College Council Minutes - approved

Date	**18 January 2024, 17.00**
Location	Council Room, Strand
Present	Lord Geidt (Chair); Professor Shitij Kapur; Vivek Ahuja; Tom Berry; Dr Hillary Briffa; Paul Cartwright; Sir Jon Coles; Paul Goswell; Vinay Jha; Sir Ron Kerr; Steve Large; Professor Rachel Mills; Professor Kim Piper; Clare Sumner; Steven Suresh; Professor Richard Trembath.
Apologies	Nhuoc Lan Tu (Vice-Chair); Dr Natasha Awais-Dean and Donna Catley

In attendance Malcolm Ace, CFO/Vice President (Finance) – standing attendee
Aaron Porter, Advance HE (for Item 9)
Professor 'Funmi Olonisakin, Vice President (International, Engagement & Service) (for   item 10)

For the Community Story:
Professor Adam Fagan, Vice-President (Education & Student Success)
Dr Martin Compton (AI and Innovation in Education Lead, King's Academy)
Isaac Ng and Chantelle Gasa, students from the Department of Medical Education in the Faculty of Life Sciences & Medicine (FoLSM)

Secretariat:
Irene Birrell, College Secretary
Paul Mould, Deputy College Secretary & Chief Compliance Officer
Sheronlyn Balfour, Governance & Compliance Manager
Joanna Brown, Governance Manager

Community Story and Discussion – Student use of Generative AI

The Chair welcomed Isaac Ng and Chantelle Gasa, students from the Faculty of Life Sciences & Medicine, and Professor Adam Fagan and Dr Martin Compton to the meeting to discuss student use of generative AI.

King's had determined that as an institution it would be positive and pioneering and embrace generative AI as an opportunity, rather than take a punitive approach. A King's generative AI course on future learning had already attracted 4.5k participants from all over the world. King's was at the forefront in this area, and students were leading and collaborating in research, fostered by the belief that by putting this in the hands of students they would use it responsibly. The University had invested funds and launched an initiative to invite students to think about the opportunities in marking, feedback and assessment. Students were leading the projects not just participating in them.

Overall, AI literacy was low in the majority of students, with international students being more frequent users. Students fell into three groups: 1) not interested or suspicious; 2) understand the concepts and use

AI to help with sophisticated web browser searches; and 3) frequent users who believe in AI potential. It was difficult to predict which direction AI was going, and therefore challenging and important to encourage students to adapt and use it to their advantage. A key criterion for the initiative was that every project had to involve both staff and students.

Isaac Ng and Chantelle Gasa outlined the details of their "Single Best Answer" (SBA) project. It featured:

- Testing students' ability to use their knowledge to address a question and bring in lateral thinking.
- Used in UCAT and A-levels.
- Aimed at making practice in this method of answering questions accessible to all students.
- Creating resources tailored to the course.
- Personalised (upload own notes) and tracks progress.
- Customisations create an expansive array of SBA questions.
- Aimed to deliver learner analytics as feedback to individuals.
- Using same approach as YouTube to help students pick the most helpful questions.
- Looking to expand horizontally and vertically.
- Gamify the platform and make it exciting.
- Also moving into R&D and other subjects.

The AI and Innovation in Education Lead from King's Academy was of the view that there was no one better to develop these projects than students. There were many big players looking at generative AI and having student input was key in understanding what the stakeholders actually required. Some of the gains could possibly be monetizable. Another gain would be time, for both staff and students. Curriculum change would be incremental. The potential was unlimited and options highly varied so it was a matter of priorisation. The current focus of the SBA project was pre-clinical education because that was more contained and less complicated than the clinical area. Achieving good data from these projects could be used to drive wider change and provide learning analytics.

Welcome, Apologies and Notices

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The Chair welcomed guests to the meeting.

Apologies had been received from Dr Natasha Awais-Dean, Donna Catley and Nhuoc Lan Tu.

2 **Declarations of Interest** Noted.

During the discussion in the Vice-Chancellor's report on fundraising for Guy's and St Thomas', Council Member, Sir Ron Kerr, declared an interest as a Trustee of Guy's and St Thomas' Foundation.

3 **Approval of agenda**
The agenda was approved with the addition of a tabled item at Any Other Business (Item 11): Terms and Conditions of Employment for Academic Staff.

4 **Unanimous Consent Agenda (including Minutes of the Previous Meeting)** [KCC-24-01-18-04]

There was a request to remove the Actions Log (Item 4.3) from the Unanimous Consent Agenda for discussion.

The remaining items on the Unanimous Consent Agenda were taken as read and noted or approved as set out in the papers.

5   Matters Arising - Actions Log [KCC-24-01-18-04.3]

Actions log – It was requested that deadlines be added to advance and progress the action log. [*ACTION*]

6   Report of the Chair

The Chair remained in touch with many people around the University, thus maintaining a good view of the daily rhythm of the university. Regular meetings with the Vice-Chancellor continued.

7.1 Report of the Vice-Chancellor & President [KCC-24-01-18-07.1]

Council received the Vice-Chancellor's report, which highlighted current issues and events since its last meeting. These included: Israel/Gaza response; Admissions; My King's Benefits; New Year Honours; and a Fundraising update. The Vice-Chancellor made the following updates to his report:

Generative AI: Generative AI was not just for students: King's offered ten modules for professorial staff. King's was one of two UK universities using Microsoft co-pilot for a free six month trial.

Israel/Gaza Response: King's had handled the crisis reasonably well and had avoided problems seen elsewhere: it had a well-developed responsive system for dealing with complaints and escalated information. The bigger question was what the role of the University was in taking a position on geopolitical events: there were some who believed the University needed to take a stance beyond providing safety and security for the community. A lot of thought had been given to the situation, and the Vice-President (International, Engagement & Service) would present a paper on this later in the meeting.

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Fundraising Forecast: Fundraising generally achieved £20-30m per year in a normal year. Last year had been an outstanding success, but a one-off. King's had set itself an ambitious target of achieving £50m as the norm within the next five years through an increased return on investment.

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[REDACTED]

King's Climate and Sustainability: Sustainability would need to be considered in the context of the whole University and would be picked up in the integrated strategic and financial business planning process (IPP) as there would be considerable trade-offs. The Chair of the Estates Strategy Committee noted that even in the real estate sector there was no clear or consistent understanding of what a NetZero building was.

7.2 Modern Slavery Act Annual Transparency Statement [KCC-24-01-18-07.1]
In compliance with the provision of Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015, King's College London produces a statement each year of its efforts to combat slavery and human trafficking within its business and supply chains within six months of the end of its financial year. The approved statement would be signed by the Chair and posted on the University's web page.

Decision:
That the Council approve the Modern Slavery Act Transparency Statement 2022-2023 for the financial year ended 31 July 2023.

8   Report of the KCLSU President [KCC-24-01-18-08]
Council received the KCLSU President's report, which updated the College Council on two team priorities: the cost of living campaign; and the timetabling campaign.

Due to the Israel/Gaza conflict and resulting pressures on the Student Union, its campaigns had not been delivered as completely as had been expected, but the President still hoped to develop some sensible objectives before the end of the year. KCLSU had negotiated with the Estates & Facilities (E&F) department to increase bed numbers and provide a new student residence closer to campus. It had been collaborating with E&F on rent setting, to provide a range of pricing options. KCLSU was working with the Student and Education Directorate on how to address key changes students wished to see in timetabling, including faster release times for teaching & examination timetables; and the protection of some timeslots for those students who had religious obligations on Fridays. Finally, the KCLSU President would be meeting with the Chief Financial Officer regarding the KCLSU business case for cost of living improvements, and would report back on this at the next Council meeting.

The KCLSU was encouraged to work with faculties and the Vice-Deans Education group in order to resolve the timetabling issues that clashed with religious observances.

9   Report of the Governance & Nominations Committee [KCC-24-01-18-09]

- **Governance Review Report**

Council had commissioned Advance HE to carry out an external review of governance effectiveness, and considered and discussed the final report.

The Chair of the Governance & Nominations Committee (GNC) introduced the report, and put on record her thanks to all of the various contributors to the review. She stated that the ambition to move from good to great was captured in key elements of the governance review and its recommendations, including: focus on KPIs, a Board Assurance Framework (BAF), closer understanding of the Academic Board, and using the Chairs' Committee to be more strategic. These recommendations had been very helpful and had received consensus.

Staff representation had been considered in detail, with research into where King's was positioned within the sector. Regarding executive representation on UK university governing bodies, one third had a Vice-Chancellor alone, one third had a Vice-Chancellor plus one other executive, and one third had more executive members. Many members of the GNC considered that the current system at King's provided coherence and accountability to the executive, and was potentially at the forefront of good governance. However, the final recommendation regarding composition of Council resulted from a pragmatic view. It had been deemed important that Council support the executive in pursuit of a solution, and the governance review had engaged with the Unions more than might have been expected. GNC was not fully convinced that recommendation 9 would work in practice but there was a willingness to try it out with the addition of a review point.

Ultimately, good governance was about culture: working together, trust, respect and communication. The hygiene recommendations in the report were also important for effective governance. The GNC Chair stated that the Governance & Nominations Committee accepted the report, and that GNC would work with the various committee chairs to implement the recommendations.

The Advance HE consultant stated that over 500 members of the community had engaged with the review, and made the following key points:
- High level of assurance that King's already had effective governance arrangements in place but in order to get from good to great there were a number of key recommendations. Some of the hygiene recommendations (Recommendations A to P) would be helpful in keeping on track.
- There was a bigger understanding of the strategy at King's than at many other institutions but there remained some confusion over how delivery was tracked and reported.
- Board Assurance Framework: bringing it to life and interfacing would be key, with the biggest challenge within the academic environment.
- Composition of Council: the recommendations were a balance between basic good governance, stakeholder views, and the convention in the sector. Having the right people at the table was good governance.
- The Advance HE report focused on the things which really mattered. The draft implementation plan being developed in response was well judged.

Points made during discussion included:
- Recommendation 9 was a compromise toward the strongly held views of some in the University community that there should be a larger number of seats on Council allotted to elected staff representatives. The former President of the UCU had agreed to five of seven staff seats being allocated to non-executive members of staff. This change would put King's in line with the majority of peer institutions in the sector.

- It remained to determine how the two additional seats would be filled and the appropriate review point in order to assess how the change was working in practice.

- Council was in a stronger position for having undertaken the review, and for having looked at the sector and the norm. The review had been rigorously undertaken by AdvanceHE and the outcomes were reliable and independent.
- There should be clarity around the skills that the two additional 'ordinary' staff members would bring to the table. Skills, diversity and expertise should be considered within the skills matrix, and a process developed for finding specific skills and expertise across the University in order to enhance the culture and discussion at Council.
- With regard to the composition of Council, the most important thing was that there be independent oversight of the University, which meant that governance needed to be independent of the staff and students who would have a natural conflict of interest. King's was a public institution accountable to the public and governance should be focussed on its long-term sustainability.
- Removing the Senior Vice Presidents Academic & Health as members would be mitigated by their continued attendance to provide input as required by the Vice-Chancellor. Other universities had this arrangement and King's would be conforming with sector norms.
- A communication plan for Council (Recommendation 4) should be prioritised.
- A view that Council needed to take a more active and direct role in academic governance with higher quality discussions about education and research (Recommendation 2). It was noted in response that: Council had agency in its scrutiny and in the implementation of Advance HE's recommendations; and acknowledged that there needed to be better understanding of the Academic Board/Council relationship. It was further noted that this relationship was below par in almost every university.
- The community story recommendation (Recommendation 3) should not detract from Council time on scrutinising the Strategy and mission of King's.
- A concern that revamping the Chairs' Committee (Recommendation 6) could create a two-tier Council, and that it was not transparent to all members as to how governors become chairs and therefore members of the Chairs' Committee.
- Implementation of the change in length of terms (Recommendation 12) would need to consider exemptions in the transition from the current practice of three-year terms.
- There needed to be consultation with all members on the implementation.

GNC would work through the recommendations of the review, being cognizant of the comments above. On implementation of the bigger points, Council approval would be required, while the straightforward hygiene recommendations could now be forwarded to the appropriate place at the appropriate time.

Decision:
That the Council welcomes the Advance-HE review of College Governance, supports its recommendations and would now work through how best to achieve the objective of moving from good to great in terms of enabling King's to succeed in future.

The remainder of the Governance & Nomination Committee's report had been approved or noted on the Unanimous Consent Agenda:

(i)   *Review of the Council's Conflict of Interest Policy (**approved**)*

(ii)   *Membership and Searches Update*

10   Report of the Academic Board [KCC-24-01-18-10]
    (i)   In Defence of Value-Based Impartiality

The Vice President (International, Engagement & Service) presented the report, which had previously been discussed by the Academic Board at its December meeting. The report set out the balance between freedom of expression and a harmonious community, and how, as a university, to be impartial and handle disagreements.

There had been 39 geopolitical emergencies over the past several years during which staff and students had petitioned the University to take one position or another. King's, as an institution, acknowledged its own inconsistencies in responding to these, and the need for providing guidance to its community. The report put forward a set of principles, distinguishing between the University as an entity and individual members of that community and articulating a set of values to guide how the institution would respond. It was stressed that impartiality did not mean indifference. However, unless the safety of staff and students was endangered, academic freedom/freedom of speech was challenged, or the emergency impinged directly on the work and objectives of the University, as an institution, King's would not take a position, and would protect the ability of individual members of its community to speak freely within the law.

The Vice-Chancellor stated that the test for the institution would be where one person's freedom of expression challenged another person's sense of feeling welcome and safe on campus.

It was noted that the positive values expressed in the paper, promoting everyone's safety, would need to be built into the new communications strategy.

It was noted that the meaning of safety and security would need to be clearly defined: physical safety being very different to psychological safety; and that the wording "inclusive and harmonious" should be improved upon to make absolutely clear that the University fully protects and respects the rights of all to put forward their views even if they were contrary to the views of others – it is OK to disagree.

The Vice-Chancellor noted that the reality was that the University wanted to be both a place of contention and difficult conversations, and also a place of safety and security. This could be difficult when the topic was immediately close.

Council members welcomed and commended the report. It would be further discussed in a number of fora and would remain a set of guiding principles for now, to be converted to formal policy at an appropriate time.

The remainder of the Academic Board's report had been noted on the Unanimous Consent Agenda:
    (ii)   EDI Update
    (iii)   Report of the College Education Committee
    (iv)   Report of the College Research Committee
    (v)   Report of the Academic Board Operations Committee
    (vi)   Election of Associates of King's College (AKC)

11   Any Other Business
    Terms and Conditions of Employment for Academic Staff (TABLED PAPER):
In 2023 agreement was reached with the UCU, UNISON and UNITE to increase paid maternity leave to 20 weeks and to increase paternity and partners leave to six weeks and to make these day-one rights. In addition, the annual leave entitlement was increased to 30 days (including two wellbeing days).

The relevant standalone policies had been updated with these changes. However, the Terms and Conditions of Employment for Academic Staff need to be updated to reflect the negotiated benefits

changes and the document stated that Council approval of amendments to specific Terms was required.

This was a historical anomaly, since the College Ordinances already delegated authority over staffing matters to the Vice-Chancellor and the document would be updated to reflect that delegation for

future. However, as it stands, the approval of Council was required for the benefits amendments, which was now requested.

These improvements in family friendly provisions had also been formally confirmed to the BMA and BDA.

Decision:
That Council approve amendments to the Terms and Condition of Employment for Academic Staff to reflect the negotiated settlement with respect to annual, maternity and paternity leave, to take effect as negotiated.

Graduation Ceremonies:
Thanks to all independent members who participated.

12   Adjournment
The Chair adjourned the meeting at 19:35.

Lord Geidt
January 2024