

APPROVED COUNCIL MINUTES
MEETING HELD ON 10th OCTOBER 2025,
9AM Northampton Suite A and B

Members		Meeting 1 12.09.25	Meeting 2 10.10.25	Meeting 3 27.11.25	Meeting 4 26.02.26	Meeting 5 27.03.26	Meeting 6 22.05.26	Meeting 7 02.07.26
Independent Members	Professor Ian Jacobs (Chair)	✓	✓					
	Professor Sir Anthony Finkelstein (President)	✓	✓					
	Mr Godfrey Allen	✓	✓					
	Professor Bob Allison	✓	✓					
	Mr Mark Evans	✓	✓					
	Ms Adrienne Fresko	✓	✓					
	Mr Josh Joshi	✓	✓					
	Mr Max Khan	✓	✓					
	Ms Rachel Lock	✓	✓					
	Mr Mark Lowcock	✓	A					
	Ms Catherine McGuinness	✓	A					
	Ms Julia Palca	✓	✓					
	Mr Anant Prakash	✓	✓					
	Mr Damian Reid	✓	✓					
Ms Christine Swabey	✓	✓						
Staff and Student Members	Professor Natalie Armstrong	✓	✓					
	Ms Sandra Ashton	A	✓					
	Ms Ana-Maria Barrow	✓	A					
	Professor Jon Friedland	✓	✓					
	Professor Elisabeth Hill	✓	✓					
	Mr Nasir Mohammed	✓	✓					
	Professor Rich Payne	✓	✓					
	Professor Andre Spicer	✓	✓					
Ms Helen Watson	A	✓						

Key: ✓ In Attendance A Apologies P Part Attendance N/M Not a Member S Sabbatical

In Attendance	Reason and Meeting Section
Mr Dominic Davis	Director of Strategy, Planning and Performance
Mr Alex Hall	General Counsel & Director of Governance and Legal Services
Dr William Jordan	University Secretary
Ms Sarah Lawton	Senior Governance Officer
Ms Charlotte Martin	Director of Governance Support, Development and Integration
Professor Susannah Quinsee	Vice-President, Digital and Student Experience
Professor Baba Sheba	Director of Digital Transformation (for Item 13)
Mr Matthew Swales	Chief Financial Officer

MINUTES SECTION A – OPEN FOR PUBLICATION

Part One – Preliminary Items

- 1. Apologies for Absence**
Council noted apologies from Catherine McGuinness, Mark Lowcock and Ana-Maria Barrow.
- 2. Quorum**
The meeting was quorate.
- 3. Highlighted Items**
Council **agreed** the highlighted items.
- 4. Conflicts of Interest**
None reported in relation to the items of business on the agenda.

5. Minutes

The minutes of the meetings held on 4th July 2025 and 12th September 2025 were approved.

6. Matters Arising

Council noted the actions arising from past meetings.

6.1 Tooting Degree Certificates

Council noted the paper which explained that the General Medical Council (GMC) required that the awarding body on Degree Certificates for Medical students graduating after 1st August 2024 should be shown as 'City St George's, University of London'. All certificates for Tooting students graduating since this date therefore show the awarding body as 'City St George's' though students can choose to receive a certificate showing the St George's crest if they wish to do so. Following the grant of a supplemental Charter in April 2025 changing the legal name of the University, the note that had previously been included on the certificate regarding the trading name of the University had been removed.

6.2 Student Services Update

Council noted the paper which provided an update on the current level of service provision on the student counselling service and allied services following discussion at the September meeting of Council.

6.3 Flood incident at Tooting Campus: Lessons Learnt

Council noted the paper which set out lessons learnt from the recent flood incident at Tooting. In discussion it was noted that:

- Overall, the Business Continuity Management arrangements at the University had worked very well when put to this test.
- It might be helpful to bear Business Continuity considerations in mind explicitly when making strategic decisions about the future of the University.
- CSG's Executive were working closely with GESH to strengthen relationships with the NHS Trust; and it was helpful, to that end, that the Dean of SHMS was a member of the GESH Board.
- The condition of the Tooting estate clearly needed to continue to figure on the University's strategic risk register, going forward.

7. Items Specially Brought Forward by the Chair

Visit to the School of Science and Technology

As with the other School visits the Council visit to SST had been highly informative and helpful to all those on the visit. All the Council members attending the visit had enjoyed meeting both staff and students. This was the fifth of six visits with a visit to SHMS scheduled for 13th November. A further round of visits to each School will be organised to take place over the next 18 months.

Meeting with the Trade Unions

The Chair, accompanied by the University Secretary and Director of Governance Support, had held his annual meeting with Trade Union representatives to learn about current issues on their agenda. It had been a helpful and informative meeting.

Appointment of new CEO of GESH

The Dean of SHMS, Prof Natalie Armstrong, would be representing CSG in the appointment process.

Departure

Charlotte Martin would be leaving CSG at the end of the year to take up a post at King's College London. Charlotte had played a very significant role in the merger of SGUL with City, was effectively job-sharing the role of University Secretary for key Council committees and was also leading work to support the SGUL Dissolution Council. She would be very much missed.

8. Calendar

Council members noted the calendar.

9. President's Report

Council noted the report from the President which included updates from the Vice-Presidents and Executive Deans.

The President noted that:

- The University had welcomed a new student from Gaza under the FCDO Gaza Student Scholarships initiative, to study journalism. The University would continue to support scholarships from areas of conflict across the world.
- SLT continued to await guidance from the EHRC on the use of toilets and changing facilities and gendered access to those facilities. The University was currently operating under an interim policy which reflected the EHRC interim guidance.
- Since the July meeting the pay settlement of 1.4% had been implemented. This was below inflation but also, arguably, it was set at a higher level than the sector could sustain. Around five institutions had been reported to have deferred payment of the settlement, as was permitted by UCEA guidance.
- The "ResearchPlus" group of Universities engaged in research outside the Russell Group continued to meet and to have an impact on policy development in the sector.
- The President's takeaways from a recent SLT Away Day had been the need to focus on delivery and organise for delivery; the need to fight complexity, and the need to work further on getting the matrix management regime to work better.
- Work continued on a number of important projects at the University, including the People & Finance Project, and the PS TOM, and the alignment of policies at the University following merger.
- The President had met with NHS influencers as part of trying to build CSG's network to underpin SHMS.
- The President and some members of SLT had attended a productive meeting with the GESH Executive which focussed on how best to operationalise the partnership.
- The majority of the President's time in recent months continued to be spent on new potential partnerships and collaborations; and discussions with a range of potential partners were progressing.

In discussion the following points were made:

- Many institutions in the sector were downsizing and this was not always primarily driven by a search for cost savings or in response to mergers. Rather, Universities such as Oxford were likely to be engaged in a strategic downsizing initiative designed to improve quality.
- The President noted that many institutions which had performed to the same level as City had done in the previous REF were now in financial difficulties. He believed that the strategic context of the sector was that a space was opening up for CSG's strategic proposition as a technical university. Ideally he would like to keep the staff base broadly constant (rather than to downsize) and use margin from scale to invest in digital innovation at the University.
- The Chair noted the impressive increase in research grant income referenced in the President's report, which was perhaps an early indication of the ability of the University to realise some of the benefits of the merger.
- The SHMS 'silver' Athena SWAN award was a notable achievement. Other Schools currently had 'bronze' accreditation with the exception of Bayes which was in the midst of applying for a 'bronze' award.

10. SU President's Report

Council considered the report which gave a full account of the events and campaigns being taken forward by the Students' Union. In discussion the following points were noted:

- The report set out the priority areas for which each SU sabbatical officer would be taking forward in the current academic year.
- The Board of Trustees had approved the implementation plan for the SU's Make Every Day Better Strategy.
- Welcome Week 2025 at the Union had offered a vibrant start to the academic year, uniting new and returning students across Clerkenwell, Moorgate, and Tooting campuses. Highlights included dual Freshers' Fairs, course meet-and-greets, and three boat parties. Activity continued after this report was submitted. Students explored over 150 societies and sports clubs, met their elected officers, and accessed vital support services.

- The Students' Union had held two record breaking fresher's fairs in September and was pleased to bring the Fresher's Fair to the Clerkenwell Campus and to the Rob Lowe sports hall on the Tooting campus for the first time. In Tooting, 1272 students attended and in Clerkenwell and Moorgate 5500+ students attended.
 - Flooding update: Following an extended period of restoration work, the Union's Bar and Office spaces in Tooting were returned to the SU for use on 29 August. While both spaces had now reopened, they were operating at significantly reduced capacity, which affected both income and the overall student experience. Several other key spaces that facilitated student engagement and societies remained closed.
 - Sabbatical Officers and twelve staff had taken part in training on antisemitism with the Union of Jewish Students. The session covered historical and contemporary antisemitic tropes and labels, the lived experiences of Jewish students, and the importance of cultural understanding. This training supported the SU's commitment to inclusive practice and had helped the team to better challenge discrimination.
 - The affordability of Graduation and of food on campus were two of the priority issues being taken forward by the current sabbatical team. It would be helpful to Council to be informed, at a future meeting, of what was currently being spent on graduation ceremonies and to subsidise the cost of food at the Clerkenwell campus – noting, however, that any additional expenditure on these fronts would be expenditure that could not be deployed elsewhere.
- [Action]**

11.1 Student Recruitment Update

Council received a verbal update from the Director of Strategy and Planning. In discussion the following points were noted:

- The update on recruitment suggested that the University was at 101% of its target for UG and at 95% of its target for PGT in terms of headcount. Finance Committee would receive the Flash Forecast derived from these recruitment numbers (and numbers of continuing students) in November.
- As the home/overseas fees mix had shifted further towards the domestic market, it was anticipated that the University would be below its financial targets .
- The Executive was working on the space and staffing implications of recruiting additional students. Finance Committee would receive an update on, and be able to discuss and consider, the additional costs that would be incurred, and how these would affect operating margins, in due course.
- The Chair commended the Executive on a very strong performance in student recruitment.

11.2 Q4 Financial Report

Council considered the Q4 Financial Report which had been considered in detail at the Finance Committee on 8th October. The Chair of Finance Committee noted that this had been an exceedingly difficult year which might have brought the University close to its covenants but for the hard work of the CFO and his team. Council extended its thanks to the Finance Team.

Decision

Council **approved** the Q4 Financial Report as recommended by Finance Committee.

11.3 Students' Union Budget 2025/26

Council considered the Students' Union Budget for 2025/26, which had been considered in detail at Finance Committee on 8th October. In discussion, the following points were noted:

- The 2025/26 budget marked the first integrated financial plan for the newly merged City St George's Students' Union (CSGSU). It reflected strategic adjustments, including a 1.4% salary uplift and zero-based budgeting. Key challenges included sports funding, especially in Tooting, where legacy subsidies had ended.
- The trading budget forecast a £31k surplus despite flood-related disruptions. Charity budgets showed a £22k deficit, with society funds now treated as restricted. Block grants had increased, and staffing roles were under review.
- Overall, the consolidated budget projected a modest £8k surplus.

Decision

Council **approved** the Students' Union Budget 2025/26 as recommended by Finance Committee.

11.4 Tooting IT Stabilisation Business Case

Council considered the business case which had been considered in detail at Finance Committee on 8th October. In discussion the following points were noted:

- The proposed investment would swiftly mitigate key operational resiliency risks highlighted in the major incident in March 2025 which had impacted all IT services. Furthermore, the project would deliver the strategic infrastructure foundations to deliver full rationalisation of systems over the longer term.
- The Chair of Finance Committee noted that the finances for the full integration of legacy City with legacy SGUL IT systems had not been included in the Joint Financial Plan for the merger.
- The question of resourcing and planning IT integration (the first estimate was for costs of up to £40 million to bring the institution on to one ERP and one Student Records System within two years) would be considered as part of wider work on strategy and the broader Financial Headroom work; and would be further considered at FinCo.
- It was not in fact unusual following a merger or acquisition for two HR and IT infrastructure systems to be run in parallel for a significant period, depending on the financial priorities of the institution. But at CSG, some parts of the IT integration did need to be taken forward on an urgent basis.
- The President noted that some form of government financing support might be available to help work with this in due course, either through capital grants, loans or loan guarantees.
- The Chair noted that:
 - Similar costs (or indeed higher levels of cost) could well arise from any future major partnership and such costs would need to be affordable.
 - There was a case for the University, if contemplating another major merger, to engage external consultants with experience in Mergers & Acquisitions, so that all the costs of any future merger could be taken into account when decisions on partnerships were made.

Decision

Council **approved** the business case to stabilise all foundational technology and digital infrastructure at Tooting, costed at a one-off capital investment of £3.2M, funded from the allocated Integration Programme budget.

11.5 Financial Headroom: Phase 2

Council noted the papers for information. There would be an opportunity for further discussion of the papers and consideration of how resources can be generated to enable the University Strategy, at a special seminar in November, to which all Council members will be invited. **[Action]**

12.1 Strategy Refresh

Council considered the strategy refresh papers and in discussion the following points were made:

- The new documents admirably reflected the steer from Council to develop shorter, clearer and more appealing texts for the use of staff and for use on the University website which summarised the 'strategy narrative' agreed by Council at its meeting in July.
- There was a strong case, however, for combining the two documents into a single text – as it was not clear that either document contained any ideas that were commercially confidential or that would be potentially helpful to rival HEIs if made available on the University website.
- Drafting of the document could be improved – ideally the drafting would be both crisper and more sparkling and would signal more clearly to the reader a University bursting with ideas and energy.
- There was a case for defining the identity of the combined university in the document rather than first setting out the identities of legacy City and legacy SGUL.
- The document could helpfully say more about the exciting opportunities generated by the merger; and also, the path the University would traverse over the 10 years and the positioning in the sector that the University aspired to achieve by 2035.

Summarising the discussion, the Chair noted that:

- Council welcomed the work the team had put in to taking the overarching “strategy narrative” document and summarising it as requested; and noted the new papers offered, as requested, a shorter, more focussed and glossier document for communication with staff and with external stakeholders.
- There was nothing in either document that would constitute commercially sensitive information and therefore the two documents could be combined into a single document for both staff internally to use to help structure their everyday work and also for communication with external stakeholders.

- The work was now very nearly final but was lacking an element of crispness and “sparkle.” That would be achieved in part by focusing more on the ambitions of the University and journey CSG would be taking in the next ten years, and also by including more a prominent narrative on the realisation of the benefits from the merger.
- The President would reflect on the feedback and produce a final version for Council to note at its November meeting, ensuring that the strategic proposition is communicated more effectively. **[Action]**

12.2 Vision and Strategy 2035

Council considered the papers which provided more detail on how the strategy would be implemented. It was noted that the paper would be more fully considered and discussed at the next meeting of S&DCo. In discussion the following points were made:

- The proposal to write a very large number of supporting strategy documents of various kinds could lead the University down a path of “death by strategy” – as time spent writing strategy documents would not be spent in implementing the strategy.
- It was not clear that Council required the development of the full array of documents proposed in the papers.
- An action plan setting out the priorities for 2026 and 2027 would however be required; as would a financial plan for the implementation of the strategy.
- Proposals on research as set out in the paper seemed particularly in need of further development.
- The way forward on fundraising might helpfully be referenced in the document. The President noted on this issue that a process was underway to recruit a VP for Development, following receipt of the MORE report on fundraising at the university.
- Further work would be required to develop KPIs and measures of performance, but the Year-on-Year performance trends tables in the paper could already be used, as they stood, to inform performance management of senior staff at the University. This was very welcome.
- Performance measures should be aligned, or new measures developed, to show the success (or otherwise) of the institution against each of the four ‘themes’ of the strategy.
- It would be vital that Schools were involved in strategy development and feel ownership of the strategy as ultimately the strategy would be delivered through actions taken in Schools.
- These issues would be considered in more detail at the meeting of S&DCo on Monday which all members of Council were welcome to attend.

12.3 International League Tables: Review and optimisation

Council considered the paper and in discussion the following points were noted:

- CSG’s new improved position in the current League Table was a result of the merger and future improvements could not be automatically expected in the future.
- The report highlighted the drivers behind the current position of 310th and suggested the level of improvement that would be possible, should CSG implement the actions recommended in the paper, including:
 - A research communications strategy
 - Improved understanding of citation patterns and practices
 - Increased focus on the Academic Reputation Survey and mandating academic contribution to this.
 - A change in the approach to how the University manages and publishes information on sustainability
 - A change in the approach to how the University manages the Employer Reputation Survey.
- Prioritising research was pivotal to improving CSG’s rankings in the long term. Currently, CSG’s citations were better per capita than several leading institutions but the University suffered by having a relatively poor academic reputation.
- If the university’s academic reputation could be improved, it would be possible for CSG to move into the environs of the top 200 in the QS survey relatively quickly.

12.4 Improving the Student Experience

Council considered the report which summarised the 2025 National Student Survey (NSS) results and outlined the strategic priorities for the student experience and education at City St George’s for the academic year 2025-2026. In discussion the following points were noted:

- There was a risk that increased student numbers and cohort sizes would have a negative impact on the student experience if practices were not adjusted accordingly. This required

continued strategic focus on large cohorts with both targeted additional support and a new approach to planning and delivery to ensure successful delivery at scale.

- The continuation of devolved practice in education at the University created cost and inequitable experience. Addressing devolved practice institutionally was a priority and would be achieved in part through the revised Education and Student Experience Sub Strategies currently under development and the PSTOM process.
- As integration of legacy City and legacy SGUL continued, risks remained in relation to inequity of student experience. Those risks were managed and overseen by the university's Integration Board. There was a dedicated workstream looking at Student Experience and a School Integration Board to ensure that the education benefits of integration were realised.
- School actions plans were being developed where the university had identified that there was a need to 'shift the dial' in the performance of individual programmes. These would cover both 'hygiene factors' such as assessment turnaround times and tactical factors such as survey response rates together with the implementation of University policies such as the move to greater use of 'authentic' modes of assessment.
- It would be important for the University, in developing the education and student experience sub strategies, to identify both 'quick wins' and also measures with deep impact but that involved more of a 'slow burn'.
- The Chair requested that the next time this item was considered at Council it should be moved up the agenda to allow more time for discussion. **[Action]**

13. AI as Accelerator Presentation: Enabling the Next Phase of Digital Transformation at City St George's

Council received a presentation from the VP, Digital & Student Experience and Director of Digital Transformation. Council agreed that this presentation would be discussed at the Plenary Dinner on 26th November. **[Action]**

14. Update on Freedom of Speech and Academic Freedom and approval of the University's revised Code of Practice

Council considered the update and the revised Code of Practice. In discussion the following points were noted:

- The HEI sector had been required to comply with new legislative requirement relating to Freedom of Speech since 1st August; but nearly all HEIs, like CSG, had failed to meet that deadline for compliance.
- The University's revised code of practice was built on OfS guidance, which was very helpful, and set out the University's values and procedures.
- Further training on Freedom of Speech and further communications at the University would be taken forward following approval of the new Code of Practice.
- The General Counsel had met with the Students' Union to discuss the Code and Freedom of Speech and this meeting had proved very useful.
- The Deputy President (Operations) noted that in recent years the University had never in fact stopped an event organised by students or staff on university premises from taking place on the basis planned.

Decision

Council **approved** the revised code of practice on freedom of speech and academic freedom.

15. Legal and Regulatory Update

Council noted the update.

16. Transformation Board Update

Council noted the update.

17. President's Sprints Consolidated Insights Report: Advancing Healthcare Education, Research and Inter-professional collaboration

Council noted the report.

18. Estates & Property Projects Update Report

Council noted the report which was considered at Finance Committee.

19. Minutes

Council noted the minutes of the following meetings:

19.1 Finance Committee 12th June

19.2 Senate 16th June/ 9th July
19.3 Audit & Risk Committee 16th June
19.4 Remuneration Committee 25th June

20. Policy Update

Council noted the report.

21. FOI Review

Council **agreed** that no changes were required.

AOB

Professor Debra Salmon had left the University and Council noted its thanks for the huge contribution Debra had made in her role as Dean of the School of Health and Psychological Sciences, her work on the merger and as a Council Member. Council wished her well in her future endeavours.

22. Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 27th November 2025, 9am

Professor Ian Jacobs
Chair of Council
October 2025