

IMPERIAL COLLEGE OF SCIENCE, TECHNOLOGY AND MEDICINE

Minutes of Council Meeting

Held at The Stadium, Scale Space on 28 February 2025, at 09.00

Present

Mr. V. Banga (Chair), Professor D. Ashby, Ms. A. Ashley-Smith, Professor Sir L. Borysiewicz. Ms. C. Boutrolle (from minute 10), Professor H. Brady (President), Professor N. Brandon, Ms. K. Briggs, Ms. K. Coates, Mr. C. Cooper, Professor R. Craster, Dr L. Elvidge (online), Mr. A. Hennah, Sir R. Kalifa, Mr. R. Kerse, Mr. D. Khanna, Professor L. Lightstone, Dr M. Meaney Haynes, Mr. J. Ritblat, Dr M. Safa, Mr. S. Saxena, Professor J. Sanders, Professor P. Todd, Professor I. Walmsley (Provost) and Mr. R. Martin (Registrar and University Secretary).

In attendance

Vice-President (Strategic Engagement), Chief Financial Officer (minute 20), Chief Information Officer (minutes 18 – 19), Chief Information Security Officer (minutes 18 – 19), and Director of University Governance.

Welcome

1. Apologies for absence were received from Mr. R. Lewis and Mr. T. Olanrewaju.

Minutes and matters arising

2. The Minutes from the meeting held on 29 November 2024 were approved and the action tracker noted.

Conflicts of interest with agenda items

3. No conflicts of interest were raised.

Reports

4. The Chair updated Council on activities since the last meeting, including work on the Governance of Imperial document and Council member appointments (Papers 4.1).
5. In response to feedback from Council the roles and responsibilities document had been revised to serve both internal needs and as a resource to be shared during partnership development and other external relationships.

Resolved: that the Governance of Imperial document be approved, with the University Secretary authorised to make future minor updates in collaboration with the Chair and President.

6. The Nominations Committee had met on 29 January to discuss Council succession planning. The Chair thanked four members – Professor Sir L. Borysiewicz, Mr. D. Khanna, Dr M. Meaney Haynes and Mr. S Saxena - who had agreed to a second term of office. A resolution to formally appoint them would be presented at the next meeting, along with a recommendation to appoint new members identified in the ongoing search. The Committee had identified a preferred candidate with academic expertise, and the search for a second member, possibly with expertise in property or digital, was underway.
7. The Chair congratulated Mr. R. Lewis, who subject to formalities, had been appointed as Chair of the Crown Estate. Mr. Lewis had resigned from Council from 28 February 2025. A paper was tabled to appoint Ms. A. Spring as an Independent member and Chair of Endowment Board from 1 March 2025.

Resolved: That Ms. A. Spring be appointed as an Independent Member of Council for a 4-year term of office from 1 March 2025, and as Endowment Board Chair.

8. Dr. L. Elvidge and Ms. A. Ashley-Smith left the meeting for this discussion. The Chair introduced the staff Council appointments set out in the paper (Paper 4.1). The proposal to expand the eligibility criteria for the second student member to enhance representation was discussed.

Resolved:

- a. That Ms. A. Ashley-Smith and Dr L. Elvidge be appointed for a second consecutive term of office to 31 July 2026.
 - b. That the requirement that the second student member of Council be an ICU Trustee be removed.
9. The President presented his report (Paper 4.2), and highlighted the following:
 - a. His Majesty the King, accompanied by the Ambassador of Ukraine, visited the Centre of Injury Studies to observe how Imperial applied lessons learnt from previous conflicts to aid the wounded in Ukraine. The visit was uplifting, involving engagement with academic and senior department staff, Ukrainian students, an emotional engagement with a trauma field surgeon in Ukraine and an informal walk around.
 - b. Engagement with policymakers and the development of the comprehensive spending review and industrial strategy remained ongoing, with a strong

emphasis on the role of universities in driving sustainable growth. Shaping the narrative of the UK as a unified ecosystem was crucial, illustrated by examples of Imperial's successes that had led to investment and other benefits across the country.

- c. Imperial was actively contributing to various UK government strategy and policy reforms that could impact the University, engaging through multiple channels. Meanwhile, within the EU, there was a growing emphasis on growth and security, presenting new opportunities for scientific partnerships. The University was working closely with European scientific communities to help shape the successor to Horizon Europe.
- 10. In discussion, it was noted that the reach of the Imperial Global strategic initiative would be accelerated with the arrival of the new Vice-President (Advancement). To support this initiative, the brand narrative should continue to evolve, with a focus on highlighting Imperial's strong record in science and innovation. It was observed that in some regions, the association of the term "College" with undergraduate institutions diminished Imperial's global stature and research successes.
- 11. It was noted that the introduction of Framework Programme 10, the successor to Horizon Europe, was creating opportunities for academic partnerships and that identifying specific areas of focus could help maximise these opportunities.

ACTION: Council to receive a one-page briefing on key messages to support discussions about Horizon Europe with relevant stakeholders.

- 12. The Provost presented his report (Paper 4.3). He updated Council on the progress of the Venture Fund, highlighting that the executive team was nearly complete and that negotiations, based on the approved heads of terms, were nearing finalisation. University Management Board would be asked to approve proceeding with the framework agreement between Imperial and Science Capital Imperial at their next meeting.
- 13. Student admission numbers were on track to meet growth targets while maintaining candidate quality. With the increasing student numbers, there would be a heightened emphasis on continuation rates, particularly among widening participation cohorts.
- 14. The Chief Operating Officer presented his report (Paper 4.4), which provided updates on the implementation of the enabling roadmap. The main points in

discussion were:

- a. Work to implement the requirements of the Building Safety Act 2022 continued. Compared to its peers, Imperial had a significant number of high-risk buildings registered with the Building Safety Regulator. While there had been challenges, particularly delays in appointing contractors due to statutory authorisation requirements, mitigating controls were being implemented. The introduction of retrospective liability for certain fire safety issues, had enabled the University to take actions to strengthen compliance and accountability.
 - b. Where estate was shared with the NHS, some responsibilities were not fully documented, particularly for leases from the 1950s and 1960s. While colleagues were confident that written communications had clarified roles, additional resources were needed to fully address the opportunities arising from ongoing developments, such as changes within the NHS Trust.
 - c. Budget variances this month showed a slightly tougher outlook, with a greater downside than usual in relation to tuition fees and research income. The impact was minor, with cost management and personnel expenses remaining within the planned envelope.
 - d. It was noted that the year-end outcome was expected to align closely with the forecast, with key factors being the impact of pay awards and investments in people and digital infrastructure. The University would be working to ensure the year-end position was in line with the budget.
15. The ICU President delivered an oral update, highlighting the following.
- a. The student accommodation rent review was completed before Christmas, and a memorandum of understanding between the University and the Students' Union had been developed to support future undergraduate rent setting.
 - b. From October 2025, the UKRI postgraduate stipend would increase, with growing momentum to lobby now for a rise in the London weighting.
 - c. In January, the ICU hosted an investment forum for students with the President and Chief Operating Officer as panel members. The possibility of holding further forums with different University Management Board members to strengthen connectivity between the student body and

management was being explored.

- d. There was growing student demand for prayer rooms, with additional facilities in place ahead of Ramadan. However, as student numbers increased, additional space would be needed to accommodate the demand on an ongoing basis.
- e. The ICU democracy review, conducted by CounterCulture LLP had begun in July 202 and was nearing completion. The purpose of the review was to enable a more inclusive and representative students' union.
- f. The ICU President had presented to the ICU board on the ongoing efforts to represent students equally and equitably across all campuses, emphasising that, despite the challenges posed by multiple campuses, this remained a priority and an important area for continued work.

Strategy implementation

- 16. The Vice-President (Strategic Engagement) presented an update on the implementation of the Strategy. The McKinsey maturity assessment for the strategic programmes had identified actionable recommendations for Q1 2025, with emphasis on initiatives identified as highly critical but lower maturity. Staff were being recruited to form the Strategy Management Office (SMO), which would oversee cross-cutting themes at the programme level, ensuring effective coordination of workstreams and targeted interventions for specific projects. Its role would include driving programme-level initiatives, strengthening implementation, addressing communication and change management gaps, and owning overarching governance. The Schools of Convergence Science had been identified as requiring the most targeted support due to tight delivery timelines and their strategic importance to Imperial.
- 17. Key points in discussion were:
 - a. A phased rollout of the programmes was designed to prioritise readiness, recognising that not everything could be launched simultaneously. This approach ensured a more manageable implementation, allowing resources to be allocated effectively and key elements to be properly established before scaling up.
 - b. The SMO would take a strategic approach to financial planning by coordinating and prioritising funding requests, ensuring efficient use of seed

- funding and existing budgets. Over the past year, there had been considerable progress in defining realistic funding needs, differentiating between initial investment requirements and long-term sustainability.
- c. While some projects were expected to transition quickly to self-sufficiency or revenue generation, others required clear milestones for seed funding and steady-state operations. Detailed financial planning had already begun, and the coming months would focus on setting funding priorities and developing a comprehensive financial plan for the next 3–5 years.
 - d. Additionally, significant upskilling over the past months had improved processes, equipping teams with better knowledge and skills to manage the programmes more effectively.
 - e. The Schools of Convergence Science would serve as a platform for interdisciplinary collaboration, where emerging ideas and initiatives would need to align with timelines and key strategic priorities for effective implementation. Proactively engaging in external funding discussions early would be essential to navigate long lead times and position these initiatives to maximise future opportunities.

Cyber Security

- 18. The Chief Operating Officer introduced his paper (Paper 6), which highlighted the cyber security risks faced by the University and the cyber security roadmap. The plan aimed to achieve the target risk score without imposing disproportionate costs or operational burdens on the Imperial community. The key risk exposure areas were discussed, noting the plans for external validation of the cyber risk management controls and future roadmap later in the year. As part of this process, it was suggested to include additional assessments, such as comprehensive stealth team testing and targeted engagement with consultants. This risk would continue to be monitored closely by the University Management Board and the Audit and Risk Committee.
- 19. Other points raised in discussion were:
 - a. Management had responded promptly to the recent heightened risk period minimising disruption to the community. Lessons learned would inform plans for the coming year. More broadly, risk mitigations and controls had been strengthened, reducing overall likelihood and severity assessments. However, vigilance remained key, and Imperial should look to benchmark its

plans globally, in addition to within the UK.

- b. A significant change management initiative was underway, with ongoing efforts to strengthen community engagement. As part of this, the ICT teams, while highly skilled technically, would benefit from enhanced management capabilities. The new University Data Leadership Group, launching next month, would play a key role in driving these changes by strengthening the work to implement and manage controls.
- c. Compared to its peers, Imperial maintained a higher number of public-facing servers, requiring a careful balance between accessibility and proportionate risk management.
- d. Generative AI represented a significant opportunity but needed to be managed carefully, particularly regarding data governance. Imperial had introduced a streamlined version of Microsoft Co-Pilot to the community, ensuring that data remained within the University's secure systems, protecting intellectual property and proprietary information.
- e. Efforts to ensure the Imperial community acquired essential cybersecurity skills included a presence at student welcome fairs, regular sessions in partnership with the ICU, and mandatory training for staff. However, staff participation in training had decreased after the initial rollout. To improve engagement, a top-down approach would be necessary to promote uptake of training, which had been updated in response to valuable feedback.
- f. Principal Investigators often stored large scientific datasets outside the University while still containing its intellectual property. To mitigate risks in a supportive manner, all datasets were required to be registered in a data asset registration tool, with high-risk entries escalated to the cyber team for assessment and security guidance. However, unregistered datasets remained a risk.

Capital planning update

- 20. The Chair set out the objective for discussions on the University's capital planning, which was to share an understanding of the delivery of the capital plan (Paper 7), particularly the key steps, major investment areas and their interconnections. The President noted the importance of a holistic approach, incorporating people, programmes, and capital. People remained central, with a careful balance being struck between digital and physical estate needs also. Both new and existing estate

developments were equally important, and all discussions around capital would be grounded in academic and broader institutional ambitions to deliver long-term value. Following a discussion led by the Chief Operating Officer and the Chief Financial Officer on the plan phases, funding options, and assumptions, Council members broke into smaller discussion groups to address specific topics. Upon reconvening, feedback included the following:

- a. Given the scale of the ambition and its impact on students, staff, and campus sequencing, it was suggested that external expertise be engaged to review the plan, in particular the level of debt that the University might take on. Growing the size of the University, whilst improving margins would be challenging. The optimal sequencing should consider beneficiaries, financial stakeholders, the student experience, and whether the proposed two phases to the plan would provide sufficient flexibility to achieve the desired outcomes.
- b. Ensuring reliable cash flow projections would be key. Additionally, maintaining flexibility within the system would help maximise opportunities as initiatives progressed, while ensuring alignment with NHS investments remained a consideration.
- c. The Net Zero plan presented opportunities, though careful attention was needed to manage cost projections. Funding for the Net Zero journey should be sought from external sources where possible, and should there be opportunities to acquire property, they should be thoroughly evaluated to ensure alignment with the agreed goals.
- d. Ensuring a strong pipeline of high-quality students, particularly those with math backgrounds, remained a focus given the limited pool. There was also a need to consider how students worked, with shifting lab space requirements and underutilised professional spaces.
- e. Thorough scenario planning was essential for resilience, ensuring sufficient capacity to maximise opportunities across all projects. The University should continue to evaluate the potential impact of changes on the prioritisation of initiatives.

ACTION: Finance Committee to consider the points of feedback raised to ensure that key questions are addressed.

Starred items

21. Council noted the reports from the Finance and Property Committees (Papers

8.1 and 8.2).

22. Council received the updates to the Regulations of Council (Paper 9).

Resolved:

- a. That the updated Property Committee terms of reference, set out in Appendix 1, be approved with immediate effect.
- b. That the appointment of external members to the Property Committee be delegated to the Nominations Committee, in liaison with the Chair of the Property Committee and the Chief Operating Officer.
- c. That the updated Regulation 12: University Officers, set out in Appendix 2, be approved with immediate effect.

23. Council received the paper requesting a change of purpose of named funds held within the endowment (Paper 10).

Resolved:

That the purpose of the Henry Ford II Mechanical Eng Fund be amended to *“One or more scholarships awarded, when sufficient income is available, to undergraduate or postgraduate students within the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Imperial College of Science, Technology and Medicine (‘Imperial’) who display exceptional academic merit and/or potential. The value of such scholarships shall be at the discretion of Imperial.”*

Any other business

24. There were no items of any other business.

The meeting closed at 12.35.