

**APPROVED COUNCIL MINUTES
MEETING HELD ON 14th MARCH 2025, 9AM
NORTHAMPTON C UNIVERSITY BUILDING**

The meeting began with a visit to the School of Communication & Creativity until 9.30am

Members		Meeting 1 20.09.24	Meeting 2 10.10.24	Meeting 3 28.11.24	Meeting 4 20.02.25	Meeting 5 14.03.25	Meeting 6 09.05.25	Meeting 7 04.07.25
Independent Members	Professor Ian Jacobs (Chair)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Professor Sir Anthony Finkelstein (President)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Mr Godfrey Allen	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Professor Bob Allison	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Mr Jonathan Curtiss	A	A	N/M	N/M	N/M		
	Mr Mark Evans	N/M	N/M	N/M	✓	A		
	Ms Adrienne Fresko	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Mr Josh Joshi	✓	A	✓	✓	✓		
	Ms Rachel Lock	A	✓	✓	A	✓		
	Ms Catherine McGuinness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Ms Gillian Norton	✓	✓	A	A	✓		
	Ms Julia Palca	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Mr Anant Prakash	✓	A	✓	✓	✓		
	Mr Damian Reid	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Ms Christine Swabey	✓	✓	A	✓	✓		
Mr Ron Zeghibe	✓	✓	A	✓	✓			
Staff and Student Members	Ms Sandra Ashton	A	✓	✓	✓	✓		
	Professor Leanne Aitken	✓	A	✓	N/M	N/M		
	Ms Ayla Hamzayeva	✓	✓	✓	A	A		
	Professor Jon Friedland	N/M	N/M	N/M	✓	✓		
	Professor Elisabeth Hill	✓	✓	P	✓	✓		
	Mr Joe Kenwright	A	A	A	✓	A		
	Professor Rich Payne	A	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Ms Helen Watson	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			

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
Professor Juliet John	Vice-President Education (Item 13.2 onwards)
Professor Jessica Jones-Nielsen	Assistant Vice-President EDI (Item 13.2 onwards)
Dr William Jordan	University Secretary
Ms Sarah Lawton	Senior Governance Officer
Ms Charlotte Martin	Director of GLAS
Dr Sionade Robinson	Vice-President EEE
Professor Susannah Quinsee	Vice-President Digital and Student Experience
Professor Andre Spicer	Executive Dean Bayes Business School

MINUTES SECTION A – OPEN FOR PUBLICATION

Part One – Preliminary Items

- Highlighted Items**
Council **agreed** the highlighted items.
- Minutes**
The minutes of the meeting held on 20th February 2025 were approved.
- Matters Arising**
Council noted the actions arising from past meetings.

4. **Conflicts of Interest**

There were no conflicts of interest relating to the matters on the agenda of the meeting.

Catherine McGuinness declared that she had been appointed as an adviser to the Board of Trade for a year from 13th March. Catherine would appreciate guidance when any potential conflict arises e.g., "hidden" in finance papers.

5. **Items Specially Brought Forward by the Chair**

Visit to SCC

The first of the Chair's planned visits to Schools had taken place earlier in the week, to SCC; and a shortened form of the presentation SCC had given on that occasion had been given to all Council members, immediately prior to this meeting of Council.

The Chair commended very strongly the energy, drive and commitment to the University's strategic goal to serve as the University of Business, Practice and the Professions, which had been apparent through the visit.

Plenary Dinner

The Chair passed on his thanks to Dr Diana Beech, Director of the Finsbury Institute (from 1st April), for her presentation at last night's dinner.

Gillian Norton OBE Retirement

This was Gillian's final meeting of Council and the Chair thanked her for all her contributions to both St George's and City and to City St Georges and, on behalf of Council wished her well.

Gillian had been Chief Executive of Richmond Council for 17 years and was awarded an OBE for services to Richmond-upon-Thames and local government. She still held an honorary position as Representative Deputy Lieutenant for Richmond-upon-Thames.

Gillian had become a member of St George's, University of London Council in July 2017, shortly after her appointment as Chairman of St George's University Hospitals NHS Trust. She had strong supporter of the strategic benefits of the merger between City and St George's, and had worked tirelessly to bring it to effect, serving on the panel for key appointments (President and Chair of Council) and part of a small governance working group which considered, amongst other matters, the membership of Council.

Chair Roles

Professor Bob Allison and Damian Reid left the meeting for this item.

Decisions

Council **agreed** the CGNC recommendation that Professor Bob Allison should take over the role of Chair of Strategy and Development Committee from 1st September 2025.

Council **agreed** the CGNC recommendation that Damian Reid should take over the role of Chair of Audit and Risk Committee from 1st September 2025.

Professor Bob Allison and Damian Reid re-joined the meeting.

New Council Member

Council approved the appointment of Mark Lowcock as recommended by CGNC for a period of three years from 14th March 2025.

6. **Calendar**

Council members noted the calendar.

The Chair reminded members of the decision to hold two Plenary Dinners per academic year moving forward, noting that the next would be held in November, ideally near the Tooting site. Chairs' dinners would be held occasionally when needed.

It was noted that the November meeting of Council would be held at Tooting.

7. President's Report

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

The President highlighted the following activities which had taken place since the last meeting:

- The President's Forum had been held on the Tooting site and was well attended both in person and online. Overall, this had been a very positive event and the President had welcomed the opportunity to address concerns which were raised.
- The President had hosted visits by Councillor Hogg (The Leader of Wandsworth Council) and Luke Taylor MP (the Liberal Democrat MP for Sutton and Cheam) to the Tooting campus.
- An excellent informal meeting of SLT had considered the University's Estates and the rebuilding of the Estates Masterplan. Any developments from this work would be presented to Strategy and Development Committee in due course. **[Action]**
- The President had met with other heads of institutions to discuss this year's pay settlement; there was a high degree of consensus on what the outcome was likely to be.
- The President had held a series of good "strategy wash up" meetings with senior leaders as a result of input at the Away Day and the next iteration of the strategy refresh paper would benefit from those discussions.
- Cross-institutional discussions had taken place with regard to succession planning and active management of the talent pipeline.
- The President had given the Franklin Lecture "On Digital Change" at the Worshipful Company of Educators and would share the content with Council Members following the meeting. **[Action]**
- City St George's had welcomed the new Chief People Officer, Marcelle Moncrieffe-Newman and the President had begun conversations with her about the work required in relation to the Workforce Strategy.
- The President had attended a dinner at the Worshipful Company of Saddlers and noted his thanks to the VP, EEE, for ensuring that those relationships continued to flourish.
- The new brand had been launched earlier in the month and the staff reception had been very well attended. Feedback on the new brand had been very positive. It had been a real achievement also that the email transition had taken place so smoothly with no issues reported. The President and Council thanked the Marketing & External Relations and IT teams for all their hard work.
- The Digital Innovation and Transformation Office (DiTO) had been launched in October 2024 under the leadership of Professor Baba Sheba to lead academic digital transformation. This Office directly supported City St George's aim to be among the most digitally capable UK universities, with a clear edge in using technology. A dynamic vision emphasising a 'learner- and research-centred, digitally empowered institution' had been approved by SLT.
- The President had hosted a visit from OfS and DfE who had wished to learn more from the University about from the merger of City with St George's.
- The President continued also to manage the University's interface with government more generally and had met recently with Lord Vallance to discuss research issues.
- The President had embarked on exploratory discussions about potential future partnerships and collaborations. The Chair requested, for the next Council meeting, a confidential item be put on the agenda to enable Council to consider the strategic rationale for further partnerships, mergers or acquisitions. **[Action]**

In discussion, the following points were made:

- School of Health and Medical Sciences: two School all staff meetings had been held in February - one at Clerkenwell and one at Tooting. At both meetings staff had articulated their anxieties surrounding jobs and roles and had identified a need for improved communication from senior leadership. It would therefore be important for the Senior Team to ensure that positive messaging reached all staff in SHMS.

- The President noted that change inevitably gave rise to anxieties, that roles and organisations structure were changing and the selection process to appoint individuals to new roles following merger was now underway. The processes associated with those change were complex and interconnected, and there was a limit to how quickly change could be delivered.
- There was in fact a need for the University more generally to enable middle managers generally to feel comfortable with change. There could be a role here for Bayes colleagues in helping the President reflect on the best way to address this issue.
- With regard to talent management it might be useful to consider using the Shadow Leadership Board to help manage talent and reflect on how new board members were recruited to replace those who should shortly be standing down from the board.
- The Chair of Finance Committee noted that UG applications were strong but also noted the downside risk currently being recorded for PGT recruitment this year - and the potential need for mitigating actions to be planned, if the downside risk materialised.
- The President noted that overseas applications were down across the sector; and that many of the University's competitors were finding themselves in financial difficulties and so were extending their offers to enable them to recruit students who would previously have been recruited by CSG.
- The Chair was pleased to see that UG numbers were rising and noted the need for the University to do everything it possibly could to ensure that targets were hit and that financial mitigations were not required.
- The Chair noted that the brand launch event had offered a great public discussion of a key topic but had not been designed to offer to all those who might need to be more aware of the merger a narrative which set out the great opportunities the merger would offer the University. To that end, the President would consider further holding a "one year on" event to showcase achievements since 1st August 2024. **[Action]**
- The President thanked his Chief of Staff for the new layout of his report noting that following today's feedback he would look to reframe future iterations to highlight in more detail the challenges being faced, perhaps by way of a section entitled "Issues to draw Council's Attention To". **[Action]**

8. **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 Rob Lowe Sports Centre work had completed, further enhancing the sports facilities available on the Tooting campus. The Union was grateful for the support of the Director of Estates, Environment and Facilities and their team in ensuring this was a facility that could continue to serve the student community for many years to come.
- Following the Trustee Board's approval of new proposed roles to support the governance of the Union's safeguarding responsibilities and the nomination of a Lay Trustee to be the Safeguarding Lead, the Deputy Chief Executive was developing the new Safeguarding Policy and associated procedures.
- The Student Union Elections had taken place and Nasir Mohammed had been duly elected to serve as the SU President from July 2025. Despite the challenges of conducting the election across multiple campuses, The SU achieved a record-breaking voter turnout of 21.3% of all eligible students. A total of 5,394 students cast their votes and made their voices heard.
- The SU extended an invitation to all Council Members to the City St George's Students' Union Academic Impact Awards 2025. This prestigious cross-campus event, supported by the City St George's Learning Enhancement and Development Directorate, would take place on Wednesday 2 April 2025.

9. **Away Day Notes**

Council noted the informal notes of the Away Day held on 20th February 2025.

10. **Financial Headroom**

Council considered the paper and noted that a special meeting would be held in early April, to which all Council members would be invited.

11. Transformation Board Impact Report

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

- Good progress was being made across the three current transformational programmes and the portfolio of strategic projects.
- Consultation was underway with Trade Unions and Professional Service Directors on the overall approach to integration of Professional Services (e.g., mapping roles, integration timeline and VRS). A targeted Voluntary Redundancy scheme would be launched to support the redesign and integration of services. .
- The President noted that he strongly supported workplace representation and supported those staff who wished to join Unions: the Senior Leadership Team was proud to engage with Trade Union staff representatives.
- The Deputy President and Provost noted that the Academic Planning Board last year at City had looked at the size and shape of the institution; and had looked to ensure that staff employed by the University were those who would be required to deliver its future. Workload allocations were also being considered to that end – in work being led by the Dean of Bayes.
- The extended absence of the Dean of SHMS was impacting adversely on staff in the School. A strong and authentic communication plan, to address the concerns expressed by staff in the School, would be required to address this issue with staff, especially staff at Tooting.
- The Deputy President & Provost noted that there was now a strong leadership team in place in the new School, which would take work forward in the absence of the Dean; and that the Associate Deans within the School had been appointed. The announcement of those appointments would be made next week and would subsequently be circulated to Council Members for their information. It was notable there was an exact 50:50 split between existing staff on Tooting and Clerkenwell sites among staff being appointed to those roles.
- The President noted that a revised Workforce Strategy, a new Performance Management Scheme and revised work on Workload Allocation would come together to improve CSG's approach to business partnering generally and help ensure the university was fit for purpose for the future by improving its leadership and management.
- To provide assurance to Council that the right tools were in place and operating well, the President would consider further with the Chair of CGNC, how best to report on this work to Council in the Autumn. This report could also helpfully cover work organisational and cultural issues arising from the merger and integration programme and work underway now to improve talent management. **[Action]**
- It was likely that NHS hospital trusts generally would be primarily focussed on having to make reductions to their cost bases in coming years; and so the Executive should be mindful of these pressures in its discussions with NHS partners.
- It was worth noting that the merger offered the University the opportunity to work closely with all Epsom and St Helier hospitals that formed part of GESH as well as St George's.
- The Chair would welcome the opportunity to see a report on the relationship between the University and the hospitals which was "in train" and the President would discuss the timing of this with the Deputy President in due course. **[Action]**

12. Mid-Year Forecast 2024/25

Council received the report which presented the 2024/25 Mid-Year Forecast (MYF) as considered by Finance Committee and in discussion the following points were noted:

- The MYF builds on the information presented in the flash forecast in November and captured the impact of updated information from detailed work with budget holders across both income and expenditure.
- The MYF deficit was £7.8m representing an improvement of £2.9m against the 2024/25 Budget. This incorporated £5.2m in increased income vs a net cost increase of £2.3m and, of the £2.9m improvement, £2.4m related to a reduction in (non-cash) depreciation.

- Current year pressure on cash would be alleviated by in-year underspend on capital works relating to the Tooting estate of £3.7m. This was only a timing difference and would unwind in 2025/26.
- Covenant and liquidity compliance remained secure and thresholds were not at risk of breach.
- Both Finance Board and Finance Committee had endorsed the release of £1m of contingency funding to cover additional spend in-year on a priority basis as agreed by SLT.
- The University had gone into the year with adjusted student recruitment targets, flexed down for PG and flexed up for UG recruitment. Overall, the admissions position was a success story, and the contingency also built in gave extra resilience. The CFO noted that the Financial Headroom exercise demonstrated that CSG was one of the strongest performers in the current PG admissions climate outside the Russell Group. International recruitment was never easy to turnaround.
- Estates constraints on scaling up further UG recruitment were currently being addressed through hiring additional lecture space in the Barbican. The COO noted that the Home Office recently published visa requirements for overseas students meant that the majority of teaching would need to continue to be delivered via the face-to-face model, at least while these guidelines remained in place.

13. Student Matters

13.1 Cost of Living

Council considered the report which provided a summary overview of cost of living Support that has been offered to the University's students since 2022-23 and plans to continue to support students as part of City St George's integration. In discussion the following points were made:

- Since 2022-23 legacy City had developed new offers to support its students including discounted membership to City Sport, introduction of a sport access fund, increase in number of microwaves and access to hot water (Heat and Eat as part of the Student Support Hub), and short-term interest free loans from the Students' Union.
- Legacy SGUL had taken a similar approach and developed a cost of living hub and introduced initiatives such as discounted food, free food, boosted financial support available to students, and shared advice and guidance on how to save money. Several of these initiatives, including food and hygiene banks, continue in operation and are well used by students at Tooting.
- The cost of living was a very high priority for students and this had been reflected clearly in the recent SU elections.
- Following a review and evaluation of Financial Support packages, further work was being undertaken to develop further cost of living support to students. This includes a review of the approach to scholarships and bursaries to ensure that financial support is transparent, equitable and effective across all CSG Schools and Campuses. This includes the submission of the City St George's Access and Participation Plan in June 2025.
- This further work was being undertaken in close partnership with the Students' Union and would continue to take an approach based on evidence and data.

13.2 Addressing the Ethnicity Degree Awarding Gap at City St George's

Council considered the report which highlighted the current approach and general direction.

Introducing the discussion, the VP (Education) drew attention to some key elements of the paper which had noted that:

- Awarding gaps were well-documented in UK higher education, with the ethnicity awarding gap remaining significant even after accounting for entry qualifications, socio-economic background and age on entry.
- The differences in degree attainment by ethnicity, particularly for Black Students, was so significant that it has been adopted as a key performance measure by the Office for Students. It was also one of the key lifecycle stages featured in Access and Participation Plans submitted to the OfS.

- Moving beyond a deficit approach that aims to “fix students”, the sector was now focused on removing underlying inequality, making data-informed decisions, alongside continuous evaluation to understand the impact of intervention and refine them.
- The report provided a strategic vision to address the ethnicity degree awarding gap at City St George’s by taking a whole-university approach.
- Differences existed in the data analysis methods and data sources between City and St George’s prior to the merger. This included variations in reporting years and cohort coverage. Rationalising this data as part of the ongoing integration would be crucial for developing a comprehensive framework to address CSG’s ethnicity awarding gap.
- City St George’s student body was increasingly diverse. In 2021/22, legacy St George’s undergraduate entrants were 36% Asian, 14% Black, and 38% White, with the remainder identifying as Mixed (6%) or Other (6%). In 2023/24, the ethnicity breakdown for City students was 37% Asian, 11% Black, and 19% White.
- City St George’s staff body did not reflect the diversity of its student body. 23% of legacy City staff had identified as Black, Asian or ethnic minority in 2022/23 (38% of professional services staff and 24% of academic staff). Legacy St George’s Equality reporting data from 2023 showed 66% of all staff were White (88% of Professors and 70% of Lecturers).
- Staff diversity mattered to the University’s students. SLT had therefore received extensive training on recognising the importance of celebrating diversity and this should have a long-term impact.
- The University believed that good education was inclusive education. CSG’s approach to the awarding gap was underpinned by its commitment that all students who choose to study here have the opportunity to thrive. To see meaningful and sustainable change in the attainment gap required long-term commitment, a multi-stage approach and clear responsibilities and accountability across City St George’s. Based on sector evidence the Executive has identified 5 key areas of focus as follows that together will shift the dial on the degree awarding gap:
 - Leadership, Accountability and Governance
 - Inclusive Education, Assessment, Policy and Quality
 - Developing racially diverse and inclusive communities
 - Data Driven Decisions and Interventions, Evidence and Impact Evaluation
 - Student Partnership and Co-creation
- Sustained change relied on a combination of bottom-up grassroots and top-down organisational approaches. Evidence suggested that targeting approaches for smaller but sustainable change through holistic mechanisms might yield more effective outcomes. These approaches would be evident across the university.
- EDI data was now embedded in all management information and reporting mechanisms and was threaded through all academic evaluations.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- An EDI metric had formed part of the portfolio review process. EDI issues were also monitored in the Annual Programme Evaluation process for academic programmes.
- Changes to Regulations during the pandemic, in the domain of Exceptional Circumstances and late submission, and compensation rules, had temporarily reduced the attainment gap. The University would consider whether there was scope to amend Regulations on a more permanent basis in these areas while not relaxing academic standards.
- The Law School and SST both now had successful track records in tackling the attainment gap. This had been achieved through ‘drilling down on the data at School level’.
- It was not clear that any University had a stellar track record in addressing the attainment gap, although the record of Leeds University was strong. External examiners could perhaps be asked whether they were aware of strong performance in this domain at their ‘home’ Universities.
- Work to address the attainment gap would continue to be funded, as part of the University’s Access and Participation Plan (APP).

- It would be important to make some early progress on this agenda, and not postpone planned progress towards institutional targets until future years.
- AI was likely to impact on the attainment gap: it would enable poorer performers to improve their performance, as AI would effectively provide a 'floor' level of attainment available to each and every student on course work elements of any assessment.
- The University was adopting an approach to addressing the attainment gap that might be described as a 'comprehensive shotgun', or alternatively as 'holistic systematic' approach to this agenda: it was not clear what worked, and so it made sense for the University to try everything that might impact on performance. Over time, it would be helpful to develop a more focussed approach. The VP, Education, noted that this was a problem across the sector: it was simply not clear 'what worked' in this domain.
- It was clearly important in the first instance for the University to develop up-to-date accurate data to ensure that the University could monitor progress effectively.
- Council agreed that this was a challenging area and that it was essential for Council to receive regular reports on work to address the Ethnicity Degree Awarding Gap at CSG.

[Action]

13.3 Student Experience Update

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

- The paper provided an overview of progress against our student experience priorities for 2024-2025. The progress was based on Student Experience Board updates, meetings held with all legacy City Schools, student feedback and partnership work with the Student's Union. For legacy SGUL the information had been gathered from a Student Experience Continuous Improvement Action Plan, NSS and Student Experience Survey results from 2024 and a copy of their approved Access and Participation Plan.
- There remained a risk, despite positive indicators around improvements in student satisfaction on large cohorts, that with the newly merged institution the league table position in relation to student experience will dip in 2025 and that the pace and scale of change required for the integrated institution may impact on staff morale and engagement with work to improve the student experience.
- Students continued to be dissatisfied with the timetabling delivery model for teaching and learning, this was a complex area that was being reviewed under APB and there is no quick fix so it was anticipated that this will continue to have a negative impact on student satisfaction in the medium term.

14. Employability Report

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

- City St George's University prioritised employability as a core focus, preparing students for the world of work. The Longitudinal Educational Outcomes (LEO) survey showed that alumni of the University generally made excellent process in their chosen careers over time.
- This paper summarised Graduate Outcomes data and provided updates on progress against the five deliverables of the employability element of the strategic plan: Employability in the Curriculum, Graduate Attributes, Career Ready Graduates, Embedding Employability at all levels and Employer Engagement and Partnerships.
- Destination data would not be combined for the newly merged institution until 2027. The report therefore provided separate updates with regard to Legacy City and Legacy St George's data. Due to its significance to the Office for Students, and league tables, the focus was on UK UG data. Employability was however, of the utmost importance for the student groups both domestic and international.
- It was noted that the Internships Programme was too small and currently only covered 20 students per year, but that this could be improved with more external sponsorship.
- It would be helpful for future iterations of this report to include further information about the University's links to businesses and how the University was building those links and relationships. **[Action]**

15 Enterprise Report

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

- CSG's Enterprise activity included Innovation & Knowledge Exchange, entrepreneurship, and Educational Enterprise. The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) assesses universities' knowledge exchange performance in seven areas. The latest KEF results were published in September 2024, for 2020-2023. Both City and St George's demonstrated strengths in IP, Research Partnerships, and Working with Business. City had strengths in CPD and Graduate Start-ups, while St George's performed well in Public Sector and Public Engagement.
- All universities were assigned a KEF cluster, and going forward, the University would have very little control over which cluster it was assigned to. Probably it would be assigned to a group of mid-ranking universities, just below the Russell Group.
- The Chair thanked the VP, EEE for the informative report.

16. Honorary Award Nominations

Council **approved** the four nominations as recommended by CGNC.

This item is continued in the closed section of these minutes.

17. Minutes

Council noted the minutes of the following meetings:

- 17.1 Audit & Risk Committee, 18th November 2024
- 17.2 Remuneration Committee, 20th November 2024
- 17.3 Finance Committee 16th January 2025
- 17.4 Senate 23rd January 2025
- 17.5 Strategy & Development Committee, 24th January 2025
- 17.6 Strategy & Development Committee, 11th February 2025

18. Estates and Property Projects Update Report

Council noted the report.

19. Dubai: Lessons Learned

Council noted the report which was considered by Audit and Risk Committee.

20. Public Sector Equality Duty Report: Staff and Student Equality Monitoring Reports 2023/24

Council noted the reports.

21. Policy Update

Council noted the update.

22. Performance Measures Update: Legacy City Strategy

Council noted the update.

23. Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2023/24

Council **approved** the statement which had been considered in detail by Senate.

24. Legacy St George's Quality Assurance Annual Report for 2023/24

Council noted the report.

25. FOI Review

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

26. Date of Next Meeting

Friday 9th May 2025, 9am

Professor Ian Jacobs, Chair of Council March 2025