

Bangor University

# COUNCIL MINUTES

At a meeting of the Council held in the University on Friday, 6 May 2022.

**Present**:

Mrs Marian Wyn Jones (Chair), Mr James Avison, Mr Mabon Dafydd, Professor Iwan Davies, Mr Eric Hepburn, Dr Llion Jones, Mr Marc Jones, Mr Kailesh Karavadra, Sir Paul Lambert, Mrs Alison Lea-Wilson, Dr Ian Rees, Professor Oliver Turnbull, Professor Jean White, Dr Lynne Williams, Mr Paul Wood, and Mrs Gwenan Hine (Secretary).

**Apologies:** Dr Myfanwy Davies, Mr Atul Devani, Mr Rob Eastwood, Ms Julie Perkins, and Professor Gareth Roberts

**In attendance:**

Professor Nicky Callow, Professor Andrew Edwards, Mrs Tracy Hibbert, Dr Kevin Mundy, Professor Paul Spencer, Mrs Lorraine Westwood, and Mr Lars Wiegand.

**Observing:**

Mr Celt John, UMCB President Elect, Ms Nyah Lowe, President Elect of the Students’ Union, and Ms Shauna Mallinson, RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP.

In addition, Dr Christian Dunn, Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Sustainability) attended for item 21.67.

*The meeting was held in Cledwyn Conference Room 3, Bangor University and through Zoom.*

**21.63 WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed Ms Nyah Lowe, President Elect of the Students’ Union, and Mr Celt John, UMCB President Elect who were observing the meeting prior to taking up their roles in July 2022.

**21.64 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBER**

A. The Chair advised members that following a recruitment exercise for a new Independent Member of Council, facilitated by Minerva recruitment consultants a short-listing process followed by interviews were undertaken during April 2022. It was noted that the interview panel consisted of members of the Nominations & Governance Committee, namely the Chair and Deputy Chairs of Council, the Vice-Chancellor, and the Chief Operating Officer.

Following the interview process the Appointment Panel wished to recommend to the Council that Professor Timothy Wheeler be appointed as an independent member of Council, for an initial period of 4 years. It was noted that the Council had received a biography of Professor Wheeler in the papers for the meeting.

B. Following consideration the Council **approved** the recommendation of the Appointment Panel, and Professor Timothy Wheeler was duly appointed as an Independent Member for an initial term of four years.

*Professor Wheeler joined the Council meeting*

**21.65 CONGRATULATIONS**

A. On the award of an Honorary Professorship:

* **Dr Mark Gilbert,** Head of Programme, Callum Centre for Fusion Energy, UK Atomic Agency Authority as Honorary Professor in the Nuclear Futures Institute
* **Professor Paul Smith,** ANSWERS Technical Director at Jacobs re-appointed as Honorary Professor in the Nuclear Futures Institute.
* **Professor John Stairmand,** Technical Director, Jacobs, re-appointed as Honorary Professor in the Nuclear Futures Institute

B. On behalf of the Council the Chair warmly congratulated all those listed.

**21.66 DEATHS**

A. The Chair referred to the recent deaths of:

* **Mr Henry Brian Eardley**, former member of staff in Estates & Campus Services
* **Mr Malcolm John,** former member of staff in the School of Medical and Health Sciences
* **Mr Atsuko Papworth**, student in the School of Computer Sciences and Engineering
* **Mr Henry Arthur Smith**, former member of staff in Estates & Campus Services

B. Members fell silent in tribute to their memory.

**21.67 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

A. Members were reminded that they should declare any personal, financial, or beneficial interest in any matter under consideration at this meeting prior to that matter being considered.

B. There were no declarations of interest made in relation to the matters on the agenda.

**21.68 UPDATE ON SUSTAINABILITY**

A. Professor Turnbull introduced Dr Christian Dunn, Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor (Sustainability), and noted that Bangor University had made substantial progress on sustainability in recent years, which was reflected in the University’s positive performance in a number of sustainability league tables. In addition, the appointment of Dr Dunn to help move this activity forward, and the approval of the University’s Sustainability Strategy, had helped to capture the ambition of the University in this area.

Dr Dunn informed the Council that sustainability had a much wider meaning than the commonly understood focus on the environment. The definition utilised by the Welsh Government in the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 categorised sustainability into economic, social, environmental, and cultural aspects. The University was focussing activity across all areas of its business, including in the academic domain, integrating sustainability into work around marketing, the curriculum and research. The aim was to ensure that students choose Bangor University for sustainability reasons, and that once here sustainability should be part of every programme, as well as offering module choices with a sustainability focus. This vision required staff and student engagement, debate, and training over a number of years, however it was already clear that staff and students at the University were committed to making a difference on this critical issue.

Several specific initiatives were highlighted by Dr Dunn, including:

* The University had committed to the *30 by 30* initiative and had taken it a step further by committing to *30 by 30 with 30* aiming to protect 30% of its campus in 30 different areas through conservation by 2030;
* A new sustainability website;
* Sustainability Annual Reports; and
* Embracing sustainability in everything the University did from research, to marketing, to campus and estates management to strategic and business planning processes.

A discussion ensued, and a number of comments were made, and questions asked by members:

* Professor Turnbull noted, following a question from Professor White around the financial implications of delivering the commitments within the Strategy, that there were a number of initiatives already in place such as the use of electric vehicles and the rationalisation of the estate which would provide savings in the long term. In addition, Dr Dunn reported that in his experience prospective students wanted to come to Bangor University to study and initiatives such as the 30 by 30 with 30, whilst requiring some initial investment, would pay dividends in the future in relation to the University’s sustainability credentials.
* Mr Marc Jones queried the capital allocation to renewable energy projects in Henfaes and wondered whether the University had missed opportunities in this area. Professor Spencer noted that the University was certainly looking at sustainable issues around the farm, including improving the upland farm economy through mixed source income, using wool sustainably and reducing reliance on the carbon economy. The University was also looking at the use of solar energy, but this was one of a number of initiatives currently being considered.
* In response to a question posed by Ms Julie Perkins prior to the meeting relating to how to measure progress in this area, Dr Dunn confirmed that there were a number of national and international sustainability targets to follow, and in addition increasing the University’s rankings in league tables such as the one published by the Times Higher Education recently, where the University increased its standing, would also evidence the progress being made. In response to a question from the Chair around how the University could measure engagement with students Dr Dunn noted his aspirations to create a student sustainability committee which would feed items through to the main University Sustainability Strategy Group.
* Mrs Westwood advised the Council that her team were already working with Dr Dunn on a number of areas, including surfacing the sustainability credentials of a number of University programmes, and featuring sustainability in the most recent prospectus. This would remain a focus going forward as the University had a very positive story to tell in relation to this area.
* In response to a question from Dr Rees on how the Council could be assured that in future decisions made on aspects such as finance and the estate also included sustainability considerations, Professor Turnbull noted that raising awareness through staff engagement would bring matters to the forefront of members of staff’s minds. In addition, Dr Dunn was a member of the Investment Committee and was working with outside agencies to look at issues such as sustainable travel. Mr Wiegand also informed the Council that Estates & Campus Services were considering more operational activities such as upgrading lights to LED bulbs, looking at bringing in more lights activated by motion detection, as well as the more strategic considerations around a sustainable estate.

B. The Chair congratulated Professor Turnbull and Dr Dunn on their achievements in this area in particular on the recent news that the University had achieved a higher ranking in the Times Higher Education sustainability table.

**21.69 MINUTES**

1. The Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2022 were **confirmed.**
2. An action log was provided noting progress on all outstanding Council actions. Council noted the progress reports and completed actions.
3. In relation to Minute 21.5C (Supplemental Charter) Mrs Hine noted that the petition for a Supplemental Charter had now been referred by Her Majesty back to the Privy Council. Final comments were awaited from the Welsh Government, and it was hoped that the process could then move to signature. It was noted that a Welsh language version of the Supplemental Charter had also been submitted to the Privy Council, and that the University would receive a signed Welsh and English version in due course.

1. In relation to minute 21.31 (Academic Governance) the Council noted the letter received from HEFCW which advised that the University’s responses to the annual assurance statements had been considered by HEFCW’s Quality Assessment Committee and that no further action was required at this time.

**21.70 CHAIR’S UPDATE**

A. Council **noted** the Report from the Chair which included an update on the meeting with the Welsh Government Minister for Education and Welsh Language, an update on the Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill and an update on the USS pension scheme.

B. In addition, the Chair provided the Council with an update on the process for appointing a new Vice-Chancellor, and it was noted that the closing date was in a few days’ time. Members were informed that there was a clear timetable in place for longlisting, shortlisting, and final interviews as well as a series of stakeholder engagement groups which Council members would be invited to take part in. It was hoped that a recommendation for appointment would be brought to the next meeting of the Council in July.

C. The Chair noted that a Governance Effectiveness Review would be undertaken during 2022, as it was three years since the last Review had been completed. The exact timetabling of the Review was currently being discussed, would be finalised once the outcome of the current RSM audit on governance was known, and would likely take place in the autumn.

**21.71 VICE-CHANCELLOR’S UPDATE**

**A. Student Numbers Cap**

The Vice-Chancellor noted that the Department for Education had launched a consultation earlier in the year in relation to introducing a system to control the numbers of students going into higher education institutions in England. A range of options was being considered but the main issue which may affect Welsh universities was the possibility of a limit on the numbers of students who were able to come from England to study in Wales. The matter was being kept under review in relation to the impact on the Welsh HE sector.

**B. Draft Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill**

The Council were informed that the University was monitoring the progress of the draft Tertiary Education and Research (Wales) Bill as it progressed through the Senedd and would continue to keep members informed.

**C. HEFCW Institutional Review Letter**

The Vice-Chancellor noted that the University had received the HEFCW Institutional Review letter informing it of the outcome of the most recent Institutional Risk Review assessment. It was reported that the University normally received an Institutional Review letter every year but had not received one since 2019 due to the pandemic. It was noted that the University was assessed as “moderate”, with a number of actions being highlighted to be taken forward under a number of headings:

* Finances;
* Governance and Management;
* Research, innovation, and Engagement;
* Students and Quality;
* Estates; and
* Strategic Direction

A discussion ensued and members of Council noted the current challenges faced by the University around its finances including inflation, the forthcoming pay settlement and the implications arising out of the USS pension scheme. The Vice-Chancellor acknowledged the challenges that lay ahead and confirmed that the Finance & Strategy Committee would continue to monitor the financial sustainability of the institution.

The Chair requested an update on the Employability Strategy and the Widening Access Strategy, both of which were referenced in the letter. Professor Spencer noted that the Employability Strategy had now received approval from the Executive, and prior to that had been out for consultation with both staff and students. It was reported that the Strategy consisted of three objectives:

* Embed employability skills and professional attributes throughout the year of study;
* Ensure students identify and develop their personal employability characteristics and experiences; and
* Develop academic colleagues’ knowledge, skills and understanding of employability to engage and inspire students’ development

Professor Spencer noted that progress against each of the objectives within the Strategy would be articulated through key performance indicators (KPIs).

Mrs Westwood advised the Council that the Widening Access Strategy was progressing well and had already been to the Executive in draft form. It was noted that the Strategy covered the whole lifecycle of a student’s journey with the University from engagement at school level to progression to higher education, and on to employment, and dovetailed with the Employability and the Teaching and Learning strategies.

**D. Report from the Executive**

The Vice-Chancellor presented the report from the Executive Committee which was **noted.**

**E. Ukraine**

Professor Edwards provided the Council with an update on the work being undertaken by the University as a result of the crisis in the Ukraine. A few months ago, following Welsh Government enquiries, the University had committed to offering one of its halls of residence to be used as a Welcome Centre, managed by an external provider. It was noted that a number of refugees had subsequently arrived at the centre. In addition, the University would shortly be welcoming two PhD students from the Ukraine and had reached out to the Council for at Risk Academics (Cara) with an offer to host an individual from a conflict zone.

The Chair thanked the University for showing leadership in this area and for taking forward its application for University of Sanctuary.

**F. Update on REF2021**

Professor Spencer advised the Council that the outcome of REF2021 was expected the following week. Members were reminded that the University would be provided with outcomes in each of the Units of Assessment, with these being drawn into a Grade Point Average score. The University was prepared for the outcome and had been working for a number of months on draft internal and external communications, including communication to members of Council, a draft website and also preparing briefings. It was noted that the Council should be made aware of the outcome on the Thursday.

**21.72 STUDENTS UNION UPDATE**

A. Mr Avison and Mr Dafydd presented their reports to the Council, and in particular the following items were highlighted:

* 20 candidates put their names forward for the Sabbatical Officer positions in the recent elections, and a total of 2077 students voted, which was 16.6% of the student population. The 2022/23 Sabbatical Team were noted as:
  + President: Nyah Lowe
  + VP Education: Elsie Pearce
  + VP Sport: Lewis Thompson
  + VP Societies & Volunteering: Sam Dickins
  + UMCB President: Celt John
* The Sabbatical Officers released a statement on the situation in the Ukraine and contributed to and signed an open letter to Universities UK to lobby universities to support students from the affected areas. In addition, the Students’ Union have been working with the University to support students from the Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, and a fundraiser had been held.
* A £103,605 allocation from the HEFCW Winter of Wellbeing fund to support student wellbeing and health was spent by the end of March and had a positive impact on students. A Case Study Report was provided as an appendix to the Council papers, providing further detail on the activities.
* The Students’ Union was recently shortlisted for NUS Wales Awards including Students’ Union of the Year and Campaign of the Year for the Period Poverty and Dignity campaign, and won the Community and Solidarity Award recognising exceptions projects which had brought communities together.
* UMCB have just released a Welsh Medium Teaching and Learning Survey for students, with the purpose of the survey to ensure that the voice and rights of all Welsh speaking students are met throughout the year.
* The Eisteddfod Ryng-golegol was held in Bangor in March, with Bangor University taking the Eisteddfod Shield for the 7th time in a row.

C. The Chair, on behalf of the Council, thanked both Mr Avison and Mr Dafydd for their reports.

**21.73 DEGREE CLASSIFICATION REPORT**

A. Professor Callow presented the 2020/21 Degree Classification Report and reminded members that HEFCW’s Quality Assessment Framework for Wales (2020) placed a responsibility on the Council to ascertain that the University meet standards set out in the Framework. The Degree Classification Report provided further information on degree outcomes and formed an important part of the University’s quality assurance and governance processes. Members of Council were reminded that the full 2020/21 report had been delayed this year due to issues accessing the HEIDI portal.

It was noted in particular that:

* The degree classification report for 2022 had been enhanced this year through the addition of a competitor analysis, tariff information, and a more detailed breakdown of demographic groupings and by subject area.
* The University consistently performed below the level of the sector median between 2015/16 (4% below) and 2019/20 (1% below), but the University’s performance against the sector had improved in recent years and was 2% above the sector median for 2020/21.
* The University was ranked 50th (out of 127) in 2020/21 which was a significantly improved position compared to 2015/16, when Bangor was ranked 92nd (out of 126), moving from a lower quartile to an interquartile position.
* There was variation in degree class between subject areas, with good degrees awarded being close to, or consistent with, the sector minimum in three subject areas: Marketing, Medical Sciences, and Information Systems. However, five subject areas perform poorly in relation to sector norms, falling below the sector lower quartile: Business Studies, Economics, Media Studies, Biomedical Sciences, and Nursing.
* There was variation in the proportion of good degrees awarded within different demographic groups, with attainment gaps noticeable in certain subject areas (e.g., gender in health sciences HEIW, age in electronic engineering, disability in environmental, Natural Resources and Geography).

Following questions from Professor White in relation to attainment gaps it was noted that this was the first year that the data had been presented in this way, and that moving forward there would be far more opportunities to bring data together to track the student journey from entry to employment outcomes.

Dr Rees raised a concern in relation to anomalies between different Schools, and Professor Callow noted that the Teaching & Learning Strategy provided for a learning achievement record for each student, and in addition the work progressing around learning analytics would strengthen this area.

The Chair thanked Professor Callow for presenting the report and noted that the Council would be interested in hearing more about the steps to be taken to address attainment gaps at a future meeting.

B. Following discussion, the Council **approved** the 2020/21 Degree Outcomes Statement.

**21.74 ANNUAL EQUALITY REPORT 2020-21 / GENDER PAY GAP REPORT**

A. Professor Nicky Callow presented the Annual Equality Report 2020-21 which set out the equality monitoring data of all staff employed in the 2020-21 academic year including comparisons with the HEI sector and trends as required by the Equality Act 2010 Public Sector Equality Duty.

It was noted that there had been a strengthening of equality matters across all University strategies, ensuring that consideration of diversity and inclusion was at the heart of everything that the University does. In addition, the University was proud of awards celebrating its commitment to gender equality and it was reported that the University was fully committed to the Athena SWAN Charter and held a Bronze award in recognition of work and progress in this area. Schools continued to work towards School-level awards, and there was a commitment at the University level to apply for a Silver award during 2023.

B. The Council **approved** the Annual Equality Report 2020-21.

C. Mrs Hibbert presented the Gender Pay Gap report which was **noted** by the Council. It was reported that the requirements for reporting on Gender came into force on 6 April 2017 but did not apply to public authorities in Wales. However, following discussions at the Equal Pay Working Group and as agreed with the Trades Unions it was reported that the University voluntarily published its Gender Pay Gap Report.

The Council noted that the University’s Gender Pay Gap stood at a median variance of 7.2% (UK, 13.7%), in favour of those who identify as male rather than female. Whilst the University had an action plan in place to reduce the gender pay gap and the University’s median gap was significantly lower than the provisional national gap there was continued work to be done to reduce/eliminate this gap. The University also voluntarily published its Ethnicity Pay Gap, and for the first time this year its disability pay gap. It was noted that the Ethnicity Pay Gap stood at a median variance of -1.7% (in favour of BAME employees), and the Disability Pay Gap data was at a median of 16.8% in favour of employees who have not identified as disabled.

D. A discussion ensued on both reports and a number of comments were made:

Mr Avison queried whether staff were unsure about supplying certain protected characteristics information, such as sexual orientation. Mrs Hibbert responded that the University had noticed this a few years ago, and following the establishment of a staff-led LGBTQ+ Group which runs campaigns, instigates social gatherings, and provides information to staff the University could see that the numbers reporting under this section were slowly climbing;

Professor White asked whether, in relation to staff and student complaints, information was held in relation to any protected characteristics relating to individuals using these processes. Mrs Hibbert, in relation to staff complaints, and Mrs Hine, in relation to student complaints confirmed that this would be considered going forward to be able to pick up on any trends or biases.

D. The Chair welcomed the positive news contained within both reports and noted that with the establishment of the Council’s People and Cultures Committee updates relating to these matters would be taken to that Committee in the first instance going forward.

**21.75 GRADUATION 2022**

**A. Honorary Degree Recipients 2022**

Members of the Council received the list of individuals who would receive an Honorary Degree during the summer 2022 graduation ceremonies. It was noted that a sub-committee of the Nominations & Governance Committee, including representatives from the Senate were involved in reviewing the basis for which the University would award Honorary Degrees going forward. It was noted that for the first time the University had a number of categories under which individuals would be nominated namely:

* Public Service (including health);
* Outstanding Scholarship and Innovation;
* Sporting Achievements;
* Contribution to Welsh Culture, Language, Music and the Arts;
* Business and Entrepreneurship;
* Popular entertainment, contribution to learning through all media;
* Education; and
* Regional Contribution and / or University Contribution

In response to a question from Mr Hepburn it was confirmed that equality, diversity and inclusion matters were discussed in some detail at the Committee but that the process would benefit from further transparency in this regard for future years.  In addition, Mr Hepburn requested that the Council received more detailed biographical information in relation to the individuals being nominated in future years.

**B. Graduation Arrangements**

Professor Turnbull provided the Council with an update on the arrangements for the two weeks of graduation ceremonies in the summer, running between 30 June and 14 July 2022. It was noted that students would be graduating by subject, with all three cohorts (2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22) graduating on the same day. A series of events associated with *Music 100: Celebrating 100 years of Music at Bangor* would culminate in events happening during the graduation ceremonies themselves. In addition, a new Welsh language poem, and a new English language poem, to be read out in the ceremonies had been commissioned. Finally, it was reported that the University had commissioned two portraits, one of Mary Sutherland the world’s first female forestry graduate, who graduated from Bangor University, and one of Sir Robert Edwards, a Nobel Prize winner who also graduated from Bangor.

The Chair invited all members of Council to attend the graduation ceremony which will be held prior to the Council’s next meeting on 8 July 2022.

**21.76 STUDENT RECRUITMENT**

A. Professor Andrew Edwards provided the Council with an update on the current student recruitment position and noted that the University had now moved from the application stage to the acceptance stage. Once again, the Council were reminded that the overall reduction in HEIW commissioned provision was having an impact on the overall numbers.

B. The Council welcomed the positive news in relation to student recruitment and noted, with thanks, the hard work and dedication of staff across the institution.

**21.77 ESTATES REPORT**

A. Mr Wiegand provided the Council with an update on the Estates Vision 2030+, and specifically on the projects involving the Outer Quad, and the transformation of Parc y Coleg. It was noted in particular that:

* The Outer Quad car park area was being removed and a new pedestrian area developed;
* Work was also planned on the Main Entrance lobby to provide a more open space;
* Work on Parc y Coleg would take a number of months and would open up the area and create a welcoming green space, opening up views, encouraging better tree growth, improving entrances and enhancing biodiversity on the site.

B. The Chair thanked Mr Wiegand for his update, and the Council **noted** the update provided by Mr Wiegand in the Action Log pertaining to Nantporth Boathouse, and the Old Post Office building.

**21.78 FINANCE & STRATEGY COMMITTEE**

A. The Report of the meeting of the Finance & Strategy Committee held on the 11 March 2022 (attached as Appendix I to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted**.

B. In relation to minute 2122-39 b) (Financial Monitoring): it was noted that the Committee were presented with a paper providing a summary of the Q2 performance for 2021/22, covering the Statement of Comprehensive income & Expenditure, Balance Sheet and Cashflow Statement.

**21.79 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE**

A. The Report of the meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on the 11 March 2022 (attached as Appendix II to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted**. Mr Hepburn noted that the Council would receive a deep dive on risk management processes at its meeting in July.

B. The Council received a report on the Corporate Risks Classified Residually as Extreme and High, and noted that currently 12 of the 23 risks on the University’s Corporate Risk Register were classified residually extreme or high, i.e., following the application of the University’s control mechanisms, those which would cause major or critical impact, and likely or almost certainly come to fruition in the next 1-3 years.

**21.80 JOINT ENGAGEMENT FORUM**

The Report of the meeting of the Joint Engagement Forum held on 27 April 2022 (attached as Appendix III to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted.**

**21.81 WELSH AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

The Report of the meeting of the Welsh Language Affairs Committee held on 25th February 2022 (attached as Appendix IV to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted.**

**21.82 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**

As the Health and Safety Committee had not met since the last meeting of the Council an in-Year Report on accidents and incidents, and sickness absence was noted. In addition, Dr Mundy advised the Council that the University was slowly returning to a more business as usual model with Covid-19 signage being removed in time for the graduation ceremonies, and the existing Coronavirus Risk Assessment being developed into a more generic workplace public health risk assessment.

**21.83 VALEDICTION**

The Chair of Council noted that this was Mr Avison and Mr Dafydd’s last meeting of the Council as President of the Students’ Union and President of UMCB respectively. On behalf of the whole Council the Chair thanked both for their willingness to work with the Council and the University and their leadership and wished them both well for their future careers.

Ms Leah Edge, Governance Assistant who was moving to another role within the University was also thanked for supporting the Chair, and Council members over a period of more than two years.