

Bangor University

# COUNCIL MINUTES

At a meeting of the Council held in the University on Friday, 29 September 2023.

**Present**:

Mrs Marian Wyn Jones (Chair), Professor Edmund Burke, Dr Myfanwy Davies, Mr Atul Devani, Mr Eric Hepburn CBE, Mr Celt John, Sir Paul Lambert, Ms Nyah Lowe, Professor Oliver Turnbull, Ms Julie Perkins, Dr Ian Rees, Professor David Viner, Professor Tim Wheeler DL, Professor Jean White CBE, Mr Paul Wood, Ms Elin Wyn and Mrs Gwenan Hine (University Secretary).

**Apologies:** Professor Rhiannon T. Edwards

**In attendance:**

Professor Nicky Callow, Mr Michael Flanagan, Dr Kevin Mundy, Mr Martyn Riddleston, Professor Paul Spencer and Mr Mike Wilson.

In addition, Ms Ingrid Pedersen, Corporate Events Officer attended for agenda item 23.06.

**Observing:**

Dr Ama Eyo and Mrs Emily Rees.

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

**23.02 WELCOME**

The Chair welcomed Dr Ama Eyo, the incoming member for academic staff, who was observing the meeting. In addition, the Chair noted that this was Dr Myfanwy Davies’ last meeting, and thanks was extended to Dr Davies, on behalf of the whole Council for her dedication and commitment to the Council over the past few years.

**23.03 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. Dr Ian Rees declared an interest in agendum 23-05 (Appointment of Independent Members of Council) noting that Mrs Emily Rees was a family member. Dr Rees confirmed that he would take no part in the decisions under this agendum item.

Ms Elin Wyn advised the Council that she had recently been appointed as Chair of the More than Just Words Advisory Board, the Welsh Government’s Welsh Language Plan in Health and Social Care.

In addition, members of University staff who were present, and who are members of USS, declared an interest in agendum item 23.13A.

**23.04 DEATHS**

A. The Chair referred to the recent deaths of:

* **Mr David Hannah,** Former Bursar
* **Professor Sir Gordon Conway,** Former Student and Honorary Fellow 1997
* **Mr Thomas (Tom) Donovan,** Former Captain of the University Research Vessel, Prince Madog
* **Mr Alex Daley**, Student in the School of Ocean Sciences

B. Members fell silent in tribute to their memory.

**23.05 APPOINTMENT OF INDEPENDENT MEMBERS**

1. The Chair advised members that, during August 2023, the University had undertaken a recruitment exercise to appoint two new Independent Members of Council to replace Mrs Alison Lea-Wilson, who had completed her final term, and Mr Kailesh Karavadra, who had stepped down from his first term to concentrate on other University projects and committees.

A decision was made not to utilise a Recruitment Agency for the exercise as previous attempts to appoint to the key skills required had not proven successful, this being the case particularly with Welsh language skills. The University undertook its own recruitment process with the advert outlining the key skills the University was looking for, namely finance, audit, marketing and/or business. In addition, the advert highlighted those applications from women, and from those who speak Welsh were particularly welcomed.

An Appointment Panel was convened, which consisted of the Chair of Council (Chair of the Panel), Sir Paul Lambert (Deputy Chair of Council), Mrs Julie Perkins, (Chair, of the Remuneration Committee), the Vice-Chancellor and the University Secretary. A shortlisting process took place, and 5 individuals were subsequently interviewed.

The Chair advised that, following these interviews, the Appointment Panel recommendation to the Council was the appointment of the following individuals as independent members of Council, for an initial period of 4 years from 1 October 2023 – 30 September 2027. Pen portraits of both individuals were provided in the papers for the meeting:

- Emily Rees

- Rheon Tomos

1. Following discussion, the Council **agreed** to the appointment of Mrs Rees and Mr Tomos for the period outlined above.
2. Following confirmation of her appointment, Mrs Rees joined the Council meeting as an observer and was warmly welcomed by the Chair.
	1. **140th ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS**
3. Ms Pedersen, the University’s Corporate Events Officer was welcomed to the meeting. Ms Pedersen provided an update of the development of initial ideas to celebrate Bangor University’s 140th anniversary during 2024. It was noted that this would be a year long celebration starting in January 2024, with the goal of celebrating the best of Bangor University’s rich history and to showcase its many achievements. The celebrations will involve each School and Professional Service, and will comprise lectures, concerts, exhibitions, and events covering the following broad categories:
* History & heritage
* Arts & music
* Teaching and Research
* Welsh and international language and culture
* Alumni
* Marketing & Media
* Sustainability.

It was noted that some yearly events will also be re-purposed and re-branded for 2024.

1. Members of Council were invited to provide feedback on the proposed celebrations, and the following points were made:
* It is important to make the most of the University’s rich heritage, ensuring that events appeal to prospective, current, and former students as well as members of staff, members of the community, stakeholders, and Honorary Fellows.
* Following a question from Professor White, the University Secretary confirmed that a costed plan was being drawn up which would be taken through the University’s planning process. It was noted that the main events would be ticketed and that the University would also consider sponsorship.
* The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that a philanthropy campaign would be run alongside the celebrations, using the events as a springboard for fundraising.
1. The Chair thanked Ms Pedersen for her update, and it was confirmed that the Council would be kept informed as the plans matured.

**23.07 MINUTES**

1. The Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2023 were **confirmed,** subject to minor drafting amendments.
2. An action log was provided noting progress on all outstanding Council actions. The Council noted the progress reports and completed actions.

**North Wales Medical School (minute 22-53)**

Professor Turnbull advised members that discussions were ongoing to agree to a Memorandum of Understanding with the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. The draft is being developed by the Joint Strategic Steering Group with BCUHB.

1. The latest update of the Council Workplan was noted, and the Students’ Union President requested further clarity on the presentation of the Students’ Union Relationship Agreement. It was confirmed by the Chief Operating Officer that this was a shared responsibility.

**Update on Strategy 2030 (minute 22-73)**

Professor Turnbull advised that, following the last meeting of the Council, it had been agreed to delay providing the final draft of the updated Strategy 2030, to allow for student consultation. The Students’ Union President expressed her thanks to the University for allowing this process to go ahead before the presentation of the final draft to Council in November.

**Health and Safety Update (minute 23-01)**

The University Secretary confirmed that matters raised at the health and safety briefing that morning would be taken forward as an action plan, and further updates would be provided to the Council in due course.

**23.08 CHAIR’S UPDATE**

1. The Chair reported that she had met with the Welsh Government’s Minister for Education, along with a group of Vice-Chancellors and Chairs to discuss the funding of HE in Wales. In addition, a meeting had also taken place between the Chairs, and the Director of Universities Wales where an update was provided on their work relating to the funding challenges. The recent report of the House of Lords enquiry into the Office for Students in England also outlined the clear challenges of the current funding model.

The Chair noted that she had attended the Commission for Tertiary Education and Research (CTER) Board in July, and in addition, members’ attention was drawn to the recent appointment of lay members of the CTER Board. It was noted that the new Chief Executive of CTER would join the next meeting of the Chairs of Universities Wales.

The Students’ Union President requested further information regarding a potential re-focus by CTER, away from higher education to apprenticeships. The Vice-Chancellor noted that the University was working closely with colleagues at both Grŵp Llandrillo Menai and Coleg Cambria to consider this point further.

1. **Chair’s Action: Renaming of Colleges and Schools**

The Chair advised members that, following a decision at the July meeting of Council regarding the renaming of Colleges and Schools, one of the Schools provided a further response outside of the consultation period. The letter from the Head of School advised that a 61% majority of the School favoured the title School of Psychology and Sports Science, as opposed to 39% favouring the School of Psychology, Sport and Exercise Science (as was agreed by the Council in July). The Executive Board, after discussion and consideration, had requested that the Council consider removing the word ‘exercise’ from the title. An email was shared with Council members on 04 August 2023, asking for any objections by 11 August 2023. None were received and therefore Chair’s action was undertaken to confirm this change.

**23.09 VICE-CHANCELLOR’S UPDATE**

1. The Vice-Chancellor provided the Council with updates in several key areas:

**Chief Operating Officer**

Members of Council were informed that Dr Kevin Mundy, Chief Operating Officer, would be leaving the University at the end of the year. On behalf of the University, the Vice-Chancellor paid tribute to Dr Mundy’s outstanding service to the institution as a senior member of staff over many years and thanked him for all his years of service.

**Interim Pro Vice-Chancellor / Head of College**

It was reported that three Interim Pro Vice-Chancellors / Heads of Colleges have been appointed and have joined the Executive Board:

* Professor Mike Larvin, Pro Vice-Chancellor/Head of the College of Medicine and Health, and Dean of Medicine.
* Professor Morag Mcdonald, Pro Vice-Chancellor/Head of the College of Science and Engineering.
* Professor Enlli Thomas, Pro Vice-Chancellor/Head of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

**Academic Registrar**

Members were informed that the University has appointed an Academic Registrar, Susan Moss, who will start at the end of October. It was noted that this was a crucial appointment and would support Professor Nicky Callow in delivering the Teaching and Learning Strategy, as well as ensuring close collaboration with the Students’ Union and the student body.

**Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education)**

The Council were informed that the Executive Board had agreed to change Professor Nicky Callow’s title from Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education) to Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience). This was to ensure that Professor Callow’s role across all education and student experience matters was made clear.

**Graduation**

The University had seen a very successful week of graduation ceremonies in July 2023, with all students who were expecting to graduate being able to do so, despite the marking and assessment boycott. It was noted that the University had recently undertaken further discussions with UCU locally which had proven constructive, and a local agreement had been reached that a further proposed strike of 5 days during the first week of the new semester would be called off. In addition, the University had agreed to provide staff with an extra day’s holiday at Christmas to thank them for their hard work during the year.

The Chair of Council echoed the Vice-Chancellor’s appreciation that the Executive Board had managed to ensure every student had graduated with a full set of marks. Thanks were extended to all those involved in achieving this milestone, which reflected the maturity of the relationship between the University and Campus Trades’ Unions.

**Financial Matters**

A small surplus is expected in relation to the 2022/23 financial year, with a full financial report being presented to the November Council. Thanks were extended to Mr Riddleston, Chief Financial Officer, and his team for their hard work in ensuring the University delivered a surplus.

Following a question from Ms Perkins, the Chief Financial Officer confirmed that whilst some operational matters had been slowed down towards the end of the previous financial year to ensure that a surplus was delivered, these had been operational decisions and not strategic matters.

**League Tables**

Members of Council were informed that, over the summer, several positive results had been received in various league tables.

* The inaugural Daily Mail University Guide saw the University ranked 50th in the UK and 3rd in Wales and named as Welsh University of the Year.
* The Guardian University Guide 2024 saw the University ranked 54th – a rise of 28 places from the previous year, placing the University 4th in Wales, an improvement from 7th last year.
* The Times and Sunday Times Good University Guide 2024 saw the University ranked 44th – a rise of 1 place since last year.
* The University was placed first in the UK in the Uni Freshers “Alternative University” league table which measures sustainability, cost of living and safety.

**North Wales Medical School**

Following a visit by the General Medical Council in July, the Vice-Chancellor was pleased to report that the University had received formal approval to recruit students into the North Wales Medical School in September 2024. At the current time, it is difficult to provide an update on recruitment. However, further information will be provided at the November Council meeting.

1. Following the Vice-Chancellor’s updates, the following questions were raised:
* Dr Rees asked how the University can ensure that the positive messages outlined in the Vice-Chancellor’s update reach prospective students and parents. The Vice-Chancellor noted that work needed to be done on communication, in addition to the work which was ongoing with the National Student Survey results which Professor Callow would outline shortly. The Chair endorsed the need for a clear communication plan and requested that a Communications Strategy be brought to the Council by the end of the academic year.
* Ms Wyn asked whether the Welsh Government had provided the University with any targets on the number of students recruited to the North Wales Medical School who can speak Welsh. The Vice-Chancellor noted that no formal target had been received. However, recruiting students who can speak Welsh was an important aspect of recruitment to the new School, a point which was endorsed by Professor Turnbull.
1. **Key Performance Indicator (KPI): People**

Members were reminded that, at the July 2023 meeting, the Council had considered 15 proposed institutional key performance indicators. After considering each KPI in turn, it was agreed that a KPI relating to people should replace the KPI relating to philanthropy.

The Vice-Chancellor noted that, following a period of analysis and discussion around people based KPIs, the Executive Board identified Mandatory Training as a critical issue for the University. Regularly updated mandatory training modules for all staff are being introduced, and a high level of compliance is essential. Mandatory training also ensures that knowledge, skills and understanding of these important areas are kept up to date, enabling staff to work safely, effectively, and confidently. In addition, it was noted that the Executive Board are aware that two Council Sub-Committees (People & Culture and Audit & Risk) have, over the past year, raised questions around the rollout of mandatory training, and it is therefore envisaged that the introduction of this KPI will provide assurance to these committees.

It was reported that the Welsh Government's target for the NHS for Statutory and Mandatory staff training is to achieve 85% compliance, and therefore the recommended KPI for the University is:

* At least 85% of staff will have completed all the universal staff mandatory training modules.

Several comments were made by members:

* Is the expectation of 85% completion, and the mandatory nature of the training consistent with each other, given that mandatory would suggest a completion rate of 100%. The Vice-Chancellor noted that the University accepted that, at any point in the year, there would be situations such as staff on maternity leave, on sickness absence, and new staff joining, who would have a period of time to do their training. It was therefore difficult to commit to 100%, and the Executive Board felt the 85% target from the Welsh Government was a reasonable one.
* If the 85% target was approved, it was essential to ensure that the remaining 15% were not the same members of staff each year.

Following discussion, the KPI was **agreed**, with further **agreement** reached that the target will be reviewed in a year.

1. **Institutional Performance Report**

Mr Wilson, Chief Strategy and Planning Officer noted that, following the creation of Strategy 2030 and its subsequent recent review under new leadership, it has been agreed with the Council to produce an annual integrated performance report to enable monitoring of progress against delivering the University’s strategy. The paper sets out several principles to inform the recommended approach, and a proposed format for the performance report which would include trend and benchmark analysis of the 15 main KPIs agreed by Council at its July 2023 meeting; primary KPIs from the 12 sub-strategies; and a summary of School/service performance.

Mr Wilson noted that discussions with other universities and attendance at specialist sector events (Higher Education Strategic Planners Association conferences, round-tables, and showcases) suggested that higher education sector practice tends more towards governing bodies focusing on a small number of KPIs (typically somewhere in the region of 6-12) and that these are often designated with “special” status (e.g. Gold KPIs, Measures of Success, or Critical Success Factors) to differentiate from the wider KPIs deployed operationally across planning and performance processes. The recommendations being put forward in the paper are therefore intended to strike an appropriate compromise.

Following a question from Sir Paul Lambert, Mr Wilson confirmed that work had commenced on putting together an Institutional Data Strategy, which will fit into the wider Estates and Digital Capital Programme.

The Chair thanked Mr Wilson for his report and suggested that a small task and finish group of independent members should assist in drawing together the key elements for inclusion in the Performance Report. It was **agreed** that this would be taken forward by the Chair and Mr Wilson.

1. **Report from the Executive Board**

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

1. The Chair of Council thanked the Vice-Chancellor and Executive Board members for the comprehensive updates.

It was **agreed** that an organogram noting all members of the Executive Board, and other Senior Officers would be shared with Council.

**23.10 STUDENTS UNION STRATEGIC REPORT**

1. Ms Lowe and Mr John provided a verbal update on activities over the summer. The following items were highlighted in particular:
* UMCB has been involved in activities at the University stand at the National Eisteddfod in Boduan.
* A national committee which includes all presidents/officers of Welsh Students’ Unions has been established, which provides opportunities to discuss matters which are common to the universities in Wales.
* Mr John was currently compiling a report from the recent survey of Welsh medium teaching and learning.
* Welcome week had gone well, with a very successful Serendipity event attended by around 5,500 students and leading to an increase of 1,000 in the social media following for the Union.
* Lauren Beckett has recently commenced as interim Director of the Students’ Union, covering Mair Rowlands’ maternity leave.
* Thanks were extended to the University for providing a budget option for halls for the 2023/24 academic year, which has proven very popular with students. In addition, the University provided accommodation for international students with families.
* The Student Experience report has been presented to the Executive Board and shared with schools alongside the NSS Action Plans.
* The Union was working with Professor Nicky Callow to look at how feedback from students is responded to across the University.
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 continued positive working relationship with the University.

**23.11 TEACHING, LEARNING AND RESEARCH**

1. **National Student Survey (NSS)**

Professor Callow provided members with an update on the outcome of the National Student Survey. It was noted that changes to the NSS scale this year make direct comparisons with previous years’ results difficult and overall satisfaction cannot be benchmarked against the UK sector. However, Professor Callow noted that, whichever way the results are examined, at an institutional level, the University’s NSS performance has declined significantly in comparison to last year.

Professor Callow noted that there were some indicators in certain schools that there may have been issues and acknowledged that the Students’ Union had provided feedback from students in some of the areas which had gone on to perform badly. The University was looking at these issues alongside the Sabbatical Officers.

1. **Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES)**

Professor Callow noted that, to ensure that the University’s PTES results were representative of the student cohort, a 2022/23 objective had been to drive up the University’s response rate from 17% to 25%. This was exceeded during 2023 with a response rate of 30%, which is 9% higher than the sector average and 13% higher than last year. It was noted that the University has performed well in terms of overall satisfaction and certain themes, with 85% overall satisfaction (a decrease of 1% since last year) and teaching at 88% satisfaction. However, in certain themes, for example, learning resources, although the University has increased by 1% to 88%, it has performed poorly in comparison to the sector (60th out of 84). Action planning has therefore started earlier in the cycle and is being integrated with the NSS action planning. In addition, a Postgraduate Taught Forum has been convened to focus on specific PGT issues. A pre-arrival survey of postgraduate students has also revealed a high number of PGT students with mental health issues, which the University is keeping a close eye on.

1. **Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES)**

Professor Spencer provided an update on the Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES). It was noted that AdvanceHE undertook a voluntary annual survey for Postgraduate Research (PGR) students, with initial benchmarking being undertaken by AdvanceHE. The following results were highlighted:

* Overall Satisfaction is 83% compared to the Global Benchmark of 79%, putting the University in the highest quarter of all participating institutions.
* Supervision is 84% compared to the Global Benchmark at 78%, which again places the University in the highest quarter of all participating institutions for this theme.
* The best practice from the survey as identified by AdvanceHE is that the institution values PGR’s feedback, with the University achieving 67%, 10 percentage points above the Global benchmark (57%).

Professor Spencer advised members that detailed analysis and action plans, at a school level, are being developed and overseen by the Doctoral School. The REF 2028 emphasis on research culture is likely to mean PRES will get more attention across the sector going forward.

1. **Retention**

Professor Callow provided an update on the work being undertaken on student retention. It was noted that the drivers of student retention and associated progression from each year of study are multi-faceted and can reflect unique circumstances, however, as a generalised model, student retention can be seen to be at the nexus of three key drivers (student experience, student academic performance, student health and well-being) and it is acknowledged that these are not independent of each other.

1. **Employability**

Professor Callow’s report on Employability which provided assurance that the University is committed to enhancing employability and career success for its graduates was **noted**.

1. The Chair thanked Professor Callow and Professor Spencer for their informative updates and welcomed the fact that action plans across all areas were being developed much earlier in the process.
	1. **AUDIT AND RISK COMMITTEE**
2. The Report of the meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on 14 September 2023 (attached as Appendix I to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted**.

The Chair, Sir Paul Lambert, drew Council’s attention to the risk assurance report (minute 754) noting that he had attended the last meeting of the Strategic Risk Committee which he had found extremely helpful. This was echoed by the Chief Operating Officer, who advised the Council that the University had undertaken a review of how it manages risk, with the Strategic Risk Committee receiving the latest report on high-level corporate risk. It was noted that the Council Away Day in November will include deep dives into a small number of the highest-scoring risks.

In addition, members’ attention was drawn to the report on formal complaints and data breaches, including whistleblowing (minute 756).

1. A report of the High-Level Risks was presented to the Council, and Sir Paul Lambert noted that the number of risks falling into this category has increased to 13, with a new risk being created relating to the campus masterplan.

**23.13 FINANCE MATTERS**

1. The Report of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 19 September 2023 (attached as Appendix II to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted**. Mr Hepburn, as Chair of the Committee, provided an update on the matters discussed at the meeting. In addition, it was noted that Professor Tim Wheeler had agreed to become Deputy Chair of the Committee.

**23.14 JOINT ENGAGEMENT FORUM**

The Reports of the meetings of the Joint Engagement Forum held on 4 July and 22 September 2023 (attached as Appendix III to the official copy of the Minutes) were **noted**.

**23.15 REMUNERATION COMMITTEE**

The Report of the meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on 6 July 2023 (attached as Appendix IV to the official copy of the Minutes) was **noted.**

Ms Perkins drew attention to the discussion on senior remuneration pay, the pay bargaining process and individual cases. In addition, a discussion was undertaken on future agenda items.