

Bangor University

# COUNCIL MINUTES

At a meeting of the Council held in the University on Friday, 30 September 2022.

**Present**:

Mrs Marian Wyn Jones (Chair), Professor Edmund Burke, Dr Myfanwy Davies, Mr Atul Devani, Mr Eric Hepburn, Mr Celt John, Dr Llion Jones, Mr Marc Jones, Mr Kailesh Karavadra, Sir Paul Lambert, Mrs Alison Lea-Wilson, Ms Nyah Lowe, Ms Julie Perkins, Professor Gareth Roberts, Professor Oliver Turnbull, Professor Jean White, Mr Paul Wood, and Mrs Gwenan Hine (Secretary).

**Apologies:** Dr Ian Rees and Professor Rhiannon Tudor Edwards

**In attendance:**

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

In addition, Mr Mike Wilson, Director of Strategy, Planning and Research attended for item 22.10.

*The meeting was held in the Sarah Jones Conference Centre, School of Ocean Sciences, Bangor University and through Zoom.*

**22.1 WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed Professor Edmund Burke the University’s new Vice-Chancellor, to his first meeting of Council, and welcomed all members to the first Council meeting of the 2022/23 academic year.

**22.2 CONGRATULATIONS**

A. Congratulations were extended to the University’s former students who were successful in this year's National Eisteddfod namely:

* Esyllt Maelor (Crown)
* Meinir Pierce Jones (Daniel Owen Memorial Award)
* Sioned Erin Hughes (The Prose Medal)
* Edward Rhys-Harry (The Musician’s Trophy)

In addition, the Council noted that that Professor Robin Williams, a Bangor University alumnus, had been awarded the National Eisteddfod Science and Technology Medal for his lifelong contribution to science.

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

**22.3 DEATHS**

A. The Chair referred to the recent death of:

* **Dr D M Hughes**, a former Lecturer in the School of Computer Science and Electronic Engineering
* **Dr Ann Illsley** a former member of staff in the Library and the School of Medical and Health Sciences
* **Ms Kate Maura Jones**, a BA Criminology and Criminal Justice graduate; and
* **Mr Kenneth Swales Davies** an Honorary Fellow of the University

B. Members fell silent in tribute to their memory.

**22.4 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.

**22.5 APPOINTMENT OF CHANCELLOR**

A. The Chair provided an update on the current progress in appointing a new University Chancellor.

The Council were advised that in August 2022 the University commenced a nominations exercise to appoint a new Bangor University Chancellor, as the current Chancellor’s term was finishing at the end of August. Nominations were sought from staff, students, members of Council and Alumni, with the Chancellor advert outlining the key skills the University was looking for.

Following the nominations exercise, an Appointment Panel, convened on behalf of the Nominations & Governance Committee, was established, and met on two occasions to consider the nominations received. The Appointment Panel consisted of the Chair of Council, the Vice-Chancellor, two independent members of Council, a Council member who was a member of Senate and the President of the Students’ Union. In addition, the Secretary to Council was in attendance.

The Appointment Panel drew a short list of three individuals together, and it was reported that discussions were ongoing. A further update would be brought to the next meeting of the Council.

**22.6 MINUTES**

1. The Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2022 were **confirmed.**
2. An action log was provided noting progress on all outstanding Council actions. Council noted the progress reports and completed actions.

**22.7 CHAIR’S UPDATE**

Council **noted** the Report from the Chair which included an update on the PCET Strategy and Implementation Board, the Universities Wales TER leads meeting, the Chairs of University Wales Council Committee, the CUC Executive Committee, and the Chair’s Liaison with Other Organisations.

**22.8 VICE-CHANCELLOR’S UPDATE**

A. Opening Remarks

The Vice-Chancellor thanked the Council for warmly welcoming him to Bangor University. He noted that the first few weeks of his tenure had been enjoyable, and that he was honoured and privileged to serve as the University’s Vice-Chancellor.

The University needed to focus on its core business which was teaching (including the student experience and retention), research and enterprise and student recruitment, which drove the University’s finances and allowed it to achieve its key strategic aims. Over the first few weeks the Vice-Chancellor informed the Council that he had been working closely with colleagues on the Executive to deliver a balanced budget and to ensure that key strategic projects such as the North Wales Medical School was affordable. The recent NSS results had been pleasing, and the Council would be briefed further on this point by Professor Turnbull later in the meeting.

The Vice-Chancellor noted that the opportunities afforded by the North Wales Growth Deal aligned with the University’s strategic aims, however he had begun discussions with politicians in both Westminster and Cardiff to request changes to the current rules for the Growth Deal with a view to potentially allowing the University to include projects around the North Wales Medical School.

The cost-of-living crisis was continuing to hit hard, and the University was considering ways in which it could help both the staff and student community over the coming months. A recent decision from the Executive to place further funds into the Student Hardship Fund was noted.

Finally, the Council were informed that the University had recently appointed a new Chief Finance Officer, with Mr Martyn Riddleston joining the University on 1 November 2022.

B. Report from the Executive

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

C.The Chair of Council thanked the Vice-Chancellor for the overview of the current priorities and extended her thanks, on behalf of the Council, to Mr Rob Eastwood, the Interim Finance Director for his work over the last two years.

**22.9 FINANCE AND PLANNING UPDATE**

A. Report from the Finance & Strategy Committee

Sir Paul Lambert as Chair of the Finance & Strategy Committee echoed the Chair’s thanks to Mr Eastwood for his diligent work in ensuring that the University’s finances were in a much more stable position.

The Report of the meeting of the Finance & Strategy Committee held on the 23 September 2022 (attached as Appendix I to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted**.

B. The Chair thanked Sir Paul Lambert for his comprehensive update and noted the importance of ensuring that the Council were appraised of the Executive priorities going forward. It was noted that a comprehensive discussion would be undertaken at the next Council meeting when the Financial Statements would be considered.

The Chair noted that the University had not met its stretch targets for student recruitment during the recent admissions cycle, however the strong recruitment in overseas PGT had ensured a positive outcome overall in relation to the finances.

C. Mrs Westwood provided an update on the current work being undertaken on student recruitment. It was noted that whilst the University had missed out on its stretch targets it had seen a sustained growth in student recruitment numbers over the last 2 years.

Mrs Westwood also advised the Council that the University had commissioned a decliner survey for this recruitment cycle. Professor Wheeler suggested that working with sixth forms would be beneficial, and Mr Devani also noted that working with the University’s alumni to understand which careers they had progressed into would be a useful way forward. Professor Edwards reported that in relation to the link with the Bahrain Institute of Banking and Finance a recent decision had been made to engage with alumni, as the University had an excellent reputation within that country. Mr Karavadra endorsed the view that working with alumni provided the University with opportunities to showcase what a Bangor University degree could lead to.

The Chair thanked members for their constructive suggestions, and Mrs Westwood confirmed that these would be considered further.

**22.10 LEAGUE TABLES UPDATE**

A. The Director of Strategy, Planning and Research presented his report on League Tables, which provided the Council with a briefing on the primary domestic and international league tables in operation across the UK and global HE sectors, their alignment to the University’s Strategy 2030, the University’s latest performance in league tables, and its approach to addressing league table performance.

It was noted that League Tables commanded a high-profile presence in the media and were an important element of the University’s brand proposition, being used by prospective students, their families, and teachers/advisors in schools/FE colleges. In the case of overseas students, it was noted that some governments would only fund students to attend courses at higher ranking universities.

The Council were advised that in relation to the two main league tables, the University had gone up 19 places to 45th in The Times table (4th in Wales) and had gone up 4 places to 82nd in the UK in the Guardian table (7th in Wales). The Council were reminded of the need to recognise the limitations of driving university strategy by league tables, and rather to adopt an approach where successful strategy outcomes align to improved performance in respected rankings that align to the University’s mission, vision, and values. Further challenge comes from some inherent short-term volatility in league table methodologies, making alignment to longer term strategic vision problematic. Relatively small absolute changes in metrics could give rise to more prominent changes in relative performance, particularly where data is tightly grouped around a narrow range of values, or where data changes frequently.

Members were advised that a number of interventions were planned for the 2022/23 academic year including an increased focus on key metrics and actions through business planning, significant enhancements to data analysis and benchmarking, optimisation of finance data and focus on entry tariff when the market share had recovered sufficiently. In addition, Professor Turnbull continued to focus on matters relating to student satisfaction, Professor Callow on retention, completion and degree outcomes and Professor Spencer on employability matters.

B. Professor Wheeler noted that in his experience the Sunday Times league table was a crucial one to target, with this table having a higher profile overseas. The Vice-Chancellor endorsed the point made, and noted that whilst the Sunday Times was situated behind a paywall, the Guardian table was available free. The importance of both tables to prospective students was stressed.

Professor White queried whether focussing on the entry tariff may take away opportunities for some mature students which made up a larger cohort for the medical and health programmes. Professor Callow noted that potentially those admitted towards the lower end of the tariff had more challenges with progression and retention, and this was a challenge the University needed to address post pandemic.

Mrs Westwood confirmed that profiling the student cohort in relation to some diversity and inclusion statistics, and other widening access factors was something the University was working towards. Work was ongoing to enable the University to target aspirational students, without closing the doors on mature students and those towards the lower end of the tariff scale.

C. The Chair thanked the Director of Strategy, Planning and Research, on behalf of the Council for a very useful update which provided assurance on a number of matters.

**22.11 STUDENTS UNION UPDATE**

A. Ms Lowe and Mr John presented the reports of the work undertaken by Undeb Bangor and UMCB since the last Council meeting and shared the Sabbatical Officer Team Priorities for 2022-23 with members. The reports were **noted**.

B. In addition, Ms Lowe highlighted the following additional matters:

* The international students’ welcome events had been warmly received and thanks was extended to members of staff for planning and hosting the events;
* The numbers of students signing up to the Union’s clubs and societies this academic year was currently 4,643, with 8,000 students having signed up since May.
* The work undertaken by the University in relation to the cost-of-living crisis has been well received by students, with regular updates being provided in the Student Bulletin. The Union was working with the University on a number of matters, including in relation to the Hardship Fund, and the effect of the crisis on student mental health.
* Discussions were taking place with the University around assessment and exams (in person / online) and live streaming of lectures. Professor Callow noted that the University had learnt a lot from the pandemic in relation to alternative assessment methods and in addition, it was noted that Dr Dei Huws had been appointed to a role within CELT to focus on assessment, feedback, and the module evaluation scheme.
* Graduation had been a very positive experience with good feedback received from the student body.
* The Union were hosting a Student Leadership Conference the following day, which the Vice-Chancellor was contributing to.
* A few teething problems had been encountered during registration and timetabling, and Dr Mundy confirmed that in relation to the timetabling issues these were being addressed. Professor Callow noted that there had been issues with student finance systems in both England and Wales which had meant that registration uploads had failed, the issues caused were being addressed as a priority.
* Wayfinding around campus had proven difficult for students at the start of the year and had proven particularly difficult this year as students hadn’t been on campus properly for the last two academic years.

Mr Wiegand confirmed that he was aware of the issues and was looking at both immediate fixes to the problem and longer-term actions. It was noted that an online map had been shared with students in the Student Bulletin that week, in addition to having members of staff available in Main Arts to assist in directing students. The Vice-Chancellor also confirmed that this was a priority matter which was being taken forward by Estates & Campus Services.

Mr John highlighted the following matters from the UMCB report

* The team had hosted a variety of events throughout the week-long festival, and had worked as part of the core team on the University’s stand;
* UMCB are currently busy organising events such as the UMCB Gig which takes place during Wythnos Shwmae Sumae, and holding meetings with the student council of Khmelnytsky University Ukraine following the University’s decision to twin with Bangor University as a sign of solidarity during the current crisis;
* Welcome week had gone well, with the Undeb hosing the Welsh Welcome Fair once again. In addition, the Serendipity Fair had been successful, and thanks was extended to members of Council who had attended the Fair to show support for the students.

C. The Chair, on behalf of the Council, thanked both Ms Lowe and Mr John for their informative updates and reports, and welcomed the feedback on the positive working relationship with the University on a number of matters.

**22.12 NATIONAL STUDENT SURVEY**

A. Professor Turnbull provided the Council with an update on the results of the National Student Survey (NSS). It was reported that the University’s NSS overall satisfaction had risen significantly to 81%, with the University’s position having increased to 19th in the UK, and 2nd in Wales.

The report presented summarised the data at University, School, and Subject level, and Professor Turnbull reported that there was considerable variation when analysed this way, with Schools with lower satisfaction scores, having a disproportionate impact on the overall University performance. The report summarised actions already in train or planned for these Schools and the likely causes of the improvement seen in the latest results. It was noted that action plans were currently being drawn up for the areas where overall satisfaction rates were below the average, and these would be sent to HEFCW the following week.

In summary the Council were informed that relative to the sector, the University had generated impressive levels of student satisfaction, across the very challenging period of the pandemic, and these areas of good practice would be shared.

B. Professor White welcomed the presentation from Professor Turnbull, which had provided further information on the work being taken forward in relation to this matter. An update was requested by Professor White on the current situation in the School of Medical and Health Sciences, following the retirement of Dr Lynne Williams, given that the School was one of the ones with a lower satisfaction score. Professor Turnbull noted that the University was currently preparing to advertise the role, and that an interim head Mrs Liz Mason, was in place and was working with the University on an action plan.

Ms Lowe noted that she had discussed with Professor Turnbull during the week whether the action plans could be more standardised going forward as the ones prepared in response to this year’s NSS results were not standardised. In addition, the Students’ Union had requested earlier interaction with students on the content of the action plans and had suggested that students were involved over the summer (where possible).

Professor Turnbull noted that he had welcomed the suggestions from the Students’ Union and would take these matters forward with Ms Lowe.

Professor Callow also noted that in relation to the issues within the School of Medical and Health Sciences she was in discussion with the Health Board on some of the actions identified.

Sir Paul Lambert queried whether the University was yet in a position to be able to identify any areas of concern in schools, in order that early action could be taken prior to the next survey. Professor Turnbull noted that one way to do this was to look at the module evaluation data and confirmed that this was an area that was being looked at for the 2022/23 academic year.

The Chair highlighted her disappointment with the Welsh medium results within the School of Educational Sciences and requested that a report on this matter was brought to the next meeting of the Welsh Language Affairs Committee.

The Vice-Chancellor assured members of Council that addressing the issues highlighted by the NSS survey was an absolute priority and monitoring performance would be an integral part of the planning process going forward, including where relevant ensuring that actions identified in the NSS Action Plans were being addressed. The University was currently 19th in the UK but had every opportunity to build towards being a top ten university.

C. The Chair welcomed the impressive improvement on the NSS results and noted the importance of ensuring that the University moved forward swiftly with the actions identified, to ensure that, when the next NSS survey is undertaken that the areas of weakness have been addressed. The hard work undertaken by staff across the University was acknowledged and thanks extended on behalf of all members of Council.

**22.13 SUPPLEMENTAL CHARTER AND ORDINANCES**

**A. Supplemental Charter**

Mrs Hine advised the Council that work had commenced on modernising the University’s Supplemental Charter in February 2020, following the outcome of the Governance Effectiveness Review undertaken in 2019. Working with the University’s legal advisors, and considering best practice, a decision had been made to subsume the current Statutes of the University into either the Charter, or into Ordinances. Council was reminded that they had already approved the non-staff Ordinances early in the process, but that the staff related matters within Statute XX required negotiation with the Campus Trades Unions, and updates had been brought to Council over the past two years on progress with the modernisation process.

The Council were advised that over the summer the new Supplemental Charter had been approved by the Privy Council and signed by Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II. The University was currently waiting for the new Supplemental Charter to be placed on to vellum.

The Council welcomed the news that the Charter was fully bilingual, with the Welsh and English versions appearing side by side. It was noted that the University was the only University in Wales to set out its Supplemental Charter in this way.

The Supplemental Charter was **noted**.

**B. ORDINANCES**

Mrs Hibbert advised the Council that in line with the work to modernise the University’s Supplementary Charter and the decision to incorporate the provision from the Statues into the Charter / Ordinances, the Human Resources department undertook the work of transferring the provisions of Statute XX (relating to staff) into

new Ordinances. The work entailed negotiating eight new Ordinances with the Campus Trades Unions over the course of the last two years, specifically:

* Ordinance 20: Capability and Supporting Performance
* Ordinance 21: Disciplinary
* Ordinance 22: Fixed Term Contracts
* Ordinance 23: Grievance
* Ordinance 24: Illegality and Dismissal for Some Other Substantive Reason (SOSR)
* Ordinance 25: Management of Change
* Ordinance 26: Probation
* Ordinance 27: Sickness Absence

It was noted that a period of negotiation had taken place with the three Campus Trades Unions, with significant engagement and dialogue having taken place on the content of each Ordinance, and Mrs Hibbert reported that the University had now reached the stage where all points of difference have been resolved.

The Council were informed that previously the University’s policies in this area were set out in two documents, a brief policy document and a more detailed ‘procedures’ document. As part of the modernisation exercise there was now only one document which was titled ‘policy and procedures’ which contained all the information, with a common layout and presentation format. The University believed that this was of benefit to members of staff and would be applying this model to all policies thus achieving a more common approach. It was noted that much of the text contained in the previous policy documents had been incorporated into the revised versions. Mrs Hibbert noted that prior to undertaking the modernisation exercise the University had some policies which were applicable to all staff, but others where there were separate policies for Academic & Professional staff and Support Staff. The approach taken with the modernisation exercise was to have one policy that was applicable to all staff, and therefore whilst separate terms and conditions remain for the staff groups, there will be one set of Ordinances which are applicable to all.

It was noted that once approval of the Ordinances had been granted a detailed cross-checking exercise would also be carried out across all other policies to ensure that any cross referencing remained accurate.

The Council were informed that the University confirmed that agreement had been reached with all three Campus Trades Unions as to the content of the Ordinances presented.

**Agreed** Following discussion the Council **agreed:**

[a] That the Ordinances numbered 20-27 (attached as Appendix II to the official copy of the Minutes) were hereby approved and adopted as the Ordinances of the University in substitution for and to the exclusion of the existing provision within Statute XX.

[b] That the existing provisions contained within Statute XX are revoked subject to and with effect from the approval of the Privy Council to the new Supplemental Charter of the University.

[c] That the Council hereby delegated power to the Nominations & Governance Committee to approve any further non-material amendments to the Ordinances as may be deemed necessary by the Nominations & Governance Committee.

**22.14 RESEARCH MATTERS**

**A.** **Research Concordat**

Professor Spencer advised the Council that in January 2020, Bangor became one of the first universities in the UK to become a signatory to the new Researcher Development Concordat. The Concordat was an agreement between stakeholders to improve the employment and support for researchers and researcher careers in higher education in the UK and set out three principles of environment and culture, employment, and professional and career development. It was noted that the principles were underpinned by obligations for the four key stakeholder groups (institutions, funders, researchers, and managers of researchers) to realise the aims of the Concordat.

The Council were advised that in July 2022, the University submitted its new Concordat Action plan (2022-25) and HR Excellence in Research Award application (which was currently under review).

Professor Spencer advised that it was a signatory responsibility of the new Concordat that an annual progress report was presented to the University’s governing body. The accompanying report looked at the three principles of the Concordat and the corresponding areas of the Action Plan in turn, focusing on the key objectives of the 2020-22 Action Plan and highlighting progress made over the last 12 months. It also looks ahead to the key objectives of the 2022-25 Action Plan.

Professor White asked whether an element of the Concordat considered the gender balance amongst research staff, and Professor Spencer reported that matters of diversity and inclusion were being addressed during the current year. In addition, following a question from Professor Wheeler, Mrs Hibbert confirmed that the University currently held a Bronze Athena Swann award and was looking to make a Silver application within the next 18 months. In addition, 7 of the 9 University academic schools held Athena Swann awards. The Chair requested that the People & Culture Committee be kept informed of progress on the application for a Silver award.

Following discussion, the Council **noted** the update on the Research Concordat.

**B.** **Research Grants**

Professor Spencer presented the research grant capture for the last financial year alongside the outturn of the four previous years. It was noted that the period covered by the report had seen significant changes in the funding landscape, most notably the loss of access to European structure funds, and potentially the loss of access to the European Horizon programme in addition. In the UK context the Government had initiated the formation of a new funding agency ARIA – Advanced Research and Innovation Agency, to complement the existing funders such as UKRI – UK Research and Innovation and Innovate UK. Professor Spencer also noted that it had become clear that ‘Levelling-Up’ funding would not be on the same scale as former European structure funds and would be more challenging to access because the decision making had been devolved to Local Councils. It was noted that against this backdrop the balance between EU structural grants and other funding sources was changing. The Council were informed that grant capture dipped during the Covid-19 period but had since started to recover.

In addition, the Council were informed of an UKRI visit in December 2022 as well as a visit by Sir Patrick Vallance, the Government Chief Scientific Adviser during the same month.

The Chair welcomed the news regarding the UKRI visit. In addition, the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that one of the three core business strands for the University was research, and the drive to increase the University’s reputation. The situation relating to European funding was concerning, but that going forward he fully endorsed the direction of travel outlined focussing on UKRI funding.

**22.15 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE**

A. The Report of the meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on the 16 September 2022 (attached as Appendix III to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted**.

B. Mr Hepburn informed the Council that the Annual Report received from the Internal Auditor contained the audit opinion that the University had an adequate and effective framework for risk management, governance, internal control and economy, efficiency, and effectiveness. In addition, it was pleasing to note that the updated University Corporate Risk Register included all the items considered by the Council at its meeting.

An action for the Nominations & Governance Committee relating to the governance of subsidiary companies was noted and the Chair confirmed that this would be discussed by that Committee at its next meeting.

**22.16 REMUNERATION COMMITTEE**

The Report of the meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on 29 July 2022 (attached as Appendix IV to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted.**

**22.17 JOINT ENGAGEMENT FORUM**

The Report of the meeting of the Joint Engagement Forum held on 9 September 2022 (attached as Appendix V to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted.**

**22.18 HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE**

Professor Roberts advised the Council that the Health and Safety Committee had not met following the last meeting of Council, with the next Committee is scheduled for October 2022. A summary 2021/22 statistical report pertaining to Accidents & Incidents and Staff

Sickness Absence was included in the papers for the Council, and further detail would be provided to members in the Annual Health and Safety Report in early 2023.

**22.19 SEALING**

The Council **ratified** the sealing of documents listed in Agendum 16.

**22.20 GOVERNANCE EFFECTIVENESS REVIEW**

The Chair advised members that AdvanceHE would be commencing work on the Governance Effectiveness Review during the autumn, with a view to providing a report to the February 2023 meeting of the Council. In addition to discussions with members of Council, the AdvanceHE team would be observing some Council Committees, as well as the November meeting of the Council.