

# COUNCIL MINUTES

At a meeting of the Council

held in the University on 30 September 2024

**Present**: Mrs Marian Wyn Jones (Chair), Ms Nida Ambreen, Professor Edmund Burke, Mr Atul Devani, Dr Ama Eyo-Otung,Mr Eric Hepburn CBE, Sir Paul Lambert, Ms Julie Perkins, Dr John T. Prabhakar, Mrs Emily Rees, Dr Ian Rees, Mr Gwion Rowlands, Mr Rheon Tomos, Professor Oliver Turnbull, Professor David Viner, Professor Tim Wheeler DL, Professor Jean White CBE and Ms Elin Wyn

**Apologies:** Professor Rhiannon T. Edwards and Mrs Patricia Murchie (Chief Marketing Officer)

**In attendance:** Mr Michael Flanagan (Chief Transformation Officer), Mrs Gwenan Hine (University Secretary), Mr Martyn Riddleston (Chief Financial Officer) and Mr Mike Wilson (Chief Strategy and Planning Officer)

**In addition:**

Professor Nicky Callow (Pro Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) (for item 24.05 onwards), Professor Andrew Edwards, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Welsh Language, Civic Engagement, Strategic Partnerships and EDI) (for item 24.18), Professor Morag McDonald, Pro Vice-Chancellor / Head of the College of Science and Engineering (for item 24.18), Professor Paul Spencer, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) (for item 24.17), Professor Andy McStay, Professor of Technology and Society (for item 24.17), Professor Enlli Thomas (Pro Vice-Chancellor/Head of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences) (for item 24.05 onwards) and Professor Mike Larvin (for item 24.05 onwards).

*The meeting was held in Reichel, Bangor University and through Teams.*

**24.01 WELCOME**

The Chair of Council welcomed members to the first Council meeting of the academic year and noted that the year ahead would be challenging for both the sector and the University.

**24.02 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. All members of staff present declared an interest in the discussions on delaying the pay award. Sir Paul Lambert made a declaration of interest in terms of agenda item 24.11 (NSS Update) due to a family connection. No other declarations of interest were made in relation to the matters on the agenda.

**24.03 DEATHS**

A. The Chair referred to the recent deaths of:

* **Sylvia Hilda Bourner,** Team Leader (Cleaning)
* **Lynda Smith,** Multi Tasked Facilities Operative
* **Elaine Miles,** Founder and Developer of the Teaching Service, and first Director of Teaching, within the Dyslexia Unit
* **Dr Margaret Webster,** Course Coordinator, Digital Services
* **Dilys Templer,** former Member of Facilities Operations Staff (Science Site)
* **Professor Rosalind Jones,** Professor in Marketing in the Bangor Business School
* **Iolo Wyn Williams,** former Head of the School of Education and Dean

Members fell silent in tribute to their memory.

**24.04 MINUTES**

1. The Minutes of the meeting held on 24 July 2024 were **confirmed**, subject to a minor drafting amendment**.**
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 provided an update on the status of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. It was noted that the MOU would be signed by both sides shortly. An additional Clinical Placement Agreement, which included Swansea and Cardiff Universities, and Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board, was being drawn up.

In response to a question from the Chair, Professor Turnbull noted that, rather than outlining a broader collaborative relationship, the Clinical Placement Agreement was specific to the three Universities and the Health Board.

It was **agreed** that the MOU would be shared with the Chair and Deputy Chair of Council.

**Marketing Strategy (minute 23.09A)**

In response to a question from Ms Perkins, the Chief Strategy and Planning Officer confirmed that the lessons learnt from the current recruitment round were being considered at the present time.

1. The latest update of the Council Workplan was noted. The University Secretary noted that she had provided access to the Workplan to the Senior Planning Officer, in order to ensure that the Council were provided with updates and assurances on the top scoring risks.

**24.05 CHAIRS UPDATE**

The Chair reported that the Universities UK blueprint had been published, setting out a package of reform to stabilise, mobilise and maximise the contribution of UK universities to economic growth and widening opportunity. In addition, there were suggestions in the press that a tuition fees review would be undertaken, to include an inflationary rise over 5 years. However, this was not a certainty, and the University should not rely on this in any budgetary assumptions, including whether any subsequent fees uplift would take place in Wales.

The Chair also noted that the Council had an Away Day planned for November, and discussion around whether Strategy 2030 remained fit for purpose, and the University’s aspirations in the international market would be useful.

Members were advised that MEDR had gone out to consultation on its Strategic Plan, and it was confirmed that the Executive Board were currently drafting a response.

The Chair reported that she was attending the Universities Wales Transforming Lives event in Cardiff the following day with the aim of highlighting the importance of universities to the economy of Wales.

**23.83 VICE-CHANCELLOR’S UPDATE**

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

**Financial Challenges**

[**Reserved business]**

**Research Update**

The University has recently signed a [**Reserved business]** contract [**Reserved business]** to provide epidemiology wastewater services. Congratulations was extended to the whole team for this positive development.

In addition, it was noted that the University has signed up to the Technician Commitment, which focuses on visibility, recognition, career development and sustainability. Members welcomed this commitment to Technicians at the University.

 **North Wales Medical School**

The formal opening of the North Wales Medical School would take place shortly. In addition, the University had admitted its first tranche of Medical students [**Reserved business]**. The Vice-Chancellor noted that this was a hugely positive step forward for the University, and for the region.

In addition, the University was on track to launch a new School of Pharmacy in 2025/26.

**North Wales Dental School**

A strategic case was currently being developed to establish a Dental School at the University. **[Reserved business]**

The Chair noted that the Dental School initiative drew on the University’s existing provision in dental hygiene, and the plans to offer dental therapy shortly.

**Events**

The Vice-Chancellor noted that he had recently attended the Alumni 140th Anniversary reunion weekend, where over 100 alumni were welcomed back to the University. In response to a question from Professor White, the Vice-Chancellor confirmed that the Development and Alumni Office were working to encourage further donations and philanthropy from the alumni community.

It was reported that a hugely successful Operational Research conference had been held recently at the University. The Vice-Chancellor had also visited Serendipity, and thanks was extended to the Students’ Union for a successful event.

It was **agreed** that the Chief Marketing Officer would provide updates on the work of the Development and Alumni Office as part of her update to Council in November.

1. **Proposed Changes to the Executive Board**

*The Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Professor Oliver Turnbull, left the meeting*

The Vice-Chancellor advised the Council that the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement) is leaving the University with effect from 30 September 2024 to develop new personal opportunities. It was noted that the recruitment of international students is paramount to the financial sustainability of the University, as is the continued development of existing and new TNE partnerships.

Council were advised that the University’s Recruitment and Selection procedures highlight that once a vacancy is identified the University needs to establish whether there is a requirement to fill the role. Consideration should be given to the alternatives to recruitment, and the proposal before Council, bearing in mind the importance of the role to the University, is to amend the responsibilities of an existing member of staff.

The Vice-Chancellor highlighted that, considering the importance of the remit, but also bearing in mind the challenging financial situation it is proposed that, rather than replacing the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement) with an external appointment, the University replaces the role internally by changing the role of the current Deputy Vice- Chancellor to Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement). This would signal the strategic importance that the University places on the global engagement portfolio, given that it has such an impact on the future financial sustainability of the University.

It was noted that, should this change be approved by the Council, it would leave a vacant Deputy Vice-Chancellor post (Academic Leadership). Following the process outlined by the Vice-Chancellor above, the University would wish to fill this post through an internal appointment. It is therefore proposed that the University revisits the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Leadership) post, to ensure that the job description meets the University’s changing requirements and move to advertise internally. In the event that one of the University’s current Pro Vice-Chancellors is appointed to the role, the University would revisit the role using the criteria above. Should there be a requirement to fill the post, it would be advertised internally.

A discussion took place, and the following points were made:

**[Reserved business]**

Having considered the points above:

* The Council **approved** the amendment to the responsibilities of Professor Turnbull to become Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement).
* The Council **approved** the creation of a Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Leadership) post and authorised the University to move to internally advertise the vacancy for an initial period of 12 months.
* Should an existing Pro Vice-Chancellor be appointed to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Academic Leadership) role, the Council **approved** the request to internally advertise to fill the post of Pro Vice-Chancellor for an initial period of 12 months.

In addition, it was **agreed** that an Executive Board organogram would be shared with the Council at the next meeting.

*Professor Turnbull rejoined the meeting.*

The Chair extended her congratulations to Professor Turnbull on his appointment as Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Global Engagement).

Professor Turnbull advised Council that he had been chairing the Global Engagement Committee over the summer and had already had the opportunity to familiarise himself with the portfolio. There were opportunities to improve relationships with current partners, as well as considering new partnerships for the future. The University needs to build on its TNE portfolio, and to synchronise with existing research strengths.

1. **Remuneration Committee**

Ms Perkins, as Chair of the Remuneration Committee, provided a verbal update on the meeting of the Committee held on 27 September 2024. **[Reserved business]**

1. **Update on the Encampment**

**[Reserved business]**

1. The Council **noted** the report from the Executive Board.

**24.05 FINANCIAL MATTERS**

1. The Report of the meeting of the Finance Committee held on 20 September 2024 was **noted.**

Mr Hepburn, as Chair of the Committee, provided an update on the matters discussed at the meeting. It was noted that the financial challenges facing the sector continued, and thanks was extended to the Chief Financial Officer and his team for their continued work in managing the University’s finances.

Council were informed that the Investment Committee reported into the Finance Committee. Currently the Chief Financial Officer was considering the membership and terms of reference of the Committee, and an update would be provided to the Finance Committee in due course.

1. **Student Recruitment Update**

In the Chief Marketing Officer’s absence, the Chief Strategy and Planning Officer presented the latest student recruitment update. It was noted that the paper provided sector context in relation to the 2024 recruitment cycle, an update on the University’s performance and the likely financial impact arising out of this, and details of some planned interventions.

**[Reserved business]**

The Council **noted** the report and thanked the Chief Strategy and Planning Officer for providing the context prior to the discussions on the financial situation.

1. **Financial Position 2024/25**

The Chief Financial Officer noted that the higher education sector had not previously experienced the scale of the challenges that it was currently facing, and the University was not alone in having to make difficult decisions.

**[Reserved business]**

The Council were briefed in detail on the additional proposals, which have been endorsed by the Executive Board, with a recommendation for approval by the Finance Committee.

**[Reserved business]**

The Chair of Council emphasised the need for a clear communication plan to present the short-term actions to staff. This was endorsed by the Vice-Chancellor, who noted that an all-staff meeting would be held in mid-October, preceded by an all-staff email outlining the situation, and the actions being taken.

Following a detailed discussion, and on the recommendation of Executive Board and Finance Committee, the Council:

* Received and **noted** the financial position paper, and the actions already underway.
* **Approved** the short-term actions outlined.
1. **Land Acquisition and Bangor Business School**

**[Reserved business]**

Following consideration, the Council **approved** the recommendations.

**24.06 UPDATE FROM PRO VICE-CHANCELLOR /**

**HEAD OF COLLEGE OF ARTS, HUMANITIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES**

Professor Enlli Thomas, Pro Vice-Chancellor / Head of the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences provided the Council with an update on the College.

In particular, it was noted that:

* The College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences is a broad amalgamation of academic disciplines which are currently encompassed into five Academic Schools – the Bangor Business School, the School of Arts, Culture and Language, the School of History, Law and Social Sciences, the School of Education, and since the summer the School of Welsh.
* In addition, the College is re-establishing the School of Law and are in the process of looking for a suitable Head of Law to be able to move that agenda forward.
* The College offers a plethora of traditional academic subjects, both the classics and more contemporary subjects. The teaching within each subject is modern and suits the needs and aspirations of students and the requirements of the workplace in terms of employability etc.
* The College is responsible for a number of the University's civic engagement activities, including the University Symphony Orchestra, and the annual program of performances overseen by the Director of University Music.
* A Legal Advice Clinic will be launched in October. Members of the public will be able to receive free legal advice from 3rd year students - in Welsh or English - under the supervision of a qualified solicitor. The slots for the first two weeks in October have already been filled. In addition, the College is about to launch a Business Clinic.
* The School of Education has now been part of the College for a year and is starting to settle into the structure and framework of the College, with staff moving to a building on College Road, in time for Estyn's visit later in the year.
* There is an opportunity for the College to seek funding from the Welsh Government to contribute to Professional Learning for teachers following the decision to get rid of the consortia. The School will make the most of this opportunity.
* The vast majority of the College's administrative staff speak Welsh.
* Across the College there are Schools which consistently perform well in the NSS, PTES and in League Tables, and the research output from the College is consistently improving.

Professor Thomas outlined areas of opportunity and challenge, which include:

**[Reserved business]**

The Chair thanked Professor Thomas for her presentation and for introducing the successes and challenges within the College.

 **24.07 UPDATE ON THE NORTH WALES MEDICAL SCHOOL**

Professor Mike Larvin, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Head of the College of Medicine and Health provided the Council with an update on the North Wales Medical School.

The Council were informed that:

* In September 2021 the Welsh Government pledged to establish an independent North Wales Medical School aiming to:
	+ Increase the number of local medical graduates.
	+ Widen access to a medical career to all communities.
	+ Improve care for Welsh speakers, and training more Welsh speaking doctors.
* The School welcomed its first Year 1 and Year 2 (graduate entry) students in September 2024.
* Year 3 students will be attached to a selection of 97 general practices across North Wales.
* The School provides an inter-professional, patient-centred approach, delivered through small group teaching and focussed on developing valuable, bilingual, communication skills.
* The opportunities presented by being located in North Wales include the opportunity to experience remote, rural and mountain medicine.
* Governance oversight is delivered jointly by Bangor University and the Betsi Cadwaladr University Health Board. A digital first strategy has been developed, with a Digital / IT sub-group meeting monthly, overseeing the delivery of a digitally enhanced curriculum.
* Pastoral support for students takes many forms, and includes the personal tutor system, the Peer Guide programme, integration with students from different years, and the MedSoc, which is a friendly student-led society.
* The School is currently based out of the Brigantia building and including aspects of the Wrexham campus.
* **[Reserved business]**
* A number of additional projects are currently in the pipeline, with pharmacology and dental hygiene launched last year, pharmacy commencing in 2025/26 and the plans around a North Wales Dental School.

Following a question from Ms Wyn, Professor Larvin confirmed that 44% of students are Welsh domiciled. However, he did not, currently have the data on Welsh speakers.

The Chair thanked Professor Larvin for his update.

**24.08 INTEGRATED PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Chief Strategy and Planning Officer presented the Quarter 4 2023/24 Integrated Performance Report for information and assurance purposes.

It was **agreed** that an update on Research and also Marketing and Recruitment would be included at the Council Away Day in November.

The Chair thanked the Chief Strategy and Planning Officer for his comprehensive report noting that the data echoed the discussions already undertaken during the meeting.

The Quarter 4 Integrated Performance Report was **noted**.

**24.09 LEAGUE TABLE PERFORMANCE REPORT**

The Chief Strategy and Planning Officer presented the League Table Performance Report. It was noted that this was the first league table performance report to be presented to Council, and the focus was on the recently published Guardian and Times League Tables.

It was noted that many of the performance metrics used in UK league table rankings align with the Critical Success Factors in the pillars of the University’s Strategy 2030, or the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for the underpinning sub strategies. The Report notes where performance metrics relevant to Strategy 2030 are reported as part of the annual integrated performance report, presented at the November meeting of the Council. The Chief Strategy and Planning Officer advised that it is proposed that a summary of all UK league table performance is included in the annual integrated performance report by routine, from November 2024.

The Chair thanked the Chief Strategy and Planning Officer for his report, which was **noted.**

**24.10 2023/24 EMPLOYABILITY REPORT**

Professor Callow advised the Council that the Employability Review in 2022/23 led to an Employability Action Plan centred around five strategic priorities designed to enhance the employability of students by embedding employability into all facets of the academic experience. It was reported that the five key priorities were:

* Enhancing the use of key employability data such as Career Readiness and Graduate Outcomes to inform strategic direction and interventions.
* Raising the profile of employability and professional/graduate attributes across the Institution, ensuring both staff and students recognize it as a core element of education.
* Improving academic colleagues’ understanding of employability and the importance of professional/graduate attributes to inspire and engage students.
* Embedding employability more thoroughly within the curriculum, supported by opportunities such as placements, co-curricular activities, and extra-curricular opportunities.
* Strengthening partnerships with professional services, the Students’ Union, Alumni, and employers to develop diverse employability pathways for students.

The 2023/23 Report highlights the impact of these strategic priorities and evaluates the success of employability interventions. It also sets the stage for the coming year, outlining key actions to further enhance these priorities.

Ms Wyn enquired how many programmes currently included an element of work experience. Professor Callow reported that the University had set up a Work Placement Task and End Group to look at this point. A current challenge is the administrative support for work placements, with a small Careers and Employability team, and no administrative support in Schools. The ambition would be to have a work placement option on every programme, but it’s acknowledged that this is a big undertaking.

Following a question from Sir Paul Lambert on whether the University monitored graduate outcomes, Professor Callow noted that employability action plans were being drawn up which would monitor these areas. Professor White noted that there was also an opportunity to request feedback from employers on the University’s graduates, and whether they had the expected workplace skills. Professor Callow acknowledged that there may be a discrepancy between what academics believe employers need, and what employers actually need. A Stakeholder audit is in the pipeline, and it would be appreciated if the audit could be a guidance audit.

It was **agreed** that Professor Callow would discuss this further with the Chief Strategy and Planning Officer, prior to scoping the audit.

**24.11 REPONSE TO MEDR: NSS REPORT, PTES REPORT AND**

**STUDENT EXPERIENCE STRATEGY**

Professor Callow noted that high level Institutional and School NSS 2024 and PTES 2024 results were presented to Council in July. The purpose of the Executive summaries and accompanying appendices was to provide Council with the University’s MEDR required NSS 2024 submission, to provide more detailed NSS and PTES results by subject and demographics and to assure Council on the institutional NSS 2025 delivery and enhancement planning. In addition, paperwork is included to assure Council on the PTES delivery and enhancement planning for 2024/25 and to present the new Student Experience Sub-Strategy.

The Council were advised that there has been a significant improvement in the University’s NSS performance, and also in the PTES response rate, which affords, for the first-time, results at a School level (with the exception of Education). The enhancement approach to be taken for the purpose of NSS and PTES 2025, includes the establishment of a formal PGT delivery group which will report to the Education and Student Experience Committee.

**[Reserved Business]**

The Council were advised that a variety of initiatives were underway, including a recent CELT conference and strengthening CPD provision under the leadership of Dr Eyo-Otung. In addition, the University had commissioned an external company to analyse the free text comments included in the NSS, which had provided a wealth of comments. As previously, and dependent on the 2023 performance, Schools will be divided into three intervention categories, and monitoring will be a key element of the oversight.

In response to question on the length of the HEIW contract, Professor Callow noted that it had another 2 years to run.

As a companion to the Teaching and Learning Strategy, the Student Experience Strategy articulates what the University’s student experience is, developing coherency to, and a shared understanding of student experience across the University. The strategy will maximise a student experience where students belong and can thrive to fulfil their academic and life potential and contribute in the fullest way to society, culture, and the economy.

Professor Callow noted that the Student Experience Strategy sets out five objectives:

* Culture of opportunity: to empower students to grow, thrive, and create their own student experience journey.
* Holistic approach to wellbeing: to empower students to take care of themselves and others.
* An inclusive and connected Bangor University community: to ensure all students are valued and celebrated.
* Enriched learning, living and social environments: to enhance the experience of students through an engaging and inclusive environment, with sustainability at its core.
* Partnership and effective communication: to further develop our partnership working and
* effective communication between our students, Students’ Union, and staff.

The Chair welcomed the improvements in a number of areas across both surveys, and congratulated Professor Callow and all staff involved with the Student Experience Strategy.

**24.12 STUDENTS’ UNION REPORT**

The Chair of Council invited Mr Rowlands to provide an update from the Students’ Union.

The key points included:

* Welcome week had been busy but very successful, with many well attended events.
* 32 external companies signed up to attend Serendipity, alongside 20 University departments. 5000 students attended the event, which was a huge success. Thanks was extended to the Vice-Chancellor for attending the event. UMCB are offering informal learn Welsh sessions, prior to students going on to the formal course.
* The Students’ Union continue to work with Professor Callow on the QER submission.
* Sabbatical Officers continue to liaise with the student protestors at the encampment.
* A JMJ 50th birthday celebration gig has been arranged.
* Mr Rowlands had been part of the University stall core team at the Rhondda Cynon Taf National Eisteddfod, and it had proven an excellent opportunity to engage with students, prospective students, and alumni.
* UMCB will celebrate its 50th birthday in 2026.

The Chair thanked Mr Rowlands for the comprehensive report.

**24.13 QUALITY ENHANCEMENT REVIEW UPDATE**

Professor Callow provided a verbal update on the preparations for the University’s Quality Enhancement Review which is due to take place in December 2024.

It was noted that previously, the methodology for the Quality Enhancement Review looked at quality assurance and degree standards, with the judgement being based on the Panel’s confidence in that provision. Over the past few years, in Wales, the methodology has changed to bring in enhancement, and the University is the first to go through this new methodology. In addition to the judgement statement, there will also be a statement on the University’s maturity in terms of enhancement. The Review is impactful in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland as these countries do not have the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

The University’s self-analysis document, written in conjunction with the Students’ Union, was submitted on 11 September. The QER Panel are currently reviewing the information, and Professor Callow and Ms Ambreen will travel to Cardiff shortly for a Review Meeting. After the meeting the University will discover what the Panel lines of enquiry will be, and whether any further information is required. In addition, training for staff will commence. The self-analysis document will be provided to the Council in November as an enhancement report.

*The Chair left the room, Sir Paul Lambert in the Chair.*

**24.14 NOMINATIONS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE**

1. The Reports of the meetings of the Nominations & Governance Committee held on 22 August and 13 September 2024 were **noted**.
2. The following matters were brought to the Council’s attention:
3. Minutes 22 August 2024: The Committee agreed to recommend to the Council, that the Chair’s term of office is extended for a final time to 8 February 2028 (minute 315A).

The University Secretary outlined that, in order to allow the recommendation from the Committee the University would need to request a minor amendment to the Supplemental Charter to insert the word *normally* into Article 12, deleting *always*.

The Council **approved** the recommendation that the Chair’s term of office is extended as outlined, initially to a maximum of 8 years, and following amendment of the Supplemental Charter to a final, maximum, term of 10 years.

The Council **agreed** that the University Secretary should take this forward with the Privy Council.

*The Chair of Council rejoined the meeting and resumed the Chair. Sir Paul Lambert left the meeting.*

1. The Chair drew the Council’s attention to the following recommendation:

Minutes 22 August 2024: The Committee unanimously approved the recommendation that the Council appoint Sir Paul Lambert as Pro-Chancellor (minute 135C).

Following consideration, the Council **approved** the recommendation that Sir Paul Lambert is appointed as Pro-Chancellor.

*Sir Paul Lambert rejoins the meeting.*

1. Minutes 13 September 2024: Following review, the Committee agreed to recommend to the Council that the following Ordinances should be approved (minute 316):
* Capability and Supporting Performance Policy and Procedure.
* Disciplinary Policy and Procedure.
* Fixed Term Contract Policy and Procedure.
* Grievance Policy and Procedure.
* Probation Policy and Procedure.
* Sickness Absence Policy and Procedure.
* Illegality and Some Other Substantial Reason (SOSR) Procedures for Dismissal.
* Management of Change Policy.

Following consideration, the Council **approved** the Ordinances listed. Following a question from Dr Prabhakar the Chief People Officer confirmed that the Ordinances were now in force, and would be placed on the website, alongside FAQs and Guidance Notes.

In response to a question from Professor Jean White, the Chief People Officer confirmed that the University had processes to deal with long Covid.

**24.15 JOINT ENGAGEMENT FORUM**

The Chair provided a verbal report of the meeting of the Joint Engagement Forum held on 25 September 2024. The Chair noted her appreciation for the consistent willingness of all Campus Trades Union representatives to actively participate in the Forum,

and it was reported that discussions around the financial situation had taken place. In addition, it was noted that the Welsh Government is keen to undertake a pilot in higher education on social partnership, and discussions were proceeding with the view that the University would take this forward.

**24.16 AUDIT & RISK COMMITTEE**

Sir Paul Lambert, Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee provided a verbal report of the meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee held on 27 September 2024. It was noted that reports from internal and external auditors were considered. The Corporate Risk Register was included with the papers for the meeting, and Council were informed of the change in scoring for the global engagement risk. In addition, the Committee discussed business continuity matters, and in particular cyber security.

*Professor Paul Spencer and Professor Andy McStay joined the meeting.*

**24.17 ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE BRIEFING**

Professor Andy McStay, Professor of Technology and Society was welcomed to the Council, to provide a briefing on Artificial Intelligence. The Chair noted that the briefing was a timely update for members of Council on a topic which was becoming more and more important in the higher education sector.

AI in Education can be used in many areas including:

* Personalised Learning: AI-driven platforms can tailor educational experiences to individual students’ needs.
* AI-Powered Tutoring Systems: AI systems like chatbots and virtual tutors are already being used to support students outside of classroom hours.
* Automated Grading and Assessment: AI can automate grading, especially for multiple-choice tests and even some types of essays, freeing up faculty time to focus on more meaningful interaction with students.
* Content Creation and Curation: AI can help create course materials by generating quizzes, summarizing texts, or even drafting learning modules.
* Data Analysis: AI can process massive datasets much faster than traditional methods.
* AI for Interdisciplinary Research: AI encourages interdisciplinary research by bringing together experts from fields such as computer science, ethics, law, and healthcare.
* AI-Driven Research Tools: AI-based platforms can automate routine research tasks, such as literature reviews, data collection, or even generating hypotheses.
* Ethical Considerations: With the integration of AI in research, universities need to lead the way in ensuring ethical use of AI.

In addition, the use of AI in university administration and governance, whilst less obvious than the academic application, can accelerate change and streamline processes.

* Admissions and Student Services: AI systems can assist with sorting through applications more efficiently, identifying students who are at risk of dropping out, and personalizing services like advising and counselling.
* Operational Efficiency: AI can optimize scheduling, resource allocation, and campus management.
* Human Resources and Recruitment: AI tools can be used in recruitment processes to match candidates to job openings or to identify the best-fit applicants for academic positions. However, universities must be cautious about the ethical implications, ensuring that AI doesn’t introduce biases in hiring or decision-making.
* Fundraising and Alumni Engagement: AI tools can help universities identify potential donors by analysing alumni data and crafting personalized outreach strategies.

Professor McStay noted, however that the use of AI comes with challenges. Academic integrity is at risk, with AI tools like ChatGPT raising concerns about plagiarism and over-reliance on technology for learning.

A number of questions were asked, following the presentation:

* How does the University become grounded in the opportunities to use AI, and move towards using AI for student experience purposes, whilst ensuring that academic integrity is maintained.
* The regulators for some programme areas, such as Health Sciences, do not allow the use of AI.
* The University has produced Guidance on the Use of AI and has provided a CELT training session to explore the best ways of using the technology. In addition, within the College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences a module on the different uses of AI was in development.
* Whilst the use of AI in some teaching and administrative functions is clear, it was less clear how the technology could be utilised in other areas.
* It was noted that in some professions, such as the legal profession, the use of ChatGPT was becoming accepted as an additional tool.

Professor Spencer was asked where the University sees the technology going in the next few years, to improve the efficiency of the University. Professor Spencer noted that the University was monitoring the use of AI, for example in a research context. However, the use of the technology in this context was in its early days. The UKRI Guidance notes that researchers may use the technology, but reviewers should not.

Professor McStay was thanked for his briefing.

*Professor McStay left the meeting. Professor Andrew Edwards and Professor Morag McDonald joined the meeting.*

**24.18 EDI AND WELLBEING BRIEFING**

1. **Strategy 2030: People & Wellbeing Strategy**

Professor Edwards provided the Council with an update on the recently approved People and Wellbeing Strategy. It was noted that:

* The People & Wellbeing Strategy merges two previous strategies: the People and Talent and Health and Wellbeing strategies.
* As a consequence, there had been a reduction of objectives from 10 to 4 (Talent & Performance; Leadership; Diversity and Inclusion and Health and Wellbeing)
* A re-positioning and alignment of KPIs had been undertaken, and these now included:
	+ Critical Success Factor: % staff completing mandatory training (min 85%)
	+ Primary KPIs
		- Reduce median gender pay gap (by 0.5% p.a. to 2030)
		- Reduce % staff on fixed term contracts (close gap on national average)
		- Increase % PDR completions (above minimum of 90%)
		- Attain/retain/enhance sector-wide Charters or Awards

Members were advised that underlying each objective were key areas of focus. Highlights of the work currently being undertaken include:

* Staff Wellbeing Champions – ongoing recruitment
* Free Blood Pressure Checks.
* Active Workplace Champions & New Guidance for Staff.
* Introduction of new Carers Policy.
* Menopause-Friendly accreditation & ongoing line Manager training.
* Long Covid Group & Other Peer Network Opportunities.
* i-act Mental Health training open to all Managers & Leaders.
1. **Race Equality Charter Update**

Professor Edwards noted that the Race Equality Charter aims to help universities to improve the representation, progression, and success of Black, Asian and minority ethnic people in higher education. In addition, it provides a framework to self- assess what the barriers to this might look like in a local context.

The process of preparing for the Race Equality Charter submission required the University to look at its data, obtain direct feedback from staff and students and explore where there are barriers and gaps in terms of race/ethnicity at the University. In addition, it requires the University to identify priorities and create a Race Action Plan for addressing barriers to race equality for staff and students.

The programme of work undertaken since April 2022, when the University became a member of the Race Equality Charter was highlighted.

Following an initial draft submission of the University’s Race Equality Charter application, the University had received positive feedback, with a few suggested actions. These were being taken forward, before the submission of the final draft of the Charter application in November. Professor Edwards confirmed that the Council would be kept informed on progress.

1. **Athena Swan Action Plan Priorities and Objectives 2023-2028**

Professor McDonald reminded the Council that the University had been awarded an Athena Swan Silver award in January 2024. A five-year action plan had been developed, overseen by the Athena Swan Lead and Professor McDonald. Progress with the Action Plan is monitored quarterly by the EDI Oversight Group, and reviewed annually by the Athena Swan Working Group, which includes representations from Schools and Departments across the University.

A number of key issues had been highlighted and the Council were advised how these priority areas were being taken forward:

* Under-representation of women and lack of diversity in senior decision-making committees, gendered leadership roles and lack of recognition of EDI leadership.
* Women continue to be under-represented on higher pay grades, a higher proportion of women are on fixed term-contracts, and female academics are over-represented on T&S contracts.
* The proportion of women in research at the University has not improved during the reporting period and remains below the UK average. REF 2021 data shows that women are producing fewer outputs than men, and fewer women are putting themselves forward for Future Leaders Fellowship.
* analysis of attainment data shows we have gender and ethnicity awarding gaps; non-retention is higher for certain groups of students; growing acknowledgement of the “whiteness” in our academic world and an awareness of the need to decolonise the curriculum.
* lack of intersectional understanding of data and equality issues; data suggests that not all staff confident in supporting students who are transitioning.
* Health and well-being is not being prioritised by staff and students due to workload and other factors; need to ensure Menopause support is further developed and sustained.
* Caring responsibilities are disproportionately undertaken by female and part- time staff; language and practices around parental leave can exclude some staff.
* Staff are under-reporting bullying and harassment; women and especially those not disclosing gender identity, are less confident in how Bangor University addresses/deals with incidents of bullying and harassment.

Dr Jones asked about the translation of the words sex and gender, and whether these were used consistently. Professor McDonald noted that Athena Swan is about gender equality and intersectionality.

In response to a question from Professor White on developing an action plan for LGBTQ+ intersectionality, Professor Edwards confirmed that this was being taken forward at the University, working with the LGBTQ+ staff network. The discussions were not yet at a stage where an Action Plan could be developed, but this will be considered in due course.

In response to a question from the Chair, Professor McDonald noted that the University would start the process of considering Athena Swan Gold in around 2029.

The Chair thanked Professor Edwards and Professor McDonald for their updates. It was noted that the People & Culture Committee received regular updates on these areas, but a briefing to Council was appreciated.

*The Chief Operating Officer left the meeting.*

**24.19 COUNCIL AWAY DAY**

The Chair noted that a Council Away Day was scheduled for November and opened the floor to suggestions on what might be considered. It was noted that the following areas of focus had been raised during the meeting:

* Research.
* Review of Strategy 2030.
* Global Engagement.
* Student Recruitment and Marketing, including online provision.
* Communication Strategy, both internal and external.

The use of an external facilitator was suggested, should the finances allow.

**24.20 CLOSING REMARKS**

The Chair thanked members for an informative and productive meeting, with several key matters being considered and taken forward. Thanks, was also extended to the translation team for their assistance.

It was **noted** that some of the paperwork for the meeting had been uploaded later than usual. The University Secretary was asked to ensure that, where possible, all papers for Council are uploaded in a timely fashion. However, it was acknowledged that, where papers were late for good reason, that the University Secretary / Mrs Williams would advise members which papers had been uploaded / updated, in order to facilitate members’ consideration of the paperwork.

**24.21 VALEDICTION**

The Chair, on behalf of the Council, extended her sincere thanks to Mr Devani who has completed his term of office on the Council.

It was noted that Mr Devani had brought his extensive skills, experience, and richness of perspective to discussions over that time, and the Council were pleased that he had agreed to continue as a Director on the Board of MSParc.