

**Minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 19 March 2025 from 3:00pm to 6:00pm in
Room 314 / 326, Professor Stuart Hall Building, Goldsmiths**

Members**Roles**

Tom Sleigh	Independent Council Member / Chair of Council
Irene Adeyinka	Independent Council Member
Professor Moorad Choudhry	Independent Council Member (via teams)
Professor Susan Dilly	Independent Council Member
Dr Clare McConnell	Independent Council Member
Fiona McLaren	Independent Council Member
Aaron Porter	Independent Council Member (Deputy Chair)
Pam Raynor	Independent Council Member
Philip Stoltzfus	Independent Council Member
Luca Di Mambro Moor	Ex-officio Council Member / President of the Students' Union
Professor Frances Corner	Ex-officio Council Member / Vice Chancellor
Professor David Oswell	Ex-officio Council Member / Provost and Deputy Vice Chancellor for Research and Knowledge
Professor Paul Rowlett	Ex-officio Council Member / Deputy Vice Chancellor for Education and Student Experience
Elisha Lualua	Ex-Officio Council Member / Chair of the Student Assembly
Professor Richard Noble	Elected Member of Academic Board Council Member
Dr Jamie Ward	Elected Member of Academic Board Council Member
Flora Cipullo	Elected Professional Services Council Member

Attendees:

Philip Henry	Interim University Secretary / Secretary to Council / Registrar and Secretary
Imran Chughtai	Chief Finance and Infrastructure Officer
In Attendance:	
Sarah Martyn	Head of Secretariat
Jon Hayes	Governance Officer
Dr Stephen Lake	Director of Communications, Marketing and Recruitment (Items 1 - 8 only)
Gary Sprules	Director of Strategic Projects and Planning (Items 1 – 15.3 only)
Alison Woolley	Director of Development and Alumni Relations (Item 16.3.4 to end only)

Apologies:

Dr Ronke Akerele	Independent Council Member
Andrew Laurence	Independent Council Member
Ben Morton-Wright	Independent Council Member
Professor Kirsten Campbell	Elected Member of Academic Staff

3:05pm - start

Open Session**1. Welcome, Introductions and Apologies**

- 1.1. The Chair opened the meeting welcoming new members of Council present to their first meeting.

- 1.2. Apologies were noted from Dr Ronke Akerele and Andrew Laurence, Ben Morton Wright and Kirsten Campbell.
- 1.3. Council noted that Susie Hills from Halpin was observing the meeting.
- 2. Identification of Items for Discussion**
 - 2.1. No items had been additionally identified for discussion; however, it was agreed that the endowment item would be brought forward.
- 3. Chair's Actions**
 - 3.1. Council **noted** that there had been no Chair's actions taken since the last meeting.
- 4. Minutes of the Open Meeting held on 04 December 2024 (Paper A)**
 - 4.1. Council **approved** the minutes of the open meeting held on 04 December 2024 as a correct record.
- 5. Matters Arising**
 - 5.1. There were no matters arising.
- 6. Open Action Tracker (Paper B)**
 - 6.1. Council noted the Open Action Tracker.
- 7. Vice-Chancellor Report and KPI Scorecard (Paper C)**
 - 7.1. Council welcomed the new look report which covered the Vice Chancellor's update, sector and Goldsmiths' news, and monitoring aspects of the strategy. Highlights included new initiatives around market analysis, January entry for the new academic year, new foundation programmes for September 2025 and January 2026, long-term demographic pipeline issues, improvements seen as a result of the simplified academic structure and the registry realignment project, and agreement for a strategic review of academic operations in terms of further development that would be brought to Council in September 2025.
 - 7.2. In response to questions or comments around the format of the strategy section of the report; inclusion of QR funding in the decreased tuition income; organisational risks such as consumer claims, such as student complaints, return of student fees, and resurgent strikes; impact of the metrics. how these were linked to the objectives, and assurance around the objectives being on track; the outstanding piece of work from the Portfolio review and those courses that were not viable because of insufficient student numbers in the context of staff costs as a percentage of income; reductions in staff numbers in relation to module reductions, Council noted:
 - That as the strategy was shared more widely with the community, the format of the scorecard would shift to report against the pillars of the strategy.
 - QR funding was included in the grant income.
 - Further thought would be given as to how consumer claims risks could be reported.
 - The Strategy Review Group had agreed metrics around recruitment, retention, student experience and finance which would be monitored against the pillars. The next meeting of the Strategy Review Group would consider a project scorecard to be aligned to the strategy and the pillars to ensure that assurance was provided around other corporate resources. It was hoped that in time a high-level risk register would be included against which key information would be monitored and assurance provided. The Chair of the Strategy Review Group advised that the group had sought to bring the right level of detail to provide assurance to Council. It was felt that 15 KPIs were about the right number, and there was a need to understand where information was being monitored, to enable the information that was brought to Council to be finessed, whilst allowing committees to deep dive into information and regularly linking this to the management perspective.
 - Over 30% of the modules had been removed during the portfolio review and this was expected to rise where modules had not yet been reviewed. Primary stage work was

on-going in respect of second- and third-year undergraduates on modules where enrolment figures suggested that these would not be viable; these had now been removed from selection. After the selection window closed, there would be a further exercise identifying modules that had not attracted sufficient enrolment numbers.

- Staff numbers would likely reduce over the next couple of years due to the reduction in modules. There would be further staff reductions once the new IT infrastructure was in place to support the requirements of the future.

- 7.3. It was suggested that Council should receive a paper looking at the organisation's staffing profile, because after the activity of the last year, it was possible that the staffing profile might not be an optimal profile. It was also suggested that an additional KPI should be included in the scorecard in relation to the budgets, targets and any shortfall in retention. This could be discussed at a Strategy Review Group meeting.

Action: the Executive would provide a staffing profile for Council.

- 7.4. Council noted the Vice-Chancellor Report and KPI Scorecard.

8. Student Recruitment for 2025/2026 Entry (Paper D)

- 8.1. Council was reminded of the challenging picture being experienced across the sector and that Goldsmiths had seen decreasing student numbers for a number of years. The coming months were expected to remain extremely challenging, and Goldsmiths were concentrating on a range of activities to increase student numbers; there were questions over the necessary infrastructure and resources to respond to this demand.
- 8.2. Goldsmiths was in a live business process during which all data was being tracked but the outcome of the cycle would be difficult to project. There was a need to maximise conversions from the reduced applicant pool which would make the cycle even more competitive. The data showed that Goldsmiths was further ahead in offer-making than in previous years. Work was on-going in monitoring and tracking the offers.
- 8.3. Council welcomed the data which told a clearer picture, although further examination was required. The picture was sobering and there was a need to make contingencies alongside various financial scenarios, including what a smaller student population would mean for staff costs, a further drop in applications and the likelihood that targets would not be met. Council requested that work was started with immediate effect on revised forecasts for 2025/26 given the reliance on the September 2025 intake and the vulnerability of the organisation from a financial perspective. There had been insufficient progress in bringing forth multiple entry points for the academic years; although it was noted that a January intake would start in 2026. It was noted that the Audit and Risk Committee had engaged in similar conversation at its' recent meeting suggesting that the Executive should concentrate marketing on departments that performed well in attracting students.
- 8.4. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that work had begun on the 2025/26 budget, considering different scenarios, balancing the budget and taking the cashflow into account. This would be taken to the Finance and Resources Committee alongside further thought around further savings, new courses, partnerships, new relationships and increased fee levels.
- 8.5. Concern was raised about the level of support available to Goldsmiths to produce this work in the required timeframe. Council noted that the finance team were constantly re-working the figures, and the annual budget exercise would take place at the end of April, after which the statistics would be available. What now needed to be factored in was the potential impact of lower applications. The Finance and Resources Committee were invited to address this in a meeting in conjunction with Executive Board colleagues, in looking at essential action. It was agreed that the Chair of Council, the Deputy Chair of

Council and the Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee would agree a timeline and for the Executive Board to produce the documentation.

Action: The Chair of Council, Deputy Chair of Council and Chair of the Finance and Resources Committee, would agree a timeline for the Executive board to produce documentation regarding staff profiles, annual budgets, and scenario planning. A meeting would take place during April to consider scenario planning based on projected numbers.

- 8.6. In response to a question about clearing and efforts made to recruit students, Council noted that approximately 85% of the total volume of applications were undergraduate, there had been fewer postgraduate applications. Goldsmiths had consistently taken 400-450 undergraduates through clearing in previous years, and given the shift in the sector it was unlikely those numbers would be reached for 2025/26. The forthcoming clearing extra cycle would be the opportunity for Goldsmiths to advertise and generate more interest. The Executive Board had recently discussed sufficient demand on courses with growth potential. It was possible that the as yet unconfirmed scholarship package could help bring in additional students in clearing.
- 8.7. Council noted that the new faculty structure would likely enable a more nuanced and rounded planning process for students, but some departments that were under pressure to recruit did not have the necessary infrastructure to do so, as well as having high reputations to maintain. There was a need for the planning process to be more long-term, rather than a reactive process, and ensuring a simplified structure to ensure the correct balance between the numbers of students and maintaining quality. Goldsmiths would need to change to planning over a three-to-five-year planning horizon which would allow for response to the demand whilst ensuring the products in the right places for the pipeline and bring those aspects together.
- 8.8. Assurance was sought to ensure that the right quality data was being used to make sure that the correct decisions were being made to mitigate the situation through clearing extra. Council noted that Strategic Planning and Projects Directorate was the university data hub, and the Executive Board were already discussing well-performing departments that could be expanded and those courses with low demand and the likelihood of little growth potential. Goldsmiths were also considering with their marketing agency the work that needed to be undertaken for 2026/2027.
- 8.9. Council noted the update on Student Recruitment for 2025/2026 Entry.
*4:14pm – Council took a break. Director of Communications, Marketing and Recruitment left the meeting.
4:22pm Council re-started the meeting.*

9. Retention (Paper E)

- 9.1. Council posed questions around the following: the appearance of student engagement in the scope of the Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system project; quick wins around student engagement; what happened in departments where they did not hit their retention targets; support for students with protected characteristics; concern around the interim period before the CRM was fully implemented; the current position around the budget and the 85% retention rate that had been used in the plan and whether the plan was working; the financial impact of the loss of students; what the perspective of staff or student bodies was on the extent of the issue and impact on Goldsmiths; what the degree of responsibility for individual members of the student member and staff body to address this; had staff and the student body brought into the fact that retention was an issues and needed to be addressed, Council noted the following responses:
- The CRM project was in its early stages and the scope would likely include functionalities around the student journey. This would include a well-being module could allow data to be drawn from information around SEATs, and engagement with the library, which could be used for proactive activity around student engagement.

- Work would continue on identifying students in need or disengagement in the short-term; it was not clear when the CRM project would implement this module, but this would unlikely be in the short term.
- The new VLE could support student retention which could be activated before the finalisation of the CRM.
- It was also suggested that the credit bearing assessment in computing should be reviewed to ensure student engagement.
- The dashboard now allowed live tracking of data which was updated daily. Currently the two faculties were expected to engage and consider challenges. There were no in-year sanctions for underperformance but would have clear consequences on subsequent budgetary rounds.
- It was too early to tell if the plan was working; the figures were based on OfS data which had lagging indicators looking at a particular definition of the cohort at a date that were not aligned with the academic year.
- Withdrawal rates of students from their first year would only become apparent after the beginning of the summer term. In the short-term, it could be possible to use a best estimate.
- If departments were seeing issues with student retention around internal regulations of assessments, then this needed to be picked up and evidence provided.
- In respect of EDI, this was contained in the broader range of student outcomes in terms of attainment and student experience which was reflected in the NSS results. The approved OfS Access and Protection Plan focused on two major minority groups targeting retention and attainment over a four-year period and looked at current gaps in terms of outcomes. A Delivery Group was in place to provide oversight in ensuring interventions by schools and professional services departments to deliver outcomes and narrow gaps. This work would start in late March 2025 to build on significant improvements and provision of support to incoming students; this would include interventions for specific cohorts. A co-ordinated approach around the student journey, including specific measures, would be taken with year two and three returning students, again with interventions on specific cohorts.
- It was confirmed that retention was a key part of conversation throughout the organisation where staff asked how they could contribute further to the work. This was all staff's responsibility, whatever the touchpoint.
- The retention plan combined strategic perspectives with a more short-term approach, a part of which was awareness raising. This sat alongside other organisational priorities.

9.2. Council noted the update on the delivery of the University's retention plan.

9.3. Council was asked that if they complex questions on future papers, they would be encouraged to submit them in advance of meetings.

10. Appointment of Secretary to Council and Registrar and Secretary (Paper K)

10.1. Council noted that a thorough process had taken place, and the appointee brought with her experience from LSE. In response to questions regarding equality, diversity and inclusion, and the costings for the recruitment, Council noted that the costings related to two senior roles that were being recruited for.

10.2. Council approved the appointment of Hilary Hunter as Registrar and Secretary and Secretary to Council from 16 May 2025.

10.3. Council noted that the Vice Chancellor determined that the Registrar and Secretary would undertake the duties as follows:

- countersign instruments to which the University's Seal was affixed;
- sign contracts and other documents on behalf of the University;
- approve claims for reasonable expenses by members of Council.

11. Constitutional Documents (Paper N)

11.1. Council noted that the constitutional documents could require further changes following the Council Governance Effectiveness Review. In response to a question about Council powers, it was noted that these could now be found in the Standing Orders.

11.2. Council approved on the recommendation of the Nominations and Governance Committee:

- (i) that the Standing Orders (Annex 1) of the College be amended as follows:
 - Amendments to Standing Order 5.
 - Amendment to Standing Order 8.5.
 - Amendment to Standing Order 9.
- (ii) Ordinance 1 (Annex 2) as drafted is added to the ordinances

12. Health and Safety Policies (Paper O)

12.1. Council made the following comments around the policies:

- The Reuse, Recycling and Waste Management policy included awareness promotion but not how this would take place.
- The Risk Assessment policy mentioned stress at the very end, whilst the annex gave the impressions that risk assessments should be readily undertaken.
- This policy should be reviewed in the light of the work around the risk register to ensure that the policy was fit for purpose, and that the two pieces of work were complementary.
- In terms of information governance, risks were likely to present themselves on a daily basis around data requirements and its confidentiality. The fact that the organisation did not have cyber insurance was also a major risk to Goldsmiths, and many other universities, and work was on-going with the market to see if this could be procured.
- In relation to the Security policy, it was noted that individuals could tailgate others through locked gates.

12.2. Council noted that Goldsmiths were recalibrating the approach to risk and the risk register.

12.3. Council approved the updated versions of the following policies:

- (i) Reuse, Recycling and Waste Management policy;
- (ii) Risk Assessment policy; and
- (iii) Security policy.

13. Committee Impact Reports

13.1. Nominations and Governance Committee (Paper Q)

13.1.1. Council, on the recommendation of the Nominations and Governance Committee:

- (i) approved the recommendation of the Nominations and Governance Committee for the appointment of Andrew Laurence, an independent Council member, to the Strategy Review Group;
- (ii) approved the recommendation of the Nominations and Governance Committee for extension of Dr Ronke Akerele as a member of Council for a further term of office from 1 September 2025 until 31 August 2026; and
- (iii) noted the report of the Nominations and Governance Committee meeting that took place on 12 February 2025.

14. Survey and League Tables (Paper F)

14.1. Council noted the rankings of the College in the 2024 round of League Table publications, that the University was doing well, and the metrics were being kept under review.

15. National Student Survey (NSS) and Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) (Paper G)

- 15.1. Council noted that the NSS was currently open whilst the PTES and Research Experience Surveys would open later in the year. Goldsmiths was still adrift from the benchmark, but there had been consistent improvements which would make a stronger position for the TEF exercise in 2027.
- 15.2. In responses to questions about which rankings were more relevant to students, Council noted that Goldsmiths' approach had been strengthened by the progress on the model level evaluation which had been led by individual departments. There had been low student participation in surveys and a centralised approach through a digital platform was now being used. Procurement of a new digital platform was underway to improve student engagement.
- 15.3. Council noted the outcomes for the University of the 2024 National Student Survey and Postgraduate Taught Experience Surveys.

5:16pm – The Director of Projects and Strategic Planning left the meeting.

16. Academic Board Report (Paper H)

- 16.1. Council noted the Academic Board Report.

16.2. Assuring Quality and Standards (Paper I)

- 16.2.1. Council noted that the report provided an update on activity since December 2024. It was noted that departmental development plans were being withdrawn as a mechanism to provide academic assurance in which academic departments reflected on their student outcomes, access and experience, and what action departments would take in addressing gaps. A committee had been set up to monitor this work, but this approach had not been successful; going forward the reflections on performance would be embedded into a standard planning framework planning cycle which would in turn be monitored.

- 16.2.2. Council noted the Assuring Quality and Standards Report.

16.3. Research Excellence Framework (REF) Preparations (Paper J)

- 16.3.1. Council noted that this framework represented six to seven years of audit research across the UK sector. This framework increased the revenue for Goldsmiths up to £2m and reputationally was factored into the some of the ranking indicators. Preparations for REF2029 were in hand and the paper detailed a programme of work up until the submission date of Autumn 2028.
- 16.3.2. Council noted that a presentation on this area had been provided to the Finance and Resources Committee which had presented some positives around this work. It was suggested that a plan, and necessary budget, was required to expand research and support, particularly given the current financial position of the University.
- 16.3.3. There were big gaps in terms of the deficit and research which was under discussion across the sector, and whether the government could bridge the gaps. Some institutions were offered funding in terms of philanthropic activity, and Goldsmiths were looking to move along this path in implementing a Research Institute. Philanthropic income itself was restricted around research but would be important as part of the wider growth plan and in terms of generating income for research. Further work was taking place around this modelling.

5:26pm – Director of Development and Alumni Relations entered the meeting

- 16.3.4. Council noted that Goldsmiths were not unusual in the way in which research was funded across the sector. There were questions around staff, teaching contracts,

performance management and expectations of research, research and grant income, that would be brought back in a paper to a future meeting.

- 16.3.5. In response to questions around the appointment of an Interim Grant Manager given that this was a multi-year project, the costs of implementing such a project, the necessary project plan to deliver the work, and what lessons had been learned since the last REF submission had been taken on board, Council noted:
- In the interim period a temporary member of staff with experience from across the sector was driving the work forward, whilst a permanent REF Manager was sought.
 - There were no total costs of the programme of work thus far, but clearly the immediate costs would be that of the staff team across different university teams.
 - There were significant additional overheads on REF on all institutions across the sector, including the staff of REF teams.
 - There would be a vested interest around the growth agenda and whether money was well spent on the REF process.
 - There were costs to institutions, notably Goldsmiths had a reduction in staffing in areas that had previously performed well in REF so there would be a need to adjust in terms of the submission.
- 16.3.6. In addition to the previously agreed paper on the staff profile, it was agreed that it would be interesting to see the split across departments to see the current focus, differences in departments because of student numbers or previous QR success; there was a definite need to be smart on how resources were used. It was confirmed that for REF2029 it was vital that the staffing contract type history was correct.
- 16.3.7. Council noted the REF preparations.

17. Progress Towards Developing and Endowment at Goldsmiths (Paper P)

- 17.1. This item was deferred.

Action: A further webinar on endowments would be organised.

18. Council Governance Effectiveness Review (Paper L)

- 18.1. Council noted the update on the Council Governance Effectiveness Review.

19. Council Member Update (Paper M)

- 19.1. Council noted the update on Council member recruitment.

Committee reports

19.2. Audit and Risk Committee (Paper R)

- 19.2.1. Council noted the Audit and Risk Committee report.

19.3. Finance and Resources Committee (Paper S)

- 19.3.1. Council noted that the Finance and Resources Committee planned to hold a webinar on recruitment to which all Council members would be invited to attend. In addition to this, there would be discussions around a workplan with an additional committee meeting in late April 2025.

Action: all Council members to be invited to attend the Finance and Resources Committee webinar on recruitment.

- 19.3.2. Council noted the Finance and Resources Committee report.

19.4. External Relations Committee (Paper T)

- 19.4.1. Council noted the External Relations Committee report.

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19.5. People, Organisational Development and Equalities Committee (Paper U)

- 19.5.1. Council noted the People, Organisational Development and Equalities Committee report.

19.6. Strategy Review Group (Paper V)

- 19.6.1. Council noted the Strategy Review Group report.

20. Any Other business

- 20.1. There was no any other business.

21. Date of Next meeting

- 21.1. Council noted the date of the next meeting as Wednesday 25 June 2025 which would take place in person.

The meeting closed at 5:44pm.