

Bangor University

**COUNCIL MINUTES**

# At a meeting of the Council held in the University on Friday, 5 May 2023.

**Present**:

Mrs Marian Wyn Jones (Chair), Professor Edmund Burke, Mr Atul Devani, Professor Rhiannon T. Edwards, Mr Eric Hepburn, Mr Celt John, Dr Llion Jones, Sir Paul Lambert, Mrs Alison Lea-Wilson, Ms Nyah Lowe, Professor Oliver Turnbull, Ms Julie Perkins, Dr Ian Rees, Professor David Viner, Professor Jean White, Mr Paul Wood, Ms Elin Wyn and Mrs Gwenan Hine (University Secretary).

**Apologies:** Dr Myfanwy Davies, Professor Tim Wheeler, Mrs Tracy Hibbert, Dr Kevin Mundy and Professor Paul Van Gardingen.

**In attendance:**

Professor Andrew Edwards, Mr Martyn Riddleston and Mr Michael Flanagan until agendum item 22.80. Dr Lowri A. Hughes and Mr Iwan Williams, for item 22.62 and Ms Patricia Murchie for item 22.73C.

*The meeting was held in Reichel Dining Hall, Bangor University and through Zoom.*

**22.60 WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed Professor David Viner, Independent Member of Council, and Mr Flanagan, Chief Transformation Officer to their first meeting.

The Chair also informed members that, following an expression of interest exercise, Sir Paul Lambert had been confirmed as Deputy Chair of Council. In addition, it was noted that Dr Rees had been appointed as Senior Independent Governor. The Chair welcomed both appointments, noting her thanks to Sir Paul Lambert and Dr Rees for their willingness to undertake the roles.

**22.61 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.

**22.62 CIVIC ENGAGEMENT**

1. Professor Andrew Edwards introduced the briefing on civic engagement and noted that civic engagement activities are commencing again, following the pandemic. However, during the period where external meetings and events weren’t possible, the civic engagement team have had the opportunity to take stock of where the University is in terms of the portfolio, and mapped out what needs to happen to take things forward. Professor A. Edwards reported that, when he took oversight of the civic engagement brief, it became clear that more investment was needed in the area. Consequently, a Senior Civic Engagement Office, and a Civic Engagement Officer were appointed, alongside an Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor, who is working specifically on the Civic Mission Strategy which was launched in October 2022. In addition, a new post of Corporate Events Officer has been appointed to recently, and the individual would take up post soon, working alongside the team.

Professor A. Edwards outlined the three umbrella themes for this area:

* Working with stakeholders to identify and address ‘big challenges’(e.g., health, climate, Welsh language, housing, poverty and an ageing population).
* Working with stakeholders to enable innovation and economic opportunities.
* Improving quality of lifeand sharing knowledge through social and public engagement.

Dr Hughes and Mr Williams provided the Council with an update on several initiatives which were currently being taken forward:

* A Community Day was being planned for the autumn, providing an opportunity to welcome the community into the University and showcasing the breadth of work undertaken.
* Updates are being provided regularly to local social media channels, and a civic mission video (narrated by Mr Tudur Owen, an Honorary Degree recipient of the University) was currently in production.
* Civic engagement webpages have been created, and the team are now working on specific College and School civic engagement webpages to highlight activities being undertaken in those areas.
* A staff questionnaire has been circulated, which has provided some initial findings in terms of staff engagement with external stakeholders.
* The University has entered a three-year partnership with the Institute for Welsh Affairs, and two events are being held each year on specific themes.
* The University is working in partnership with Wrexham University to deliver the Children’s University across North Wales.

1. Professor R.T. Edwards provided further information on work being undertaken within the Centre for Health Economics and Medicines Evaluation, and it was **agreed** that Mr Williams would speak to Professor R.T. Edwards to gain further insight on this point.

Ms Wyn requested further information on the University’s activities at the National Eisteddfod. Mr Williams noted that, in relation to the civic engagement portfolio, there are plans in place to have a discussion on Bangor University and the community, which will be held alongside the launch of the civic engagement video.

Dr Rees requested further details on the KPIs associated with the Civic Engagement Strategy. Mr Williams confirmed that KPIs are included within the Strategy, and these are set in discussion with HEFCW. The KPIs are due for review in the next few months, and the updated KPIs would be shared with HEFCW following that exercise.

Sir Paul Lambert welcomed the University’s partnership with Wrexham University taking forward the Children’s University across North Wales. The importance of encouraging children to interact with the University, to drive their ambition to go on to higher education, was emphasised. These comments were echoed by Professor White, who also suggested considering how the Duke of Edinburgh Awards could be included in this work. In response to the comments, Professor A. Edwards noted that, in North Wales, the Children’s University project was in its infancy, however as part of the funding available for the project, two posts would be based at the University, working with schools across Gwynedd and Ynys Môn.

Professor Viner requested further information on how the University manages risk in this area, and Professor Edwards confirmed that there was a risk register associated with civic engagement, which is monitored regularly.

Mrs Lea-Wilson asked how the civic engagement work interfaced with the University Court in its role as the stakeholder meeting for the University. The University Secretary noted that a review of Court is being undertaken over the summer, working alongside the civic engagement team, to provide a more effective platform for interacting with stakeholders.

1. The Chair welcomed the update on civic engagement, and thanked Professor Edwards, Dr Hughes and Mr Williams for their presentation which has provided members with a deeper understanding of the portfolio.

*Dr Hughes and Mr Williams left the meeting*

**22.63 DEATHS**

A. The Chair referred to the recent death of:

* **Mr John Ellis Jones,** Former Member of staff, in the Department of Classics, and the Department of English.
* **Mr Arthur Hughes,** Former member of staff in Biological Sciences, MSF/Unite representative, and a member of staff in Human Resources.
* **Mr Albert Rees,** Former technician in the School of Electronic Engineering.   
  **Mr Nicholas Snowman,** Honorary Fellow.
* **Ms Helen Birch,** Former Student, School of Human & Behavioural Sciences.

Members fell silent in tribute to their memory.

**22.64 CONGRATULATIONS**

The Chair extended her congratulations to University members of staff who had recently been appointed as Fellows of the Learned Society of Wales:

* Professor Enlli Thomas
* Professor John Witcombe
* Professor Laurence Williams

**22.65 MINUTES**

1. The Minutes of the meeting held on 10 February 2023 were **confirmed.**
2. An action log was provided noting progress on all outstanding Council actions. Council noted the progress reports and completed actions.

A letter received by the Vice-Chancellor from HEFCW in relation to the Prevent Duty Annual Return (minute 22.39), noting that the University had demonstrated sufficient evidence of due regard to the Prevent Duty, has been included in the papers for assurance purposes. The letter was **noted**.

In relation to the North Wales Medical School (minute 22.51) Professor Turnbull advised members that the University is expecting the General Medical Council accreditation visit to take place in June 2023. Professor Turnbull confirmed that he would report back to the Council once the visit had taken place.

**22.66 COUNCIL WORKPLAN**

1. Members received an initial draft of the Council Workplan from the University Secretary. The aim of the Workplan is for the Governance Office, in consultation with the Chair and the Vice-Chancellor, to plan a Schedule of business for Council on a rolling academic year basis. It was noted that the Workplan linked the agenda items to Strategy 2030 for assurance.
2. Professor White asked whether work on the Race Equality Charter should be included in the Plan. The University Secretary confirmed that updates on the University’s work on the Charter would be reported to the People and Culture Committee and, through the minutes of that Committee, to the Council.

In addition, Professor White requested further information on the work on overseas provision, and the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement) was currently working on a Strategy and an initial review of provision, and a further update would be brought to the next meeting of the Council. Ms Lowe noted that, in relation to international students, further work is needed to ensure that the students were supported both prior to, and on arrival at the University. It was confirmed that this would form part of the work being undertaken by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement), who would liaise with the Students’ Union on this point.

Ms Perkins requested that a comprehensive report on student recruitment was included at each meeting, and in addition that a more in-depth report on the North Wales Medical School should be included in due course. In addition, Ms Perkins asked what the triggers would be for matters being referred to the Council from the Committees or referred directly. The Chair of Council noted that these decisions will be informed in part by those items which were in the extreme and high-risk categories on the University’s Corporate Risk Register. In addition, it was noted that the work being undertaken on producing an Integrated Performance Report for the Council, will also provide further information for the Council which may trigger requests for further updates. Chairs were invited to highlight in committee minutes issues that needed to be escalated to the Council, and to note these in cover sheets.

1. Following discussion, the draft Council Workplan was **agreed**, and it was further **agreed** that a copy would be included with the papers for each Council meeting going forward.

It was also **agreed** that the Vice-Chancellor and the University Secretary would consider how the Council will receive updates on the top scoring items on the risk register during the academic year.

**22.67 CHAIR’S UPDATE**

A. The Chair reported on the recent publication of the HESA data relating to universities’ financial statements for 2021/22. It was noted that the Chief Financial Officer has recently undertaken an analysis of sector financial performance, so that the University was able to reflect on its comparative performance.

B. The Chair also reported on a recent meeting between the Chairs of Universities Wales and the Minister for Education and Welsh Language, Jeremy Miles MS. The meeting had proven productive, with an opportunity for the Chairs to raise concerns with the Minister around the current funding model for Welsh Higher Education Institutions. It was noted that the Minister had expressed his desire to engage further with universities in Wales, and to meet with Vice-Chancellors and Chairs.

**22.68 VICE-CHANCELLOR’S UPDATE**

1. The Vice-Chancellor provided the Council with updates in a number of key areas:

**Vice-Chancellor Objectives**

The Vice-Chancellor reported that he has met with the Chair of Council recently to review his objectives, and that all the objectives are on track. An Executive Board Away Day is scheduled for mid-May when a review of Strategy 2030 will be undertaken. It was emphasised that there were no plans to change the Strategy in any great detail, however there will be to focus on developing clear Annual Institutional KPIs.

**Planning Process**

The test and challenge phase of the annual planning round is underway. Members of the Executive Board have met with Deans and Heads of School to discuss budgeting plans and Key Performance Indicators. The process of completing the equivalent Professional Services meetings is currently ongoing. The process of prioritising School/Service investment requests is being taken forward to bring together an affordable overall financial plan. The plan will be presented to the Finance & Strategy Committee and the Council in due course.

Members were informed that following the success of the £2 meal, the initiative will continue to be subsidised by the University, to support students and staff during the cost-of-living crisis. It was noted that the offering is now also available at Bar Uno.

**Draft Institutional Risk Review Letter**

Members of Council have received a copy of the draft Institutional Risk Review letter, and the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the Executive Board have discussed the content of the letter and will be responding in relation to several areas. It was noted that the overall finding of amber will not change. The final letter, once received from HEFCW, will be shared with the Council in due course.

**Student Experience**

Professor Callow is working on a range of initiatives in this area, including around employability and retention. The positive work with the Students’ Union continues in all areas relating to student experience.

**Marking and Assessment Boycott**

The Vice-Chancellor informed Council that the University is currently in a period of a marking and assessment boycott. The University continues to hold positive meetings with the local UCU President and Vice-President and will continue to meet to look at what can be done locally to mitigate the impact of the marking and assessment boycott. The University is fully committed to ensuring that the students who are due to graduate this year will do so.

**College / School Administration**

The Vice-Chancellor noted that consultation was underway with the academic community to ensure that the right administrative support is provided to Schools and Colleges in the most consistent and efficient way. It was reported that a lack of administrative support was a consistent theme during the Vice-Chancellor’s visits to Schools and Colleges in the autumn.

**School and Professional Service Visits**

It was noted that the second round of School and Professional Service visits will commence shortly, with the Vice-Chancellor currently prioritising visits to Schools to consult on the proposals for the renaming of Colleges and Schools. The aim is to complete all School and Professional Service visits by the end of the academic year.

In addition, it was noted that an all-staff meeting had been held a few weeks ago, which was very well attended. Staff were updated on the University’s finances by the Chief Financial Officer, and on global engagement by the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement) and the Director of International Operations and Admissions.

**University Visits**

Council was informed of the impending visits of the Minister of Health, and the Minister for Education, to different parts of the University on 18 May. In addition, the Vice-Chancellor reported that the University had hosted the Chief Scientific Advisor for Wales in April, for a very successful visit.

1. Ms Lowe welcomed the proposal to decentralise administration, and confirmed that, in her view, this would greatly assist student experience.

Mr Hepburn asked for further information on how the University intended to ensure that international students’ needs were catered for, in relation to accommodation, integration into the community and interaction with the Students’ Union. Professor Callow noted that work was ongoing on several initiatives in this space and welcomed the readiness of the Students’ Union to work with the University on these matters.

Professor R.T. Edwards asked how the University was currently managing its space, given the rise in heating bills, and whether staff continued to be supported to work dynamically. The Chief Transformation Officer acknowledged that the University had work to do to understand how well space is used within its buildings, and how to better control heating in older buildings. Work in this area was just beginning, and further updates would be brought in due course. The Chair of Council also noted that Dr Rees may want to consider requesting an update on the University’s dynamic working arrangements as part of the remit of the People and Culture Committee in due course.

Professor White asked for an update on the work being taken forward on mandatory training. It was confirmed that the Executive Board was currently looking at this, with the Chief People Officer leading.

C. **Report from the Executive Board**

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

D.The Chair of Council thanked the Vice-Chancellor for his updates.

* 1. **COLLEGE / SCHOOL REORGANISATION**

1. Professor Turnbull advised the Council that the paper presented is an in-process briefing on proposals for the titles of Schools and Colleges, and the proposal to split two schools. It was noted that following discussion at Council, a staff and student consultation period, and an all-staff meeting will take place, with the outcome of the consultation, and recommendations, being presented to the next meeting of the Council.
2. Ms Wyn asked for further information on the rationale for taking business out of the current title of the College of Arts, Humanities and Business. The Vice-Chancellor noted that, ideally, college names would be generic, to provide the flexibility for growth, and the introduction of other academic disciplines. The importance of Bangor Business School to the University’s aspirations for growth was emphasised, and the Vice-Chancellor noted that he looked forward to continuing the discussion with colleagues in the Bangor Business School during his visit in the next few weeks. Ms Wyn noted her concern that this may affect the University’s international recruitment, however Professor Turnbull reported that the University did not believe it would unduly affect recruitment in this area. The Vice-Chancellor added that research had been undertaken in relation to the approach undertaken at other universities, and it had been noted that most universities with successful business schools did not have business in the name of the college or faculty.

Dr Jones asked what the reference to the reviews in the paper referred to. Professor Turnbull noted that a series of external reviews had been undertaken to help to inform the suggestions. Whilst these were not included in detail in the paper to Council, there is more information in the consultation document shared with staff.

1. Following discussion, the Council **noted** the contents of the paper, and the intention to bring a further paper to the next meeting, following the consultation process.

**22.70 STUDENTS UNION MATTERS**

1. **Undeb Bangor Student Experience Report 2020-2022**

Ms Lowe presented the Undeb Bangor Student Experience Report 2020-2022 and noted that the purpose of the report is to review student voice and experience over the last two academic years and to highlight some of the key areas which are currently of importance students. Within the report the Students’ Union provide commendations and recommendations, with the aim of ensuring the student experience is the best that it can be. It was noted that the insight within the report comes from a variety of sources, including internal surveys, national surveys, and course representative councils, focus groups, casework and case studies, and conversations with students.

Professor Callow provided a response, noting that the Report was published in November 2022 and covers the academic years 2020-2021 and 2020-22. Given the timing of the report and the continued positive joint working between the Students’ Union and the University, many of the recommendations have already been actioned, or being worked on. Going forward, the Students’ Union Report will be published in June of each year to provide the University with time to incorporate any

recommendations into its planning for the following academic year.

Ms Perkins welcomed the report and asked for further information relating to the points made around student feedback. Ms Lowe noted that this was an area that the Students’ Union wants to work on over the next few months. It is important to ensure that feedback on modules provided through module evaluation, or through the course representatives, is taken on board by the University. Professor Callow reported that this is a key area for the University and confirmed that the University would work with the Students’ Union on this matter over the next few months. A key driver for this work is ensuring that students are provided with information in the most appropriate way and are not overloaded with information. Digital solutions to this are being considered at the current time. The Chair endorsed the view that it was important to ensure the University closed the feedback loop.

Mr Hepburn asked about the pushback from formal exams to open book exams and assessments. Professor Callow noted that, for certain subject areas, exams are crucial, however overall, it is believed that exams are not the best way to assess knowledge. Council was also informed that there is currently a project ongoing at the University to look at assessment and feedback.

Professor White enquired about the challenges faced by Artificial Intelligence in relation to exams and Professor Callow noted that work was ongoing to provide staff with guidance in this area.

The Chair of Council noted that University communication, to both staff and students was an area for further consideration, and she would raise this with the new Interim Chief Marketing Officer.

1. Ms Lowe and Mr John presented the Students’ Union and UMCB reports to the Council, and in particular the following items were highlighted:

* UMCB have won the Eisteddfod Rhyngolegol for an 8th year in succession. It was noted that the host University, Trinity St David’s, had commended Bangor University students on their behaviour throughout the weekend, and a group of students had assisted staff in cleaning up the rubbish after the Eisteddfod had ended.
* The Annual NUS Wales Conference had been held in Bangor recently, with representatives from all higher and further education institutions in Wales attending. One of the policy ideas discussed was the Bilingualism Policy introduced by Bangor Students’ Union, which was passed.
* UMCB are actively promoting their Welsh-medium Teaching and Learning Survey.
* The Students’ Union have been working closely with Student Services to use additional HEFCW funds to support health and wellbeing, including mental health. Some of the initiatives funded include travel bursaries for students on undergraduate professional placements, free distribution of renewable period products and outdoor activities for mental wellbeing.

1. 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 the student experience report.

The Chair also extended her congratulations to both Ms Lowe and Mr John for being re-elected for a second term and looked forward to their continued contribution at Council.

* 1. **RISK ASSURANCE REPORT**

1. Members were presented with a report of the high-level risks on the University’s Corporate Risk Register. It was noted that there remained no extreme-level risks on the Register, with ten of the twenty-nine risks classified residually high-level. Members were informed that the risk relating to the structural integrity of the Alun Roberts Tower (ART) had been significantly reduced following the demolition contractor taking control of the site, and as the Menai Suspension Bridge had reopened with no plans to repeat the full closure, the University’s related risk had been removed.
2. The Chair thanked Mr Hepburn for his overview and noted that the conclusions of the risk management review would be reported through the committee to the July meeting of Council.
   1. **DEGREE CLASSIFICATIONS REPORT**

**AND DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT**

1. Professor Callow presented the Degree Classification report for 2021/22. It was noted that, given the proportion of the University’s good degrees (1st/2:1, 76.7%), the entry tariff of the University’s students (average band), and the University’s league table position for good degrees (HESA, 71/137), the University is appropriately balancing academic integrity and degree outcomes. It was noted that during the reporting period, the University has significantly improved its good degree performance relative to the sector from 91st position in 2017/18 to its current 71st position. The most recent Degree Classification Report is enhanced through the addition of a competitor analysis, and a more detailed breakdown of demographic groupings at an Institutional level and by subject area (where possible). An additional enhancement is the inclusion of good degree against average entry tariff at a Sector and Institutional level, and by subject area (where possible).
2. Professor Callow also presented the Degree Outcomes Statement. It was noted that this is the University’s third Statement, with a significant enhancement this year being the change from a word document format to a webpage with embedded links to key strategic, and Quality Assurance documents. Although not a requirement in Wales, Professor Callow reported that HEFCW expects Welsh universities to publish their annual degree outcome statement.
3. Ms Perkins asked for further information in relation to where oversight of these issues is undertaken within the new University committee structure. Professor Callow confirmed that these matters would be overseen by the Education and Student Experience Committee, underpinned by a series of working groups.

Dr Rees enquired what steps were being taken to address the quality issues highlighted within some programmes, especially in the areas of Medicine and Health. Professor Callow reported that she had met with school Directors of Teaching and Learning to drill down into some of these issues, and these were being taken forward.

1. The Council **noted** the Degree Classification Report, and the Degree Outcomes Statement, for 2021/22.

**22.75 JOINT ENGAGEMENT FORUM**

The Report of the meeting of the Joint Engagement Forum held on 28 April 2023 (attached as Appendix II to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted.**

**22.76 WELSH LANGUAGE AFFAIRS COMMITTEE**

The Report of the meeting of the Joint Engagement Forum held on 17 March 2023 (attached as Appendix III to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted.** Dr Rees drew the Council’s attention to the discussion at the Committee around its terms of reference and proposed agenda items (minute 55), which had identified several potential agenda items for the future.

**22.77 NOMINATIONS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

1. The Report of the meeting of the Nominations and Governance Committee held on 24 February 2023 (attached as Appendix IV to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted.**
2. On the recommendation of the Nominations & Governance Committee, the Council **approved** the updates to Ordinance 31: Honorary Degrees and Honorary Fellowships.
   1. **HEALTH AND SAFETY REPORT**

The Council **noted** the Health and Safety in-year report from August 2022 to January 2023.

* 1. **REMUNERATION COMMITTEE**

The Report of the meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on 23 March 2023 (attached as Appendix V to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted.**

**22.80 SEALING**

The Council **ratified** the sealing of documents listed in Agendum 14.

*Staff and Students’ Union members of the Council, and Officers who were in attendance withdrew from the meeting at this point.*

* 1. **PEOPLE AND CULTURE COMMITTEE**

1. The Report of the meeting of the People & Culture Committee held on 24 February 2023 (attached as Appendix V to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted.**
2. On the recommendation of the Committee the Council **approved** the Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement.