



University of Exeter

**JOINT SENATE AND COUNCIL MEETING**

**MINUTES AND ACTIONS – APPROVED BY COUNCIL**

28 May 2025

13.10pm-3.15pm

Holland Hall, Streatham Campus

NB text in BLACK for publication; text in BLUE redacted for publication

**CONTENTS:**

**No: Item:**

- 24.86 Chair's Welcome and Introduction
- 24.87 HE Sector Update and UUK Transformation and Efficiency Taskforce
- 24.88 Graduate Outcomes and Employability
- 24.89 Update on Digital Strategy Delivery
- 24.90 Chair's Closing Remarks

**COUNCIL MEMBERS PRESENT**

Quentin Woodley	Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council
Sir Richard Atkins	Pro-Chancellor and Deputy Chair of Council
Sally Cabrini	Pro-Chancellor and Senior Independent Governor
Professor Lisa Roberts	President and Vice-Chancellor
Professor Dan Charman	Senior Vice-President and Provost
Professor Tim Quine	Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience)
Dr Sarah Hodge	Senate Representative
Professor Karen Knapp	Senate Representative
Professor Sue Prince	Senate Representative
Damaris Anderson-Supple	Independent Member
Nicholas Cheffings	Independent Member
Andrew Greenway	Independent Member
Karime Hassan	Independent Member
Salam Katbi	Independent Member
Alison Reed	Independent Member
Malcolm Skingle	Independent Member
Tim Weller	Independent Member

Glenn Woodcock	Independent Member ( <i>online</i> )
Sarah Matthews-DeMers	Independent Member
Professor Karen Knapp	Senate Representative
Dr Sarah Hodge	Senate Representative
Elaine Cordy	Professional Services Representative
Alex Martin	Guild President, Exeter Students' Guild
Connie Chilcott	President Exeter, Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union

**STANDING ATTENDEE**

Professor Adrian Harris	Chief Medical Officer (Royal NHS Devon)
-------------------------	---

**SECRETARY**

Mike Shore-Nye	Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary
----------------	---

**STAFF IN ATTENDANCE**

Dave Stacey	Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and Executive Divisional Director of Finance, Infrastructure and Commercial Services
Ali Chambers	Chief Executive Officer, Exeter Students' Guild
Dr Jeremy Diaper	Assistant Director, Governance (minutes)
Imelda Rogers	Deputy Registrar and Executive Divisional Director of Human Resources

**APOLOGIES**

Rebecca Boomer-Clark	Independent Member
Sarah Matthews-DeMers	Independent Member
Adrian Harris	Standing Attendee

**SENATE MEMBERS PRESENT****ATTENDEES** (listed according to the membership as detailed in [Ordinance 20](#))

- a) Professor Lisa Roberts, President & Vice-Chancellor
- b) Professor Dan Charman, Senior Vice-President & Provost
- c) Professor Tim Quine, Vice-President & Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Education and Student Experience
- Professor Richard Follett, Vice-President & Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Global Engagement
- Professor Martin Siegert, Vice-President & Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Cornwall
- Professor Rajani Naidoo, Vice-President & Deputy Vice-Chancellor, People and Culture
- Stuart Brocklehurst, Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Business Engagement and Innovation
- d) Professor Beverley Hawkins, Dean for Taught Students
- Professor Stacey Hynd, Dean for Postgraduate Research and the Doctoral College
- e) Professor Alex Gerbasi (ESE)
- f) Professor Dave Hosken (ESE)

- Professor Duncan Russel (HASS)
- Professor Adam Watt (HASS)
- Professor Richard Holland (HLS)
- Professor Anni Vanhatalo (HLS)
- g) Clare Wydell, Divisional Director of Education and Academic Services
- h) Professor Loukas Balafoutas (ESE)
- Professor Nicola Thomas (ESE)
- Professor Tim Harries (ESE)
- Professor Ion Sucala (ESE)
- Professor Fiona Cox (HASS)
- Professor Rebecca Langlands (HASS)
- Professor James Wakefield (HLS)
- Professor Joanne Smith (HLS)
- Professor Karen Knapp (HLS)
- Professor Mark Wilson (HLS)
- h) Professor Barrie Cooper (ESE)
- Dr Sarah Hodge (ESE)
- Professor Tim Naylor (ESE)
- Professor Christine Parkin Hughes (ESE)
- Dr Edvard Glucksman (ESE)
- Dr Raphaëlle Haywood (ESE)
- Professor Alison Truelove (ESE)
- Professor Ben Zissimos (ESE)
- Professor David Jones (HASS)
- Professor Fabrizio Nevola (HASS)
- Dr Alex Fairfax-Cholmley (HASS)
- Professor Brian Rappert (HASS)
- Dr Birgul Yilmaz (HASS)
- Dr Maisha Reza (HLS)
- Dr Hope Gangata (HLS)
- Professor Katie Lunnon (HLS)
- Dr Dominic Wiredu-Boakye (HLS)
- i) Mike Shore-Nye (Senior Vice President and Registrar & Secretary)
- j) Caroline Chipperfield, Academic Director, INTO
- k) Alex Martin, President Students' Guild
- l) Connie Chilcott, Falmouth and Exeter Students' Union President Exeter

**SENATE APOLOGIES**

Professor Jon Brown (HLS)  
 Professor Konstantinos Chalvatzis (ESE)  
 Professor Konstantinos Chalvatzis (ESE)  
 Professor Daniel Fountain (HASS)  
 Professor Clare Hulme (HLS)  
 Professor Sallie Lamb (HLS)  
 Professor Jane Milling (HASS)  
 Professor Laura Salisbury (HASS)  
 Professor Naomi Sykes (HASS)  
 Thomas Tran, Communities and Equality Officer, Students' Guild  
 Dr Genevieve Williams (HLS)

**IN ATTENDANCE FOR INDIVIDUAL AGENDA ITEMS****Minute Item 90 – Digital Strategy Update**

Nathan Burden	Divisional Director of IT Services
Gill Preston	Director, Enabling Strategy 2030
Donna Fitzgerald	Director of PS Connect
Helen Cocks	Assistant Director, Digital Transformation and Engagement

**86. Chair's Welcome and Declarations of Interest**

86.1 The Chair welcomed Council and Senate members to the annual meeting of Senate and Council.

**87. Higher Education Context and UUK Transformation and Efficiency Taskforce (CNL/108/24-25 Strictly Confidential)**

*The Chair invited the President and Vice-Chancellor and Senior Vice-President and Provost to deliver a presentation. An updated version was shared on the day and has been filed with the record of the meeting (CNL/108a/24-25).*

87.1 The Home Office Immigration White Paper, 'Restoring Control over the Immigration', had been published on 12 May 2025 and had significant implications for the higher education sector and international student recruitment, including:

87.1.1 Cutting the graduate visa for undergraduates and master's students from 2 years to 18 months;

87.1.2 Introducing a levy on international student tuition fees to enable reinvestment into the higher education and skills system;

87.2 The changes to the Graduate Visa route had the potential to decrease the attractiveness of the UK as a study destination for international students, especially in light of the fact that other countries offered more generous post study work visas. IDP had undertaken modelling on the

impact of a potential reduction in the graduate visa to 1 year, which had indicated that it could result in a further 40% drop in international student recruitment across the sector;

87.3 There were also a series of new measures and reforms to how UK Visas and Immigration (UKVI) would manage compliance among HE institutions sponsoring students being introduced which would place Universities under increased scrutiny;

87.4 In relation to financial sustainability and efficiency:

87.4.1 In the recent report on Financial Sustainability of Higher Education providers in Higher Education published in May 2025, the OfS had indicated that 43% of institutions were forecasting a deficit for 2024-25;

87.4.2 According to a recent UUK Member Survey, 49% of institutions had closed courses, 55% had consolidated courses, 46% removed module options, and 18% closed departments;

87.4.3 There remained a continued focus on cost efficiencies and income diversification across the sector in response to the significant financial challenges. In addition to implementing workforce planning activities, a number of institutions were looking to diversify income through online education, executive education, TNE provision and Degree Apprenticeships;

87.5 OfS had fined the University of Sussex £585,000 after it was found the University's governing documents failed to uphold the freedom of speech and academic freedom, as well as failings in the University's management and governance processes. The fine was almost 15 times larger than any other fine previously levied by the OfS. Sussex had published a pre-action protocol letter and sought a judicial review of the OfS ruling the outcome of which was still awaited;

87.6 Skills England had produced and developed national and regional skills mapping across the whole of the UK and the University continued to work closely with employers to ensure education was aligned with their skills need;

87.7 The impact of regional devolution was being explored to consider the new local government landscape and strategic implications for regions without a combined mayoral authority;

87.8 The UUK Transformation and Efficiency Taskforce (Chaired by Sir Nigel Carrington) had been set up to lead the HE sector work on efficiency, transformation and income generation, including options for shared services;

87.9 The Membership of the Taskforce included 20 members from across the sector, including Chairs of Governing Bodies, Vice-Chancellors, Deputy Vice-Chancellors and senior leaders across Professional Services. In addition to the breadth of different roles and experience the membership also incorporated a diverse mix of HE institutions represented from across the sector;

87.10 The first report, 'Towards a new era of Collaboration', would be published in May 2025 with a Phase 2 report to follow later in the year produced by Mills & Reeve and KPMG. The main of the report had to enable University leaders and governing bodies to understand drivers for change, develop a shared understanding of the opportunities, and identify the conditions needed to support greater efficiency and transformation and actions required to realise this;

87.11 Following the presentation from the President and Vice-Chancellor and the Senior Vice-President and Provost, Senate and Council were invited to reflect on the following key questions:

*87.11.1 What else (and how) can we change within the University?*

*87.11.2 What external collaborative opportunities should we consider?*

*87.11.3 How do we engage staff and students in the challenges and change in HE?*

87.12 The following was noted in discussion:

87.12.1 In light of the challenges facing the sector only the institutions that proactively leveraged the collective skills and expertise across the institution to drive forward significant transformational change would be likely to thrive in an increasingly competitive landscape;

87.12.2 It was not considered in the interests of the wider sector to see failing institutions as it would have a detrimental impact on the student experience and graduate employability;

87.12.3 There were only a couple of examples of successful mergers across the sector (including St George's University and City of London, and Writtle College and Anglia Ruskin). The FX Plus shared services provision, which managed and delivered services at Falmouth, Penryn and Truro Campuses on behalf of Falmouth University and the University of Exeter provided a good example of shared services delivery between two separate providers;

87.12.4 It was anticipated that mergers would be most likely to be successful where institutions were in close proximity, delivered similar pedagogical activity and educational provisions and had close alignment on institutional culture and values;

87.12.5 In the context of bold and transformative change it would be important for the University to be open-minded towards and attuned to emerging strategic opportunities, including regional collaborations, shared services and potential mergers;

87.12.6 The current regulatory and legal landscape had historically made collaboration in the sector more challenging, especially in light of CMA implications;

87.12.7 That there were strategic opportunities to adopt AI across the institution and it would be important to embed relevant skills in students and researchers for them to use it successfully in their relevant field and to reflect further on how it could be utilised to enhance student employability. There were also opportunities to use digital enhancements to streamline regulatory returns and integrate data collections.

**88. Graduate Outcomes and Employability (CNL/109/24-25 and CNL/109a/24-25 Strictly Confidential)**

*The Chair invited the Vice-President and Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience), Divisional Director of Education and Academic Services and the Student Presidents to deliver a presentation.*

- 88.1 Success for All was at the heart of our Education Strategy, which aimed to widen participation, close gaps in student outcomes, and build a diverse and inclusive learning environment and educational culture in which everyone could realise their potential;
- 88.2 The University's current offer to students had led to strong graduate employability in line with our benchmark through existing programmes and support. However, there was a challenge in terms of how this translated into students confidently articulating their skills and also ensuring this offer was consistent and accessible to all;
- 88.3 One of the core objectives of the Curriculum for Change (C4C) programme was also to deliver a distinctive model of education at Exeter that would improve equity and enhance the employability of graduates;
- 88.4 The modern employment landscape was evolving rapidly as a result of technological change, economic uncertainty and demographic shifts which was presenting new challenges for graduates;
- 88.5 Employers were increasingly looking at the relevant skills and wider experience of a candidate over an exclusive consideration of their specific degree classification;
- 88.6 As the development of Generative AI had resulted in a significant impact on the typical graduate level jobs, it would be critical to enable students to develop the necessary digital and interdisciplinary skills for the modern workplace, including: AI, data skills, knowledge of coding;
- 88.7 Technology-related roles were the fastest-growing jobs in percentage terms, including: Big Data Specialists; Fintech Engineers; AI and Machine Learning Specialists; and Software and Application Developers;
- 88.8 The University was broadly in line with current TEF benchmarks, but some key Russell Group competitors were significantly outperforming the University (including LSE, Durham, Warwick, and Leeds);
- 88.9 In relation to the Graduate Outcomes Survey:
- 88.9.1 The Graduate Outcomes survey was undertaken with each student cohort 15 months following graduation and asked students what they were currently doing, how much they were currently earning, and the perception of their work following their graduation from their course;
- 88.9.2 The OfS used benchmarking to make meaningful Graduate Outcomes comparisons between providers, student groups and other groups of interest. To account for the differences between these groups a sector average is then adjusted ('weighted') for each group based on

the characteristics of the students in that group (including their economic background and their prior educational attainment and the provision being offered), in order to understand how well a provider has performed compared with performance for similar types of students, on similar types of courses in the higher education sector as a whole;

#### Closed Minute – Confidential

88.10 The importance of the following in relation to graduate employability:

88.10.1 Considering the most effective mechanisms for widening awareness of the Career Zone amongst the student community and encouraging students to actively engage with the services and support available;

88.10.2 Helping students to identify the transferable skills, attributes and experiences most applicable to the modern workplace and which elements of their CV to showcase to enhance their employability and equip them to stand out in an increasingly competitive job market;

88.10.3 Ensuring that the Curriculum for Change programme continued to be informed and shaped by the latest developments in the graduate employment market and constantly updated to keep pace with the most recent digital advancements to ensure their skills and experiences remained future proofed and highly sought after by employers;

88.11 In relation to the student view on the current employability market:

88.11.1 Students experienced increasing pressure to secure graduate employment and needed increasing support to help them successfully navigate a rapidly changing external landscape and to ensure their employability skills continued to evolve in a changing environment, in recognition that job applications for graduate jobs increasingly competitive and involving less human interaction;

88.11.2 Recent survey data surrounding levels of engagement with the Career Zone indicated that there was still low-levels of engagement across Faculties, with c. 58% of students engaging in Faculty of HASS, c. 53% in Faculty of ESE and c. 37% in Faculty of HLS;

88.11.3 There were a range of opportunities to enhance the level of support provided to students through providing more industry events and careers fairs across a wider range of disciplines; offering more personalised one-to-one support; additional support for accessing paid opportunities during studies; and enabling students to access support for connecting to less “traditional” work experience;

88.12 At the end of the presentations, Senate and Council members were invited to engage in discussions in small groups to reflect on two of the following questions:

- a) How should we engage employers further in the development, design and delivery of our curriculum?
- b) How can we approach increasing the breadth, as well as depth, of our placement and experiential learning opportunities to ensure that all students can access these opportunities?

- c) How effectively is our current approach and context aligned to meet the challenges and opportunities for the changing employment market and to improving graduate employability?
- d) Beyond the Graduate Outcomes Survey, what metrics should we be using to assess meaningful graduate success?
- e) How do we approach improving our graduate outcomes for underrepresented student groups?

88.13 Small group was captured via the digital tool 'Padlet' and shared with Senate and Council Members in real time during the meeting.

**89. Digital Strategy Delivery Update (CNL/110/24-25 Strictly Confidential)**

*The Chair invited the Senior Vice-President and Registrar & Secretary; Divisional Director of Information Technology; Assistant Director, Digital Transformation and Engagement; Director of Enabling Strategy 2030 and Director of PS Connect to deliver an update on Digital Strategy Delivery;*

89.1 As part of Strategy 2030, the University had set out an ambition to transform student and staff experience through harnessing digital capabilities. Digital Transformation was embedded in plans to reshape the University for the future and would underpin future efficiency, compliance enabling economies of scale to be leveraged;

89.2 In relation to PS Connect:

89.2.1 PS Connect was transforming the way corporate services were delivered across Human Resources, Finance, Procurement, Receptions and IT desktop support through portal technology, chatbots and workflows. The PS Connect service was enabling core processes and services to be delivered in a scalable, operationally efficient and financially sustainable way;

89.2.2 Digital and AI driven automation was revolutionising the University and enabling more Efficient and effective processes, practices and service delivery models;

89.2.3 Data-led insights were also being utilised to identify inefficiencies and optimise process;

89.2.4 PS Connect had delivered £4.8m cashable savings and £2.4m non cashable savings since 2023/24 when PS Connect was set up;

89.3 In order to enhance the digital experience of students there was a need to enhance student data and workflows. The new digital student records system would replace the current 25 year-old legacy system and improve the University's digital agility and enable cost reduction;

89.4 Student Connect (which had 6 associated projects in delivery and 7 in the pipeline) was creating a single digital and physical access point for students to find help and support, improve the student experience, and deliver operational efficiency;

89.5 The University's first curriculum management system would provide a central source of information and provide the digital tool to enable all key elements of the Curriculum Change programme to be delivered, including skills mapping and creation of minors;

### Closed Minute – Commercial in Confidence

- 89.7 IT Services had enabled digital transformation and scaling operations to protect core platforms and services in order to operate safely and securely online. This included: sector leading cyber security response that was externally measured and assured; enhanced connectivity across a new network; enhanced cloud migration and optimisations; and development of strong strategic partnerships with AWS, Microsoft and Tribal;
- 89.8 Digital Transformation was focused on enhancing digital experiences for all users through the delivery of the Digital Strategy and four strategic pillars, including: establishing a data-powered and digitally confident environment (Digital Foundations); designing seamless end-to-end services (Digital Experience); automating processes (Digital Efficiency); Exploring new opportunities for growth (Digital Innovation);
- 89.9 The new student app 'MyExeter' had reached 25,000 downloads since the app launched in September 2024 and had 15,000 monthly active users. The app enabled all students to view their timetable, showcasing events and university updates, as well as enabling students to search for and book study spaces;
- 89.10 The 'MyExeter' check-in feature enabled visa holding students, and those on Medicine BMBS /HLS courses with mandatory attendance requirements, to check-in to timetabled sessions and comply with Visa/course requirements;
- 89.11 The Digital Skills initiative would be launching in June 2025, including a Digital Skills Library with over 500 digital learning resources to support development of digital capabilities;
- 89.12 Senate and Council welcomed the update on the digital capabilities being utilised to transform student and staff experience, deliver digital efficiencies and enable digital innovation. The following was noted in discussion:
- 89.12.1 That it would be helpful to reflect further on prioritisation to ensure there was an optimal balance in the digital portfolio between risk mitigations and embarking on new strategic opportunities;
- 89.12.2 That FX Plus would also be implementing the same Student Connect solution to enable benefit of shared service to be realised, including data integration, insights and parity of student experience;
- 89.12.3 That it would be important to embrace and exploit the full potential of digital innovations (including AI) across the organisation to enhance the staff and student user experience across all systems and capabilities.

### **90. Chair's Closing Remarks**

- 90.1 The Chair thanked Senate and Council members for the contribution and input to the meeting and extended particular thanks to colleagues who had presented and supported the digital showcase at the outset of the meeting.