Leigh Rengger (LR) joined the meeting.*

**10. Review and Approve BGU’s Proposed Response to Fee Pricing and Policy**

10.1 Members RECEIVED and REVIEWED the proposed response to Fee Pricing and Policy.

10.2 The Chair HIGHLIGHTED the following key points to NOTE:

- The Government allowed for an increase to tuition fees, which BGU is wanting to respond to.
- The Government announcement was released in the days after BGU’s Access and Participation Plan (APP) submission to the OfS.
- Noted was the Decision in Writing that was circulated to members on 11 November 2024, to allow Council to decide whether the APP was to be amended with the increased tuition fee.
- Institutional policies would need to be updated to reflect any changes to fees to ensure consistency across the APP and relevant policies.

10.3 The Interim Chief Commercial Officer, Leigh Rengger (LR), HIGHLIGHTED the following key points to NOTE:

- BGU was in line with other Universities who were investigating policies following the government announcement.
- The existing Tuition Fee Policy did not detail whether fees could be increased for continuing students or not, which was the change being proposed.
- The proposed wording within the policy allowed the setting for any change in the annual fee for a course applies to both new and continuing students, and where students transfer between programmes if this results in a continuous period of study and no change in mode of study (e.g. from full-time to part-time).

10.4 Members RAISED the following questions and comments:

- If the government were to increase fees again in the future, would BGU increase to the government maximum level or by the amount set out in the policy?

- LR CONFIRMED that the BGU fee would be set at the maximum government level with any future increases, and that this was in line with the majority of the sector.
- Was the maintenance loan set to increase proportionate to any increase in fees?
  - LR CONFIRMED that this was the case.

10.5 Members were CONTENT to APPROVE the new wording for the Student Fees Policy (with one member abstaining).

*Leigh Rengger left the meeting.*

## 11. Committee Chair's Updates

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

### 11.2 *Academic Assurance Committee (AAC)*

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

- An extraordinary meeting had taken place in September 2024, to approve the APP for submission to the OfS.
- A report had been received on the universities Annual Monitoring Report (AMR) process.
- The Annual Contention Report had been received and reviewed.
- A brief overview was received on the Portfolio Review, which would be fully presented to University Council at its December 2024 meeting.

### 11.3 *FE&GP Committee*

SG HIGHLIGHTED the following key points for Council to NOTE:

- The committee had reviewed and scrutinised the financial outturn for 2023/24 and the end of Q1 in 2024/25.
- The audited Financial Statements and Annual Report for 2023/24 had been received and reviewed.
- The use of the Wickham Hall funds had been discussed, with proposals being presented at a future meeting.

### 11.4 *Governance & Nominations Committee (G&N)*

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

- The two Diocesan Representatives had been received.
- A discussion was held around the use of additional governance support focussing on horizon scanning and forward planning.

### 11.5 *Audit Committee*

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

- The audited Financial Statements and Annual Report for 2023/24 had been received and reviewed.
- The schedule of Internal Audit work and the Q1 Risk Register had been reviewed.
- The Risk Framework Management Policy had been approved.

**12. Approve the Audit Committee Annual Report 2023/24**

12.1 Members RECEIVED and REVIEWED the Audit Committee Annual Report 2023/24.

12.2 SC HIGHLIGHTED the following key points to NOTE:

- The report summarised the activities of the committee during the 2023/24 academic year.
- The report had been produced for information for University Council.

12.3 Members RAISED the following questions:

- Was the committee satisfied with the level of review undertaken in 2023/24, with five internal audit reviews and one advisory?
  - SC NOTED that the committee was satisfied with the level of review undertaken in 2023/24.
  - SC also NOTED that BGU was slightly over the national average for the number of internal audit reviews in 2023/24 and that any audit work needed to remain focused.

12.4 Members were CONTENT to APPROVE the Audit Committee Annual Report 2022/23 for publication.

*Dr Sacha Mason left the meeting.*

**13. To Note the BG (Lincoln) Ltd. Accounts 2023/24 and Letter of Representation**

13.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the BG (Lincoln) Ltd. Accounts 2023/24 and Letter of Representation.

13.2 TD NOTED that the BG (Lincoln) Ltd. Accounts for 2023/24 had been audited with no changes or amendments requested by the auditors.

*Head of Finance, Amy Hare joined the meeting.*

**14. To Receive and Consider the BGU University Annual Report, Accounts for 2023/24, Statement of Corporate Governance and Internal Controls**

14.1 Members RECEIVED the BGU University Annual Report, Accounts for 2023/24, Statement of Corporate Governance and Internal Controls.

14.2 TD HIGHLIGHTED the following key points to NOTE:

- There was no material changes made by external audit.
- There were no issues around 'going concern'.
- The audited financial statements matched the Q4 management accounts.

14.3 Members RAISED the following comment:

- It was NOTED that there should be greater reference to Professor Karen Stanton within the Annual Report in the 'foreword', as the Interim Vice-Chancellor for the reporting period.
  - The Chair NOTED that a paragraph would be added to acknowledge the work undertaken by Professor Stanton.

14.4

Chair

Members were CONTENT to APPROVE the BGU University Annual Report, Accounts for 2023/24, Statement of Corporate Governance, Internal Controls and Letter of Representation for signing. Council delegated the Chair and TD to formally sign off and approve the final amendments on members behalf.

*Amy Hare left the meeting.*

**15. To Receive the Students' Union President's Report**

15.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the Students' Union President's Report.

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

- Attendance at National Union of Students (NUS) Lead and Change Event, to introduce the new Student Leaders to their roles.
- Officer Training had been completed.
- The 'Nourish and Flourish' campaign had been launched to benefit students in their health and financial wellbeing.
- The 'Coming to you Next' campaign had been launched to increase student awareness about upcoming SU and University events.
- Freshers Week 2024 was a success and well-received by students.
- The Students' Union had been represented at Open Days.
- The Autumn By-Elections had concluded, with five vacant positions being filled.
- The first Student Council of the academic year was a success and was well-attended by elected representatives.

*Head of Student Success, Phil Davis joined the meeting.*

**16. Safeguarding and Prevent Update**

16.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the Safeguarding and Prevent Update.

16.2 The Head of Student Success, Phil Davis (PD), HIGHLIGHTED the following key points to NOTE:

- The OfS Prevent Monitoring Return required BGU to report on Prevent Cases during the last academic year, with an overview of how they were handled.
- The return detailed any events with external speakers which needed to be managed in regard to Prevent.
- The return also provided confirmation of Prevent training for staff.
- PD had attended the Prevent Steering Groups for Lincolnshire and the DfE.
- BGU had been involved in the update of the local Counter Terrorism Local Profile, though PD CONFIRMED that this was not part of the formal return.

16.3 Members RAISED the following questions and comments:

- How were partner institutions represented with regard to the Prevent Return?
  - PD NOTED that Lincolnshire Colleges were involved in the County Prevent Steering Group and that BGU had a responsibility to demonstrate leadership within Prevent.
- Was the data on Prevent referrals from partner institutions captured as part of the BGU annual return?
  - PD NOTED that prevent referrals from partner institutions were not included in the BGU annual return.

- TD NOTED that further investigations were underway to identify contractual obligations regarding Prevent.
- Members ASKED if further clarity could be provided regarding Prevent arrangements relating to partner institutions.
  - It was AGREED that TD would provide further clarity on this regarding partnerships. Memorandums of Understanding (MoUs) and their responsibilities at the University Council meeting in December 2024.

DVC (Ops)

Members were CONTENT to APPROVE the Annual Prevent Accountability and Data Return and the Chair was AUTHORISED to sign on behalf of University Council.

- 16.4 TD NOTED that a Safeguarding Audit had been completed by internal auditors, Uniac, which provided a 'good level of assurance', and had been received by the Audit Committee at its meeting in November 2024.
- 16.5

*Phil Davis left the meeting.*

**17. Any Other Business**

- 17.1 There were no items of other business.

**18. Date of Next Meeting**

- 18.1 The next meeting of University Council will take place on Wednesday 18 December 2024 from 11:00-1:00pm in person, followed by Christmas Lunch in the Refectory from 1:30pm.

*Russ Coulter, Tom Dannatt and Dr Nick Gee left the meeting.*

**19. Remuneration Committee**

- 19.1 The Deputy Chair of the Remuneration Committee, SC, provided a confidential update on the activities of the committee to members.
- 19.2 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the Remuneration Committee Annual Report.

*Anne Frost, Chair, left the meeting.*

**20. Evaluation of Chair**

- 20.1 The Senior Independent Governor for 2023/24, MH, held a confidential discussion with members regarding the performance of the Chair during the 2023/24 academic year.
- 20.2 It was NOTED that the feedback from the anonymous evaluation forms would be discussed with the Chair outside of the meeting.

*Elise Temple left the meeting.*

**21. Key Items from Committees**

21.1 FE&GP Committee

- 21.1.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the minutes of the FE&GP Committee from its meetings on 18 September 2024 and 13 November 2024.

21.2 Audit Committee

21.2.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the minutes of the Audit Committee from its meetings on 21 October 2024 and 11 November 2024.

21.2.2 Members NOTED that the Audit Committee had approved the Risk Framework Management Policy.

21.2.3 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the End of Quarter 1 Risk Register.

21.3 Governance and Nominations Committee

21.3.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the minutes of the Governance and Nominations Committee from its meeting on 4 November 2024.

21.4 Academic Assurance Committee

21.4.1 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the minutes of the Academic Assurance Committee from its meetings on 19 September 2024 and 6 November 2024.

21.4.2 Members NOTED the final Access and Participation Plan (APP) Submission was made on 1 October 2024.

21.4.3 Members RECEIVED and NOTED the Annual Contention Report.

Signed ..... Date .....