

**NEWMAN UNIVERSITY****COUNCIL**

Minutes of the Meeting held Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> July 2019 at 2.00 pm in ST102/103

**Present:**

Ms Gayle Ditchburn	Vice-Chair of Council and Acting Chair for the meeting.
Mr Christian Black	President, Newman Students' Union
Dr John Carlisle	
Rev Canon David Evans	
Ms Deirdre Finucane	
Ms Karan Gilmore	
Mr Colin Harris	
Mr Phillip Lennon	
Ms Leoarna Mathias	
Mr Richard Wallace	
Mr Glen Alexander	
Miss Elizabeth McGrath QC	

**In Attendance:**

Ms Andrea Bolshaw	Registrar and University Secretary and Clerk to the Council
Ms Jackie Flowers	Minute Secretary

*For item 6*

Dr Paul Gentle	Academic Director, Invisible Grail Limited.
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The meeting opened with prayers led by Canon David Evans.

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were received from Professor Peter Childs, Mr Jonathan Day, Archbishop Bernard Longley, Mr Stephen Kenny, Ms Julie Jones, Professor Femi Oyebode, and Mr Tony Sharma.

**2. Minutes of the Previous Meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2019 (UC 3M/19)**

The minutes of the Council meeting held on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2019 were agreed to be a correct record of the meeting subject to the following amendment: to delete the second sentence of paragraph 8 on page 6.

### 3. Matters Arising from the Minutes of the Previous Meetings

#### 3.1 Minute 4.2 - Access and Participation Plan

An update was given at item 8.1 below.

#### 3.2 Minute 6 - Recruitment Plan

Council members were shown a video which had been prepared for Clearing. Other related videos would be put on the Council's Moodle site.

**Action** Clerk to the Council

#### 3.3 Any Other Business - lower than expected score on value added in the Guardian League Table

The Clerk to the Council reported that analysis of the score was underway and a report would be presented at the October meeting of the Council.

**Action** Clerk to the Council

### 4. Council Matters

#### 4.1 Instruments and Articles Revision (UC 37/19)

The Chair introduced a paper which informed Council of the proposed revisions to the University's Instrument and Articles of Government (2012 version). She noted that in future they would be called the Articles of Association. She reminded Council members of the reasons for the review which were to ensure compliance with the OfS's regulatory requirements and to reflect the University's commitment to equality. During the revision process the Working Group had also considered the document in line with good practice in company law and the format, flow and order of the Articles. The numbering of the Articles had changed significantly from the current version, but this reflected a change in format rather than material changes to the content.

During consideration of the document there was discussion about the following:

- Definition of "Governor(s)": change this to "a member or members of the Council of the University appointed in accordance with Article 8 who shall have the responsibility of charity trusteeship and who shall also be a Company Law Member in accordance with Article 5.4"
- Delete Article 5.1 and renumber the rest of Article 5. There is no need to keep this and it caused confusion with Council as to why there was the reference to 50 when there are significantly fewer Governors. However, it was agreed to leave the current Article 5.3 to give flexibility to appoint others, if desired.

- Article 8.3: extend the list to be in conformity with the Equalities Act so that it includes all 9 protected characteristics.

The Clerk reported that the revised Articles would be circulated with an accompanying special resolution and notice of an Extraordinary General Meeting to be scheduled in the new academic year. She noted that should Council members have any further concerns or queries, these should be raised before the general meeting, as the resolution to change the Articles would be considered in full at the EGM without opportunity for further amendments.

**Action** Clerk to the Council

## 5. Governance Matters

### 5.1 Vice-Chancellor Recruitment (UC 38/19)

The Clerk to the Council gave an update on the activity of the Search Committee since the last meeting of Council. There had been two 'Town Hall' meetings at which the key and desired characteristics of the new Vice-Chancellor were discussed. Consultants from Odgers Berndtson had held focus groups with staff and students to explore the expectations of the University community for the Vice-Chancellor appointment.

The advertisement had been prepared and a copy had been circulated to all staff. A media campaign has been agreed with the advice from the search firm.

The dates for the important milestones and deadlines had now been agreed with the Committee and Odgers Berndtson; the Search Committee, anticipated providing a recommendation to Council at the meeting on the 26th of November.

In response to a question, the Clerk to the Council also gave an update on the progress with the appointment of the new University Chancellor, advising that the University was currently waiting for a response from a proposed candidate.

### 5.2 University Council Induction and Development Programme (UC 39/19)

The Clerk to the Council reported that the Nominations and Governance Committee had approved the Induction and Development Programme at its meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2019. Her office would work with Council members to implement the programme and would continue to review and seek feedback from members as the programme was implemented.

Council welcomed the introduction of the Programme and thanked the Policy, Project and Governance Support Officer for her work on the Programme.

### 5.3 Student Council Member Appointment (UC40/19)

The Chair advised that the Students' Union had not conducted an election for the student member of Council. Consequently, in accordance with the Standing Orders, the President of the Students' Union would be appointed by the Council as the student Council member for the coming academic year.

The Council resolved **UC 14/19**

To appoint Mr Christian Black as student member of the Council from 1<sup>st</sup> July 2019 until 30<sup>th</sup> June 2020.

The Clerk to the Council reported that Mr Liam Rogers, the Vice-President of the Students' Union, had been invited to attend Council meetings as an observer.

## 6. Strategic Planning – Feedback from the Big Conversations (UC 41/19)

The Council considered a report of the various activities that had taken place on the new strategic planning period after the current Strategic Plan expired in 2020. The report gave a more detailed insight into the planning workshops and The Big Conversation that had taken place recently across the University community. Dr Paul Gentle had helped the University Operations Team (UOT) leaders to develop and co-facilitate a series of workshops to generate commitment to change from students and colleagues in academic and professional service teams.

After an introduction from Dr Gentle, Council members formed groups to identify important questions arising from the report on The Big Conversation and reported back to the general discussion which followed. Issues identified were felt to fall into three broad categories: process, culture and strategic priorities.

On process, the following points were made. The University intended that the new Strategic Plan would be short and focussed at around 4 pages in length. A great range of opinions and suggestions had emerged from The Big Conversation; the question was how to distil these whilst acknowledging the ideas that were not fully embraced. It was important to produce a narrative of what was possible and to give reasons for what was not, so that participants in The Big Conversation did not feel that their views had not been taken into account. It was also necessary to keep staff and students updated and engaged. Council members suggested that perhaps a richer document, directly related to the comments received could drive the work of the University's Task Groups. Council agreed that the Committee and Task Group structure would be placed on the Council Moodle site.

**Action:** Clerk to the Council.

On culture, members considered it important to create a sufficient and convincing critical mass of staff who believed in positive change to enable the culture change needed. It was noted that whilst there was resistance from some staff, the majority were committed to change and had felt that The Big Conversation was a good way to engage colleagues and that the process should take place more often. The University did intend to repeat The Big Conversation every year or two years. Council members commented on the importance of the new Vice-Chancellor being a skilled manager of change and of their ability to create a team.

On the University's strategic positioning, it was felt that Newman had a specific and unique student profile and that it should not try to replicate other institutions but to be exceptional at what it did, and to galvanise staff to this aim. It was important that the concern should not be just with 18-year olds but also with mature students and lifelong learners and that these groups would have different needs.

Arising from The Big Conversation, staff had hoped to see the University becoming a better learning institution, with distributed leadership, everyone having an input, and with continuous loops of learning. They had also wished for a greater focus on learning, teaching and assessment, and for continuous improvement of systems, in a partnership between academic and support staff.

Council members considered it important for the University to have a methodology (flowcharting was suggested as an example) to bring about continuous improvement; to become better at what it already did and to make the most effective use of resources by doing things right the first time. It was important to have the correct number of KPIs as both too few and too many measures were demotivating.

## **7. Reports from the Council Committees (AC 2M/19)**

The Council received the unapproved minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee held on 20<sup>th</sup> June 2019 and the Chair of the Audit Committee highlighted the most significant points.

He noted a clarification to item 9 of the unapproved minutes, advising that the Chief Financial Officer would provide a mapping document detailing the basis on which Council could provide the assurances detailed in the Letter of Representation. He reported that the re-tendering process for the University's external auditors was progressing.

**[REDACTED]**

## **8. Internal Reports**

### **8.1 Office for Students update (UC 42/19)**

The regular report updating Council members on OfS matters was presented by the Clerk to the Council. The University's Access and Participation Plan had been submitted to the OfS by the deadline. The OfS had carried out an initial check and had made some comments. Intelligence from within the sector indicated that some other institutions had received more comments than Newman. Over the next few weeks, the OfS would conduct a more detailed review and Council would be advised of the response from the OfS. Fortunately, a relationship had already been established (including a visit to Newman) with the OfS Officer who had been assigned to review the University's APP

Other recent publications from the OfS were noted: the OfS's 2018/19 annual report and accounts; and, various datasets which had been considered and analysed through the University's committee structure.

Council noted the update.

## **8.2 Honorary Graduands 2019 (UC 43/19)**

Council members received a report on the Newman University Honorary Awards to be conferred at the Graduation Ceremonies on 22nd October 2019. Acceptances had been received for two Honorary Doctorates and one Honorary MA:

Honorary Degree of Doctor of Laws: Sr Margaret Walsh, IJS  
 Honorary Degree of Doctor of Letters: Ms Marcia McLaughlin  
 Honorary Degree of Master of Arts (to be conferred *in absentia*):  
 Mr Jack Robbins

The report was noted.

## **8.3 Complaints Annual Report (UC 44/19)**

The Council considered a report which gave information and analysis on student complaints received by the University in 2017/18. Broader sectoral analysis, including trends from the Office of the Independent Adjudicator for Higher Education (OIA), was also included.

The Clerk to the Council noted the increase in the number of complaints received to 30 from 16 in 2016/17. It was felt that this was not surprising given the consumer culture now prevalent, and the University was not out of line with other institutions. Lessons learnt from the complaints received were forming the basis of further training to be rolled out for staff. Early resolution of complaints, at the lowest level possible, was important. About one third of complaints had been resolved at an informal stage.

During discussion of the report, Council members suggested that it would be useful to include the student population of the other HEIs listed in the table on page 5. The Clerk to the Council also clarified that this table related only to cases from these institutions which had been submitted to the OIA and

was not an indication of the total number of complaints received internally at these institutions.

**Action** Clerk to the Council

The President of NSU noted that, in addition to the complaints listed in the report, there had been a significant increase in the number of students seeking help from the student advice centre in respect of complaints and that this help had stopped many complaints progressing beyond the informal stage.

## **9. Any Other Business**

### **9.1 Canonisation of John Henry Newman**

A paper was circulated which gave the draft itinerary for the proposed visit to Rome for the canonisation of John Henry Newman in October 2019. The University Chaplain had asked for expressions of interest from staff and students who might wish to travel to Rome. The trip would be self-funded. Council members who were interested were asked to notify the Clerk to the Council.

The Clerk to the Council reported that the University was considering other events to mark the occasion on campus.

## **9. Date of the Next Meeting**

3<sup>rd</sup> October 2019

The meeting closed with prayers led by Canon David Evans

**The Council  
Action Plan from the meeting held on 18<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

Minute	Agenda Item	Action to be Taken	Person Responsible
3.2	Matters Arising – Recruitment Plan	Videos to be placed on Council Moodle site.	Clerk to the Council
3.3	Guardian League Table	Item to be on October agenda.	Clerk to the Council
4.1	Instrument and Articles	To take into account points raised during discussion and amend the revisions accordingly.	Clerk to the Council
8.3	Complaints Annual Report	To take into account points made during discussion.	Clerk to the Council