

the Academic Council

Minutes of the second meeting of the Academic Council in the 2024-2025 academic session, held on 29 January 2025 at 3.00 pm in Room 209, Mary Seacole Building, Avery Hill campus

Present:

Jane Harrington, Vice-Chancellor (Chair)

Peter Garrod, University Secretary
(Executive Secretary)

- Rachel Ashton, Executive Director, Student and Academic Services
- Gary Brown, Associate Dean: Student Success, GBS
- Ameen Chowdhury, President GSU
- Myrtle Emmanuel, Associate Professor in HRM & Organisation, GBS/EDI Adviser
- Sheryl Hendriks, Director of NRI
- Heidi King, Executive Director, Marketing & External Relations
- Mary-Clare Martin, FEHHS Member
- Sofia Stathi, Chair, UREB
- Peter Taylor, Chief Operating Officer
- Natasha Vall, PVC: FLAS
- Noel-Ann Bradshaw, Deputy Dean: FES
- Karen Brickman, GBS Member
- Paul Butler, Executive Director & Chief Information Officer
- Leigh Doster, PVC Business
- Andy Frost, Director, GRI
- Peter Griffiths, PVC Engineering & Science
- Amrutha Gullapalli, GSU Officer
- Aminul Islam, GSU Officer
- Sodiq Lawal, GSU Officer
- Jennifer Marie, PVC Education
- Tracey Reynolds, Associate Dean: R&KE, FLAS
- Catherine Tonry, FES Member
- Andrew Westby, Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Research and Knowledge Exchange)

In attendance:

Trudy Brighton, Governance Support Manager (minutes)

Karen Brough, Associate Director of SAS (Student Registry)

Gianina Harvey-Brewin, Associate Director of Employability & Apprenticeships (item 24/32)

Simon Lewis, Executive Director of Strategic Planning (item 24/30)

Emma Pleasant, Head of Student Voice & Representation, VCO (item 24/26)

Apologies:

Dave Hockham, FLAS Member

Vanessa Lemm, Deputy VC & Provost

Derek Moore, PVC FEHHS

AC 24/21 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

No declarations of interests were made.

AC 24/23 MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING AND ACTIONS (AC 24/P16)

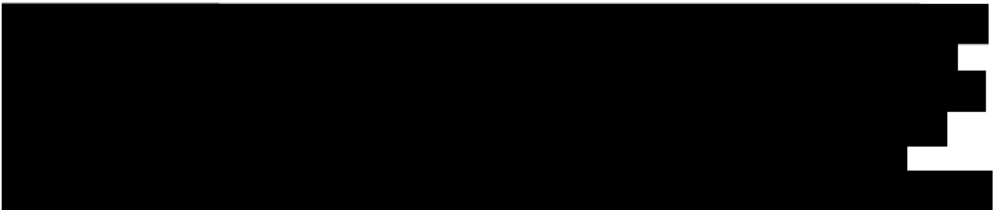
The minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2024 were agreed as an accurate record. The actions tracker was received. Two actions were on the agenda and others were in progress or completed. In relation to action 24/06, the Executive Director, SAS, reported that the project concerned with implementing a payment platform for student fees was making good progress. Implementation in September 2025 was being targeted but could slip to January 2026.

24.1 Harassment and Sexual Misconduct

The University Secretary provided a brief update on the work on harassment and sexual misconduct and preparation for the new OfS registration condition (E6) due to come into effect on 1 August 2025. Over 11,000 students had completed the mandatory training for students since the launch in September. Feedback on the survey had been largely positive and was being analysed to assess whether any changes were needed for the future. A pilot course for staff would be rolled out shortly and would become mandatory in the autumn. A web page which would act as the 'single comprehensive source of information' on harassment and sexual misconduct was being developed.

AC 24/25 REPORT FROM THE VICE-CHANCELLOR (AC 24/P18)

The Vice-Chancellor reported on recent developments and highlighted the following:

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- **Strategy Programme Work:** The overall strategy programme work continued. With the halfway point of the 2030 strategy approaching and much of the foundational work delivered or under way, greater emphasis was being placed on tracking the impact of the work.
- **University's Achievements and Awards:** The University had risen by one place to 17th out of 149 universities in the 2024/25 People & Planet League table. The University had been shortlisted for the Best of Royal Greenwich Business Awards for the Greener Greenwich Award category.
- **English Devolution White Paper:** The English Devolution White Paper published on 16 December 2024, which set out a new devolution framework, including the establishment of 'strategic authorities', would have implications for Kent and Medway.

AC 24/26 GREENWICH STUDENTS' UNION REPORT (AC 24/P19)

The Head of Student Voice and Representation, Greenwich Students' Union, presented a summary of feedback provided from programme representatives throughout Term 1. The feedback was broken down by Faculty and NSS themes and provided both qualitative and quantitative information.

The Vice-Chancellor was pleased to note that the feedback was generally positive. The comments about inconsistencies of experience would be followed up by the respective Faculties.

Mr Lawal, GSU sabbatical officer, raised the issue of student financial hardship and urged that implementation of the payment plan platform take place as soon as possible, preferably for September 2025. The Executive Director, SAS, reported on the various interventions available to help students who were experiencing financial difficulties. She re-affirmed the University's commitment to implementing the payment plan platform but noted the scale of the project might mean a later start date. Once in place, there would be greater flexibility in payment plans for continuing students. Counter staff in the student centres were

being trained to issue payment plans and deal with any issues reported by students. The Executive Director, SAS and the GSU Officer agreed to meet to discuss the platform and SAS and ILS would agree on communications to be sent to students. The Vice-Chancellor asked for an update to be provided to the next meeting.

The Vice-Chancellor thanked GSU for the excellent report which provided useful insight into student experience and the areas requiring addressing ahead of the NSS.

AC 24/27 FACULTY REPORTS (AC 24/P20)

The Council received reports from the PVCs and Executive Deans on their Faculties. They presented the following key highlight from the reports:

27.1 Faculty of Education, Health & Human Sciences

In the absence of Professor Derek Moore, the Faculty report was noted.

27.2 Faculty of Engineering and Science

Professor Peter Griffiths reported that AI-supported module rubrics had been developed and delivered across the University, inspiring change in the assessment of student work. Block teaching of maths in September had been popular with the students and appeared to impact positively on performance.

27.3 Faculty of Liberal Arts & Sciences

Professor Natasha Vall reported good scores in the module evaluations at the end of term. Some varying student experience had been highlighted and a more comprehensive approach to addressing feedback was being considered.

27.4 Greenwich Business School

Professor Leigh Doster reported that the preliminary assessment from the REF2029 exercise estimated a significant increase in Faculty FTE staff from 84 to 175 submitting and in Research Power from 235 to 525.

AC 24/28 STUDENT SUCCESS UPDATE (AC 24/P21)

The PVC Education presented:

- (i) an update on implementing the Student Success Sub-Strategy (AC 24/P21A); and
- (ii) a separate report on the Greenwich Tutoring Framework (AC 24/P21B), provided at the request of the Council.

The Council noted the progress with the individual projects being carried out under the workstreams of Foundations, Innovations, Interventions and Enablers, with significant progress on the following individual projects:

- The business case for the Curriculum Management Tool had now been approved and the contract signed for a March 2025 start with key modules due by October 2025.
- The project on the Student Lifecycle Management system was half-way through with 10 areas of casework now live. Statistics indicated that there

had already been over 104,000 interactions with the system since its launch and over 70% of students had rated their experience of it as excellent.

- The prototype of a student engagement dashboard had been developed by ILS and protocols around its use were being considered. A demonstration of the dashboard would be given to the Board at a future meeting.
- The Greenwich Tutoring Framework had now been fully rolled out in FLAS and partly in the other three Faculties. Issues relevant to timetabling, relationships with the attendance monitoring team and refresher training on the Student Lifecycle Management system were being worked through. Staff feedback about the need to spend more time on relationships building and better preparation for first assignments would be addressed before the next academic session. The next steps would be a full evaluation of the Framework before it was rolled out further to academic tutors and Faculty Student Advisers.

The Board was pleased to note the GSU's feedback that the Faculty Student Advisers were having a positive effect on triaging student issues before reaching personal tutors.

AC 24/29 GRADUATE OUTCOMES (AC 24/P22)

The Council considered an update on work to improve graduate outcomes. Against a corporate KPI target of 80%, the University's current position was 70.2%.

The PVC: Education reported that work to enhance Graduate Outcomes was being undertaken across the University on an evidence-based approach. Progression rates for further study were below the sector average (15% vs 18%) and work was underway to review the marketing of opportunities at postgraduate level and enhance the pathways to ensure students were aware of the various options. Employability was being embedded into the curriculum as part of the Curriculum Shape project. Another area of work included optimising survey responses to the Graduate Outcomes Survey by promoting the survey and educating students on its purpose and significance.

The Council received the Faculty Plans-on-a-Page relating to Employability and Graduate Outcomes and noted the rag-ratings to show progress.

The Council noted the mixed results and recognised that there was a lag between the interventions being undertaken and the impact on outcomes. The challenge ahead was to carry out interventions more quickly and in a way which would interact with employability. The Vice-Chancellor asked for a further update on Business Management and the Business School at the next meeting.

AC 24/30 POSTGRADUATE TAUGHT EXPERIENCE SURVEY (PTES) 2024 (AC 24/P23)

Dr Simon Lewis, Executive Director of Strategic Planning, attended for this item.

The Executive Director of Strategic Planning presented a report on the 2023/24 Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) results. The data drew on the institutional results from Advance HE and sector results published in November 2024.

The headline results of the survey were that:

- The overall satisfaction rate had remained at 86%, the same as last year. This was above the sector average but 2.1% below the University Alliance benchmark.
- Greenwich was currently ranked 32nd out of 107 participating institutions.
- The response rate had fallen from 34% to 29%.
- 'Resources' remained the highest performing question area with an average score of 92%.
- In keeping with the sector, the 'Community' section scored the lowest results at 78%.
- Scores of the 'Assessment' section were significantly below the sector by -3.8%.
- Overall performance in most sections of the survey had remained level with 2023 or had fallen by 1-2% points.

The Vice-Chancellor noted that comparison of the PTES and NSS data at subject level was useful in flagging up issues. The subject benchmarkings were helpful. The University was aiming to be at the top of the University Alliance rankings and the data would be made available to Faculties to understand the relevant benchmarking for programmes. PTES improvement plans would be integrated into the Faculty Plans-on-a-Page and an analysis of comments relating to professional service directorates would be used to formulate a different set of action plans.

It was noted that the 'Community' section was only introduced in 2023 and a suggestion was made that lessons learnt from the responses would be beneficial to improving performance. The Executive Director of Strategic Planning agreed to share the full list of questions in this area. It was agreed that the Council would return to the matter once the plans for improvement were developed.

AC 24/31 ANNUAL REPORT TO THE GOVERNING BODY ON ACADEMIC QUALITY AND STANDARDS (AC 24/P24)

The Council considered the 2023/24 annual report on academic quality and standards which had been prepared to provide the Governing Body with assurance that the University was meeting the quality and standards conditions for its registration as a Higher Education provider in England.

The PVC Education reported that the relevant assurance was being provided to Governors on the basis of the following indicators:

- Student satisfaction in the NSS and PTES surveys compared to 2023.
- Student outcomes thresholds being met in all undergraduate and postgraduate taught programme types.
- Robust processes to monitor both quality and standards.
- External examiner feedback indicating standards were of an equivalent or higher level than other universities.
- A comparable proportion of good honours degrees in 2023 as in 2022 so no grade inflation.
- Further enhancements made to processes over the course of the past year including the effectiveness of Progression and Awards Boards (PABs) and embedding postgraduate and undergraduate taught programmes into the Continuous Improvement Tool in the Annual Programme Review. An effective Programme Validation process had overseen 133 new programmes, 158 discontinuations, 64 programme changes and 35 suspensions as well as 12 partnerships reviews successfully undertaken.

The University Secretary noted that the report was much improved from previous annual reports. The Council **approved** the annual report on academic quality and standards 2023/24 for the Governing Body.

AC 24/32 APPRENTICESHIPS (AC 24/P25)

The Associate Director, Employability & Apprenticeships attended for this item.

The Council considered an update on degree apprenticeships and the OfS funded project to generate more awareness and expand the capacity and capability of the apprenticeship provision. Seed funding of £1.2m had been received from the OfS in 2023/24 for this purpose and the project was now about half way through. The engagement project would run until July 2025 and would include a thorough impact analysis for the University and for the OfS.

It was reported that the project was yielding results. Employers were responding to the outreach programme, including improved marketing campaigns, and there were good levels of interest in apprenticeships, particularly in the construction and quality surveying space. Similarly, the outreach activity in schools and colleges had generated good interest from learners. Support was also being provided to employers about recruiting school leavers. To improve internal capabilities, workshops to explain how degree apprenticeships worked had been rolled out. On curriculum development, a specialist had been brought in to help develop new programmes and enhance the degree apprenticeship offer so that it better fit employer demand. The funding would end in July 2025 and consideration was being given on how to embed some of the learning from the project into Faculties and the GSU team.

The Council agreed that the project had been useful and noted that the report would be going to the Governing Body for information in February.

AC 24/33 RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE ANNUAL REPORT 2023/24 (AC 24/P26)

The DVC, Research & Knowledge Exchange (R&KE) presented the annual report on research and knowledge exchange activities during 2023/24. In support of the R&KE sub-strategy, seven projects had been planned and notable achievements during the year included the establishment of the centre and institutes structure, the launch of the new Institute for Inclusive Communities and Environments, the refresh of Greenwich Research and Innovation and the implementation of a seed funding scheme for Early Career Academics. For the current year, projects included the launch of the Greenwich Doctoral College and the procurement and roll out of new IT systems for digital transformation

Other headline information included:

- The University had retained its top 100 place in the Times Higher Education Impact Ranking based on the UN Sustainable Development Goals.
- A 25% increase in bids.
- A reduction in the level of external contracting.
- Good progress being made towards preparations for REF2029, in accordance with GREAT assessments and SCOPUS data, with early indications suggesting there would be sufficient outputs to support a research power of 2000 based on submitting 650 staff with significant responsibility for research.
- As a result of efforts to improve the quality of data for the HE-BCI survey, the University had seen improved income levels which would feed through to the HEIF allocation and Knowledge Exchange Framework.
- PGR student numbers were starting to stabilise after a period of decline.

The establishment of a Doctoral College would set a strong foundation to support future growth in numbers.

The Council welcomed the report and **approved** the Research & Knowledge Exchange Annual Report for 2023/24 for the Governing Body.

AC 24/34 KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE FRAMEWORK (KEF) (AC 24/P27)

The Director of GRI updated the Council on the University's position in the latest Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF4). Under the Research and Knowledge Exchange sub-strategy, the University aimed to be ranked in the top quintile in five of the seven KEF perspectives (covering Research partnerships; Working with business; Working with the public sector, CPD and graduate start-ups; Local growth and regeneration; IP and commercialisation; and Public and community engagement).

On the basis of the latest data issued in September 2024, the University's performance in KEF4 (2022/23) had remained broadly similar to KEF3, except for CPD and graduate start-ups, where the University had dropped significantly to the lowest quintile in the sector. In all other perspectives, except for IP and Commercialisation, the University's performance had remained in the top 20%.

The Council noted that the report identified possible measures to improve performance in each of the perspectives. KEF5 data would be available in September 2025.

AC 24/35 RESEARCH ETHICS (AC 24/P28)

The Council **received** a report on changes to the research ethics process intended to streamline the handling of ethics applications in preparation for an online research ethics system. The business case for a research and knowledge exchange management system, which incorporated the research ethics component, was being presented for approval at the Finance Committee on 3 February 2025.

The principal revision related to a new approach for processing ethics applications whereby applications would be divided into different approval tracks based on whether they were low or high risk. Low risk applications would be handled by UREB's Research Ethics Officer and approved by Chair's Action and higher risk applications would be considered by the University Research Ethics Board, either by circulation or at a meeting (with most going down the former route). 'Low risk' student applications would continue to be approved by Faculty Research Ethics Committees.

The changes to the policy and process had been approved by the University Research Ethics Board in consultation with the R&KE Board and revisions to guidance and the UREB application form were being made ahead of the target timeline of implementing the new approach after the UREB meeting on 18 February 2025.

AC 24/36 FACULTY CHANGE OF NAME (AC 24/P29)

Following the merger of the Schools of Design and Screen and Stage in 2024/25, and consultation across the Faculty, the Council **approved** the change of name of the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences to the Faculty of Law, Arts and Social Sciences for recommendation to the Governing Body and **noted** the

proposed name of the new School of Design and Creative Industries, both effective from academic year 2025/26.

AC 24/37 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

The Council noted the sad passing of David Grzywacz, a former member of staff in the NRI. A letter of condolence to his family would be sent on behalf of the University.

AC 24/38 DSocSci AWARD (AC 24/P30)

The Council **approved** the proposal to establish the award of **DSocSci (Doctor of Social Science)** linked to the establishment of the new Professional Doctorate in Social and Criminal Justice to be delivered by the School of Law and Criminology .

AC 24/39 EMERITUS PROFESSORSHIP (AC 24/P34)

The Council **noted** the award of an Emeritus Professorship to Professor Robert (Bob) Cheke.

AC 24/40 SUMMARY REPORTS FROM ACADEMIC COUNCIL COMMITTEES (AC 24/P31)

The Council **received** summary reports from the following Academic Council committees:

- Partnerships Board, Interim 30 October 2024 and 12 November 2024
- Research and Knowledge Exchange Board, 11 December 2024
- Student Success Board, 23 October and 20 November 2024
- University Research Ethics Board, 22 October and 3 December 2024

AC 24/41 MINUTES OF MEETINGS OF ACADEMIC COUNCIL COMMITTEES (AC 24/P32)

The Council **received** minutes from the following meetings of the Academic Council's committees:

- Partnerships Board, 30 October and 12 November 2024
- Research and Knowledge Exchange Board, 23 September 2024
- Student Success Board, 25 September, 23 October and 20 November 2024
- University Research Ethics Board, 22 October and 3 December 2024

AC 24/42 ACADEMIC COUNCIL CYCLE OF BUSINESS (AC 24/P33)

The Council **received** an updated cycle of business for 2024/25.

AC 24/43 DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting would be held at 15:00 on 19 March 2025 at Medway.

Meeting closed at 4.20 pm.

T.A.Brighton / 17 February 2025