
Minutes of the 315th COUNCIL meeting, Wednesday, 27th November 2019

PRESENT: Dame Yve Buckland (Chair)
Professor Alec Cameron
Danielle Gallagher
Professor Helen Higson
Dr Kevin Morley
Dr Sue Noffke
Neil Scott
Dr Mike Wright

Ranjit Dhindsa
Dr Melanie Gibbs
Dr Fiona Lacey
Professor Gill Nicholls
Dr Rob Perrins
Professor Kate Sugden

APOLOGIES: Saskia Loer Hansen
Dr Vij Randeniya

Toby Lewis

N ATTENDANCE: John Walter (Secretary)

GOVERNANCE MATTERS

Welcome

19/39 RESOLVED:

To welcome Professor Gill Nicholls, as a new associate member of Council in the role of HE Advisor.

Declarations of Interest

19/40 NOTED:

That there were no new declarations of interest from members of Council or from those in attendance with respect to any agenda items.

Council Membership for 2019/20

19/41 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/19/1 providing a list of the Council's Membership for 2019/20.

MINUTES AND UNIVERSITY NEWS

Minutes

19/42 RESOLVED:

To approve the Minutes of the 314th meeting of the Council, held on 16th October 2019.

Matters Arising

19/43

RECEIVED:

Paper CO/19/12 being a report on matters arising from the minutes of the 314th Council meeting.

International Student Buddy Scheme (Minute 19/9)

19/44

NOTED:

That the Learning Development Centre and the Students' Union (SU) had developed the 'International buddy scheme', which was now operational.

Schedule of Council Business 2019/20 (Minute 19/6)

19/45

NOTED:

That no further comments on the Schedule of Council Business have been received.

Estates Masterplan Vision Statement (Minute 19/15)

19/46

NOTED:

That the possibility that there could be a decision not to proceed with HS2 was to be taken into account when the Executive and FIC consider the implementation of the estates masterplan, including the location of the new building.

University Speak Up (Whistleblowing) Policy (Minute 19/19)

19/47

NOTED:

That the University Speak Up (Whistleblowing) Policy was currently under review and a revised version would be submitted to a future meeting of Nominations and Remuneration Committee. The Audit and Risk Committee had identified the University's approach to whistleblowing for its detailed discussion theme at the next meeting.

Accountability Burden (Minute 19/22)

19/48

NOTED:

That the Chair of the CUC was to be invited to attend a future meeting of the Council.

Aston Business School Strategy Update (Minute 19/25)

19/49

NOTED:

That the Executive Dean of ABS was scheduled to provide an update on the implementation of the School strategy at the Council/Executive Away Day on 12-13 May 2020.

Research Strategy (Minute 19/27)

19/50

NOTED:

That the PVC Research would provide periodic reports to Council on progress with the University Research Strategy – these would be included in the Schedule of Council Business.

Complaints Procedure (Minute 19/36)

19/51 NOTED:

That the Complaints Procedure had been revised so that the Complaints Committee would report to the Senate (rather than the Council) and this change had been approved by Senate. The Council would in future receive an annual report on Complaints (refer to Minute 19/74).

Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive's Report

19/52 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/18/15 and an oral report from the Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive, noting the following points:

i) University Reorganisation

- Good progress had been made with the consultation process for the proposed restructuring of the University, which would be discussed in detail later in the meeting (refer to Minute 19/54). This positive feedback was endorsed by the Provost and representatives of Senate.

ii) Strike Action

- The University was experiencing strike action by members of the UCU for eight consecutive working days, which commenced on 25th November. This related to two disputes, one concerning the USS pension fund, and the increase in member contributions required to address the scheme deficit, and the second related to the annual pay offer for this year. UCU had 337 members at Aston, representing about 20% of the total staff population. Those voting in favour of strike action represent less than 40% of UCU members at Aston, and less than 20% of USS members at Aston. The issues leading to the strike were unlikely to be resolved quickly and there was a strong possibility that further strike action and action short of a strike would take place in the coming months. The Vice-Chancellor had informed the Senate that if *per capita* staff costs rose the University would not be able to employ as many staff in future.
- The Provost provided a detailed report on the actions being taken and planned to mitigate the impact of the strike action on students. The Vice-Chancellor had approved a paper on behalf of Senate approving a series of mitigation actions to reduce the effect of the strike action on student progression and graduation covering purely regulatory issues. In addition, Schools had put in place further actions to support students' learning and to ensure that students could achieve the set learning outcomes to the best of their abilities, including dissertation cafes. The University was providing a series of events during the strike period at which any students affected would be able to develop academic and vocationally relevant skills. The Executive Director of HR and Organisational Development OD and the Chair of the Aston UCU Branch had recently attended a meeting of the Students' Union Council to discuss the reasons for and consequences of the strike and the actions being taken by the University to mitigate its impact. Town hall meeting would be held for students affected by the strike. The pay saved during the strike would be used to contribute to student-led activities and possibly to make *ex gratia* payments to students impacted.
- On completion of the strike the University would review and prepare a report on the effectiveness of the actions taken and the lessons learned.
- The University would need to decide shortly when to launch this year's National Student Survey, which could reflect any negative impacts of strike action on the students' academic performance or experience at Aston.

iii) University Superannuation Scheme (USS) Update

- Birmingham City Council and other organisations were seeking to designate Birmingham as a "living wage city". Although Aston University had not been

approached in this regard, other universities in the City had been targeted to commit to accreditation as a Living Wage Employer.

- Aston had paid the “Living Wage” to its staff since 2013. Whilst the University was proud about its position on this issue, Aston had not sought accreditation for three reasons:
 - a) Accreditation required the University to ensure that its supply chain were all “living wage accredited”, which represented an additional procurement burden;
 - b) It was likely that some of the smaller enterprises in Aston’s supply chain might not be “living wage accredited”, and the University would not wish to exclude them if they could not meet this additional cost;
 - c) The University was happy to continue to do the right thing, without seeing a benefit in undertaking further assurance and incurring additional cost in order to obtain the associated kite mark.
- Council supported the University current approach, noting that the Vice-Chancellor would keep a watching brief on developments.

Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council’s Report

Opening of the New Clinical Facilities in Aston Medical School (AMS)

19/53 RECEIVED:

An oral report from the Pro-Chancellor that she been very pleased to open AMS’s new high tech clinical training facilities, which included a simulated hospital ward, on 1st November 2019. At the ribbon cutting ceremony, a number of representatives from AMS's external partners from across the West Midlands, including NHS Trusts, clinical commission groups and key hospital trusts, had the chance to meet some of Aston’s medical students who provided demonstrations and a tour of the new facilities.

STRATEGIC ISSUES

Restructure

19/54 RECEIVED:

CO/19/14 which included a proposal to restructure the University from five Schools into three Colleges in order better to meet the needs of the Aston’s three main beneficiary groups (ie students, external organisations, and the region and society), together with:

- i) a summary of associated proposed changes to the Ordinances and a tracked changed version of the Ordinances showing how they would look if the proposals were implemented;
- ii) The slides on the proposal which the VC and the Provost had presented to the Academic Assembly.
- iii) A report from the Academic Assembly (AA) summarising their comments on the proposal.
- iv) A summary of the Senate’s discussion of the proposal, including the proposed changes to the Ordinances and the above AA report, at its meeting of 27th November 2019.

19/55 NOTED:

- That a variety of views had been expressed by AA members, with general support for the proposal from some quarters, but concerns over current lack of detail and timescale, had precluded an overall decisive positive response at this stage. The AA had agreed to represent the interests of both the academic staff and the professional services staff in the consultation. AA members had expressed concern about academic re-alignment within the new Colleges; the relatively short timescale for implementation; the

importance for Aston of continuing to support staff in carrying out both blue sky research and applied beneficiary-led research; the impact of the proposal on staff, particularly the need to minimize the risk of possible redundancies; the possibility of reduced or less effective access for academic staff to administrative support when administrative functions were concentrated at a College level; and the need to keep staff at all levels and students informed about developments. The AA had agreed to continue monitoring the development of the proposal through the next phases and to provide more detailed comments when details of the so far less developed parts of the changes became available.

- That Senate members generally accepted the rationale for the proposal to move to a College structure, with some reservations about how this structure and organisation of academic disciplines would be delivered in individual colleges.
- That the consultation and engagement with the AA and Senate had been very helpful and constructive. The University had agreed to continue to involve the AA, Senate and students throughout the implementation of the new structure.
- That Executive members who were impacted by the proposal had been consulted about the new roles and restructuring. Saskia Loer Hansen had been appointed to the new role of Deputy Vice-Chancellor Engagement. The process for the appointment of the PVC Education and PVC Students, was in train. The appointment process for College Executive Deans (taking into account whether incumbent post holders had a significant overlap with the new College role) would commence immediately after the approval of the proposal by Council.
- That work had commenced on planning the future organisational structure for each of the proposed Colleges based on a standard portfolio of accountabilities developed by the Executive Academic Group (EAG). How these accountabilities would be attached to senior posts would vary across Colleges according to their individual business needs. Shadow College Boards had been established and were considering the details of the new Colleges structures. A consistent role Profile for Deputy Deans had been produced and it had been agreed that there would be two Deputy Deans in each College. Appointment to all roles would be advertised and would be open to competition in merged Colleges. The existing Associate Deans for Research had been confirmed in their roles until the REF 2021, to ensure that REF preparations would continue seamlessly during the implementation of the new structure.
- That it had been agreed that there would be three College 'Director of Operation' roles, and two 'senior business process leads' on key academic support processes across the University: examinations, timetables, etc. The School business managers and heads of professional service departments had developed a generic job description for Director of Operations for the Colleges. These new roles would be ring-fenced for the current School Business Managers.
- That the College of Engineering and Physical Sciences was anticipated to entail least change as it was being developed from one School with some realignment of subjects. The College of Medical and Life Sciences would involve more change as it was merging two cognate Schools, but as they already shared a number of effective joint systems and processes this change should not be expected to be too problematic – this College should provide a more effective "gateway" to the NHS. The creation of the School of Business and Social Sciences was likely to present more of a challenge in aligning quite different academic cultures.

ACTION: Executive Dean of EAS to be invited to a meeting of Council to provide a progress report on the move to a College

- That EAG was reviewing the optimum location for some academic disciplines within the College structure. It had been agreed that the current two distinct Psychology teams should remain as they were. Biomedical Engineering would move from LHS to EAS and Logistics would move from ABS to EAS – working groups had been established to plan this work. There was strong support from Pharmacy for Neurosciences to remain within their School.
- That planned process reengineering programmes included: Graduate School review; a move to coordinated timetabling; examinations; and academic quality assurance.

- That the Aston Executive would shortly be meeting with their counterparts from Brunel University to share learning points from their recent experience of moving to a very similar College structure to that proposed at Aston.

19/56 RESOLVED:

- i) To approve the proposal for the University to move from the current structure based on five Schools to one based on the following three Colleges:
 - College of Business and Social Sciences
 - College of Engineering and Physical Sciences
 - College of Medical and Life Sciences.
- ii) To approve the proposed changes to the Ordinances set out in Paper CO/19/14, subject to a final proof reading and amendment of some minor presentational points raised by Council members.
- iii) That a report on the implementation of the new structure be made to the next Council meeting.

ACTION: *Provost and Secretary to agree final version of the amended Ordinances and arrange for these to be published on the intranet*

Greater Birmingham and Solihull Institute of Technology (GBSIoT): Approval of Expenditure

19/57 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/19/19, presented by the Chair of the Finance and Infrastructure Committee, which sought Council's approval for the University to proceed with the GBSIoT project in collaboration with a range of FE providers, universities and employers to specialise in delivering higher technical education (at Levels 4 and 5) with a focus on smart and digital manufacturing designed to meet the needs of those employers. Council (28.11.18) had previously endorsed the proposal that the University should participate in the collaborative bid for funding to the Department for Education (DfE). For Aston, this would provide for the enhancement of engineering facilities on the lower ground floor of the main building and the construction of the core "Hub" building for the GBSIoT to be built on the Aston campus, in a vacant site behind the European Biofuels Research Institute (EBRI) on Holt Street. The proposal would entail £6.2 million capital expenditure by Aston, of which £2.7 million related to the new building costs and charges with the majority of the remainder relating to equipment and refurbishment costs.

[FOI exempt/commercially confidential]

19/59 RESOLVED:

To approve the proposal to proceed with the GBSIoT project.

ACTION: *COO to oversee the implementation of the GBSIoT project*

STRATEGY REPORTS

References from Committees

Report from the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC)

19/60 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/19/16 which summarised issues considered at the ARC meeting held on 18th November 2019 (the full minutes of which were included in the Resources and Background Material for this meeting). Issues discussed by ARC included:

- The Annual Accountability Returns 2019 (refer to Minute 19/61)
- A report on progress made in implementing recommendations from the Internal Auditors' reviews of Business Continuity Management (BCM) and Health and Safety. ARC had asked for a formal University business recovery plan and business continuity KPIs to be developed for consideration at its next meeting (11.3.20). ARC would continue to review progress in resolving all the remaining issues.
- ARC members had queried, in the light of the recent fire at the Cube student residences in Greater Manchester, whether Unite, with whom Aston had nomination agreements for student residences, had provided appropriate assurances about the fire safety of any cladding used on their buildings. The Chief Operating Officer (COO) had confirmed that the University renewed the nomination agreements each year, and as part of the process sought and received appropriate fire safety assurances from Unite.
- A report from the ARC Chair that the Chairs of Council, ARC and Finance and Infrastructure Committee (FIC) and the Vice-Chancellor had agreed that responsibility for oversight of the University's long term sustainability properly rested with the FIC, with ARC continuing to focus on the consideration of going concern.
- ARC had approved the draft University's Modern Slavery Act Statement for 2019. ARC agreed that a report on the due diligence undertaken for international academic collaboration be submitted for consideration at the next ARC meeting. The Provost reported that she had taken on the role of Chair of the University's Collaborative Strategy Committee which oversaw the two stage due diligence process for international partners, which normally included at least one visit to the organisation. The internal auditors had recently undertaken a review of collaborative provision and their recommendations would help to further strengthen the procedures.
- ARC was informed of two fraud cases that had occurred recently at the University. ARC was satisfied with the actions that the University had taken/was taking in response to these cases. Both cases would be reported to the OfS.

Annual Accountability Returns 2019

19/61 RESOLVED:

To approve the following papers for signature by the Pro-Chancellor and/or Vice-Chancellor, as appropriate, for submission to OfS as part of the Annual Accountability Returns 2019 as recommended by the ARC (Paper CO/19/17):

- i) BDO's External Audit Highlights Report for the year ended 31st July 2019, including a letter of representation (Paper CO/19/29).
- ii) Draft University Reports and Financial Statements for the year ended 31st July 2019 (Paper CO/19/30).
- iii) Draft audited Financial Statements and letter of representation for Conference Aston Limited for the year ended 31st July 2019 and a letter of support from Aston University in respect of Conference Aston (Paper CO/19/31).
- iv) Annual Report of the Audit and Risk Committee for 2018/19 (Paper CO/19/32).
- v) Annual Report of the Internal Auditors, PwC, for 2018/19 (CO/19/33).

These papers were provided in the Resources and Background Material for this meeting.

Report from the Finance and Infrastructure Committee (FIC)

19/62 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/19/18 which summarised issues considered at the inquorate FIC meeting held on 12th November 2019 (the full minutes of would be submitted to the next meeting following their endorsement at the next FIC meeting). Issues discussed by FIC included:

- The proposal seeking approval for the University to proceed with the GBSIoT project (refer to Minute 19/57 above).
- The Estates Masterplan and ABS/LSS New Build Progress Report (refer to Minute 19/63 below)
- Approval of an Ethical Investment Policy and a new Anti-Money Laundering Policy.
- Consideration of the draft revised Investment Policy and Treasury Management Policy was deferred until its next meeting.

Estates Masterplan and ABS/LSS New Build Progress Report

19/63 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/19/19, and a report that the Chair of FIC had considered a progress report on the development of the Estates Master Plan, including consideration of the location of the new ABS/LSS building. Following consideration of feedback, the 12 possible locations for the new ABS/LSS building had been reduced to four, with two plots in each of two distinct locations (Option A - Close proximity to the heart of the campus, maintaining the vibrancy and compact clustering of academic buildings; Option B - Stretching the academic zone of the campus, and anticipating future opportunities). The Estates Strategy Programme Board and the ABS/LSS Project Board would review and develop a report on the opportunities and constraints of each location, and would develop a paper to enable a considered decision. This would be presented to the Executive (9.12.19) and then to FIC (14.1.20) and Council (22.1.20) for final approval. FIC would review, at its next meeting, the current five-year capital plan (approved by Council in June 2019), which would assist FIC in considering individual capital project proposals against the University's strategic priorities.

19/64 NOTED:

- That the Chair of FIC recommended that, since Aston was now in a much stronger financial position that hitherto, it was appropriate for the University to take forward the implementation of the five-year capital plan. The plan was structured in such a way that it would be possible to pause further development should there be an adverse change in the financial position. The University should expedite the decision-making process with regard to the location of the new ABS/LSS building, the completion of which would provide the capacity to enable other aspects of the Estates strategy to be implemented. It would be prudent to consider opportunities to expand the size of the building beyond the immediate requirements of the Schools in order to exploit potential commercial opportunities. The University would be likely to generate more income and to retain more control from the exploitation of the spare land if it were to oversee the development itself or via a subsidiary company. This would depend on the University's appetite for taking on the risk of managing such a commercial project.
- That the SU President reported that students had been involved in the planning process and were excited at the prospect of an innovative new building.

Report from the Nominations and Remuneration Committee (NRC)

19/65 RECEIVED:

A brief oral report from Dr Sue Noffke, who had chaired the NRC meeting held in the morning prior to this Council meeting. Issues considered by NRC included:

- Consideration of the draft final report from MartineauShakespeare (MS) on its review of the effectiveness of Council and its Committees. The report indicated that the governance of the University had improved considerably in recent years; interviewees spoke of governance being "on a journey", accelerated by the changes to the membership of Council in 2017 and the arrival of the new Vice-Chancellor and the current Pro-Chancellor and Chair of Council. Governance was compliant in terms of

current sector guidance, and examples of good practice had been identified. The report also identified a number of areas in which the effectiveness of Council and its subcommittees could be increased going forward to ensure compliance with the new HE regulatory framework and the requirements of the Office for Students as regulator, and with current governance best practice. NRC agreed that it would assist Council in understanding the importance of and taking forward the individual recommendations, if the executive summary differentiated key regulatory and governance drivers from more routine and hygiene factors governing everyday operations (which could be regarded as potential quick wins). NRC also asked for the recommendations to be grouped under strategic themes and prioritised (including compliance with the new HE regulatory framework; academic governance; culture and behaviour; engagement with the wider group of beneficiaries; and the student voice). This would enable Council to develop and agree a prioritised action plan with dates for completion of actions at its next meeting (22.1.20).

- Review and agreement of remuneration for professorial staff and members of the Executive for 2018/19 taking into account sector benchmarking data. Each member of staff affected would be informed of the outcome of the review and the criteria and benchmarking data that had informed the decision.
- Review of the membership of Council for 2020/21, noting that procurement was in train for a search company to identify candidates for the roles of independent council member and independent member of the ARC, having regard to the need to extend the diversity of membership.
- A report on the USS pension position and the UCU strike action, together with a detailed report of the actions being taken by the University to mitigate its impact on students.
- Endorsed the proposed Remuneration Report for inclusion in the University Financial Statements for 2018/19.

Dr Rob Perrins left the meeting at this point

19/66 RESOLVED (Nem Con):

To approve on recommendation from NRC that Rob Perrins be exceptionally reappointed for a third three-year term of office ending on 31st July 2023, in view of the fact that he had recently taken on the role of Chair of the Finance and Infrastructure Committee (FIC) at a critical stage in the implementation of Aston's capital development programme.

Dr Rob Perrins re-entered the meeting at this point

Report from the Senate

19/67 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/19/20 which summarised issues considered at the Senate meeting held on 20th November 2019 (the full minutes of which would be received at the next meeting).

Senate's Annual Report to Council on Academic Governance

19/68 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/19/21 which summarised the Senate's Annual Report to Council on Academic Governance (the full Report was contained in the Resources and Background for the meeting as paper CO/19/36), which was intended to provide evidence to support Senate's recommendation to Council that Aston had in place effective systems and processes for ensuring that the University was meeting those of its conditions of registration as an HE provider relating to academic quality, reliable standards and positive outcomes for all students. The University took the effectiveness of its academic governance very seriously, and expected all staff to take responsibility for ensuring these standards and to adopt a continuous improvement ethos. This was overseen by the Senate, the Learning and Teaching

Committee and its sub-committees, and the Graduate School Management Committee, and included the involvement of students and external beneficiaries such as businesses, other organisations and PSRBs. The Annual Report had been discussed in detail by a Senate Sub-Group which included academic and support staff from across the University and two student representatives. The Sub-Group welcomed the adoption of academic KPIs, which had been recommended last year.

19/69 NOTED:

- That it was intended that, in future, Professor Gill Nicholls, in the role of HE Advisor, would provide for Council independent scrutiny of the evidence base for the assurance provided by the Senate.
- Professor Nicholls reported that this year's report was a marked improvement on that for the previous year, particularly in its use of metrics and the inclusion of detailed action plans.

19/70 RESOLVED:

To endorse the Senate's Annual Report to Council.

University Prevent Duty Annual Report to Council 2018/19

19/71 RECEIVED:

CO/19/22 which summarised the University Prevent Duty Annual Report to Council (the full Report was contained in the Resources and Background Material for the meeting as paper CO/19/35). The Report provided an overview of actions relating to the University's Prevent duty that had occurred in 2018/19, including a review and refreshment of the University's Prevent risk assessment and an updated action plan addressing any issues identified. Appended to the report was the annual Prevent data return to OfS. The Report was intended to demonstrate to Council that the University was meeting its required duties in relation to Prevent, and had been endorsed by the University Executive (28.10.19) and Senate (20.11.19).

19/72 NOTED:

- That Prevent training was compulsory for all staff and 94% of all contracted Aston University staff had completed the original on-line training in 2016. Refresher training for these staff had commenced in January 2019 and by the end of the reporting period 718 had successfully undertaken the refresher training.
- On the 4th April 2019, the Vice-Chancellor was contacted by the West Midlands Prevent Co-ordinator concerning a complaint that had been made to the Department for Education raising concerns that the University had allowed an event to take place that could potentially lead to radicalisation of students. The Aston SU's affiliated Khalistan Society had organised this event held on campus on 30th March 2019 called 'The Panjab Crisis and Human Rights'. This had been risk assessed by the University as being of medium risk and due diligence had been carried out in the relation to the external speakers. The Director of Student and Academic Services had discussed the matter with the West Midlands Prevent Co-ordinator who was satisfied that the University had acted properly and that its processes were robust, and was informed subsequently, that the Prevent Co-ordinator had discussed the issue further with the Department for Education and that there was no further action to be taken.
- The SU President highlighted the potential for radicalisation of students arising from the political unrest over Hong Kong; conflict between students from mainland China and those from Hong Kong had already been evident on other UK campuses. The University would continue to monitor this situation very closely.

- It was suggested that appropriate Prevent and safeguarding (including cyber-safeguarding) training be organised for members of Council.

ACTION: *Provost to organise Prevent and safeguarding training for Council members*

19/73 RESOLVED:

To endorse the Annual University Prevent Duty Annual Report to Council for 2018/19 and to authorise the Pro-Chancellor to sign off the Annual Prevent Data return for submission to the OfS.

Annual Report on Student Complaints

19/74 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/19/23, the Annual Report on Student Complaints for 2018/19, noting that complaints remained at a relatively low level. The University continued to work closely with the SU in addressing and learning from complaints to improve its effectiveness and the quality of its services.

References from the Executive

Access and Participation Plan Monitoring Return to the OfS 2018/19

19/75 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/19/24, which indicated that the University was required to complete a monitoring return annually for submission to Office for Students (OfS) to demonstrate whether it had met key targets and milestones and financial expenditure as outlined each year in its Access and Participation Plan. The OfS required that Council be involved in the monitoring and evaluation of the University's compliance with the provisions of the Plan and its progress in achieving the objectives set out in it. The return was due in January 2020 and as there was not a Council meeting before then, the report was presented to Council as work in progress and to show the progress against targets and milestones, as well as the expenditure required to carry out the associated work.

19/76 NOTED:

- That in most areas of access and widening participation the University was exceeding its targets. However, the performance in relation to the employability of graduates had not been as good as the University would have wished, largely due to the challenges arising from a larger volume of students (eg in finding more high quality placements; addressing the range of development and support needs of an increasingly diverse student population; and the introduction of attractive but less vocationally relevant programmes). The University would be providing more careers support for students from the first year onwards.
- That Council members suggested that the Director of Student and Academic Services be invited to attend a future Council meeting to give a presentation on her role and the challenges her teams faced, including student mental health.

ACTION: *Director of Student and Academic Services to be invited to present to a future Council meeting*

19/77 RESOLVED:

That the Pro-Chancellor and the Chair of Nominations and Remuneration Committee be authorised to sign off the Access and Participation Plan for submission to the OfS.

ACTION: *Provost and Pro-Chancellor*

Accountability Return 2019

19/78 RECEIVED:

Paper CO/19/25, containing the University Accountability Return 2019. This return was to be signed by the Vice-Chancellor, as Accountable Officer, on behalf of the Council as the University's governing body and submitted to OfS as part of the annual accountability returns exercise. The University Executive had checked each of the statements contained in the return and on that basis confirmed that the answers provided were a true reflection of the current position.

19/79 RESOLVED:

To authorise the Vice-Chancellor to sign off the Accountability Return 2019 for submission to the OfS.

ACTION: *Secretary and Vice-Chancellor*

DATE OF NEXT MEETING

19/80 NOTED:

That the Council would next meet at 1:30 pm on Wednesday, 22nd January 2020.

STUDENT- LED PROGRAMME

19/81 NOTED:

That Council members were next conducted to the new SU Building where the SU Executive had organised a programme in which they would have the opportunity to meet with groups of students in discussion of topics of current concern to students and the SU. The President would present a summary of the discussions at the next meeting.

JGW/4.12.19