COUNCIL

Loughborough University

Minutes of the meeting of 02 July 2026

COUN26-M2

Attendance

Christine Hodgson (Chair)

Karen Blay	Nick Jennings	Rachel Thomson
Penny Briscoe (ab)	Jennifer Maxwell-Harris	Mark Thurston
Graham Corfield (ab)	Nicky Morgan	Julie Turner
Andrea Davis	Lucy Palmer	Justin Waring
Natalie Gasson-McKinley (ab)	David Price	Mike Wedderburn
Naomi Hudson	Dan Rodenhurst	Sheryl Williams
Matthew Inglis	Surinder Sharma	Jon Woods
Mia Jackson	Luke Langbein-Stott (ab)	

In attendance: Sam Grogan; James Henry; Michael Hoyler (item 26/25 only); Kieran Oliver; Dan Parsons; James Roberts; Richard Taylor; Luke Vulpiani

Apologies received from: Penny Briscoe; Graham Corfield; Natalie Gasson-McKinley; Luke Langbein-Stott

26/28 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

26/29 Minutes and Matters Arising

2.1 Minutes

COUN26-M2

Council **APPROVED** the minutes of the meeting held on 26 March 2026.

2.2 Maters Arising

Council **NOTED** the following matters arising:

1. A Council briefing on Influencing Government Policy has been scheduled for Tuesday 6th October 8.15am and invites will be sent in due course.

2. Further information requested by Council in March about action being taken to reduce pay gaps will be brought to the October Council meeting.

26/30 Chair's Report

Council **RECEIVED** a verbal report from the Chair.
The Chair reiterated the importance of financial sustainability and scrutiny of the assumptions made in the forecasts.

26/31 University Finances

31.1 External Environment

COUN26-P39

Council **CONSIDERED** an update on the external environment in which the University operates.

The external environment is challenging owing to financial sustainability pressure, more rigorous regulation and rising expectations from students and their families.

Loughborough is well positioned to face these challenges. Its distinct institutional identity and its established strengths aligned with the identified strategic priorities: protecting the student experience (essential to the University's top 10 ranking), the Research Excellence Framework and the University's sport USP.

Universities need to demonstrate clear differentiation and a public value; Loughborough's economic impact is significant as its vital role in the region.

Employability is increasingly a key factor for students and prospective students. Loughborough benchmarks well on employability. Council supported an even greater focus on employability including articulation of a clear sense of what makes a Loughborough graduate special.

Council requested employability, including the student perspective, is considered further at the away day in October.

31.2 Professional Services Savings Round

COUN26-P40

Council **NOTED** progress with the Professional Services Financial Tasking including confirmed redundancies and **NOTED** the submission of Reportable Event to Office for Students and HR1 form to the government.

The consultation period had concluded and those affected had been informed of their status. The final number of redundancies was expected to be lower than anticipated owing to effective redeployment and alternative proposals. A focus on agile workforce and vacancy management will be important as the financial environment remains challenging.

The campus Unions were thanked for their engagement throughout the process.

31.3 2025/26 Financial Update

COUN26-P41

Council **NOTED** the current financial position for the 2025/26 financial year.

Covenant headroom has been the primary focus this year and is being monitored very closely as the financial year ends. The predicted deficit for the year has reduced from ~£5 million to ~£2 million, mainly owing to a non-cash reduction in research overhead costs. It may be possible to achieve a small surplus for the financial year, which could benefit future years.

Risk around the implementation of the new financial system, scheduled for the end of July, is being actively managed. The Executive Director of Finance has been in close contact with the University's bank and contingencies are in place to mitigate issues that may arise.

31.4 2026/27 Budget and Five-Year Forecast to 2031

COUN26-P42

Council **APPROVED** the 2026/27 budget and **COMMENTED** on the provisional five-year forecast to 2031.

The five-year forecast indicated two years of deficit before a gradual recovery. Key risks included the required tasking, student numbers particularly international postgraduates, and regulated fees not increasing in future years after two years of confirmed inflation increases.

Modelling for optimistic, realistic and pessimistic student number scenarios gives a high level of confidence in 26/27, though there is less certainty about numbers for future years. The Office for Students have noted that the sector as a whole is projecting a 20% increase in student numbers, while the actual increase is expected to be around 10%, indicating a shortfall in the sector's predictions. Council noted however that Loughborough's projections were in line with the actual expected market growth.

The Honorary Treasurer assured Council that the budget had undergone detailed work and been scrutinised fully by Finance Committee.

Research income and applications, which indicate potential future income, show strong growth; improving the conversion and contribution percentages is vital in growing research income and the pre-award team in the Research and Innovation Office are focussed on this area.

Staff pay awards have consistently fallen below inflation for more than a decade and remained a risk. Pay is negotiated collectively across the sector and constraints on budgets were recognised; higher pay awards would require savings in other areas. The budget is a forecast of expected pay increases, not a statement of the University's position on pay and reward.

It is important to protect Loughborough's student experience in the context of planned student number growth. The Students' Union thanked the University for the increase in their grant and appreciated the uplift was in a time of challenging finances. The Students' Union make a vital contribution to the student experience at Loughborough and were thanked for their work.

31.5 Additional Debt Proposal

COUN26-P43

Council **ENDORSED** the proposal for additional debt with the final term and structure to be approved by Finance Committee post tender/sourcing.

26/32 Commercial Update

COUN26-P44

Council **CONSIDERED** an update on commercial activities.

The paper provided increased visibility on commercial numbers and where there may be opportunities for revenue growth.

The University has the right capability to deliver effectively in some areas of commercial activity. In other areas additional or specialised commercial acumen may be required to reach the full potential.

26/33 Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park

COUN26-P45

Council **NOTED** the options for the development of Loughborough University Science and Enterprise Park and **ENDORSED** the recommendations.

The Chief Operating Officer thanked the Council lay members on Estates Management and Sustainability Committee for their assistance in evaluating the core options available.

Council supported development of the plans for LUSEP and encouraged the matter to be progressed; a blended option of academic and commercial use is the likely model. Council will receive the strategic decisions that need to be made and a clear recommendation on executive preference in October.

26/34 Pro-Vice-Chancellor Reappointment

COUN26-P46

Professor Parsons was recused for this item and left the room.

Council **ENGAGED** in the consultation process for the proposed reappointment of Professor Dan Parsons as Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation for a further 5-years from September 2027.

There was unanimous support for the reappointment based on the strong performance of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor and the increase in research performance, including research income.

26/35 Senate Effectiveness Review

COUN26-P47

Council **CONSIDERED** the Senate Effectiveness Review Report to obtain assurance of the University's academic governance.

Professor Michael Hoyler, Head of Geography and Environment and Senate Effectiveness Working Group Chair joined the meeting for this item to report the findings of the Senate Effectiveness Review. Council members had been able to contribute to the Review by responding to a questionnaire.

The Review found Senate was generally effective, and made some recommendations for how effectiveness may be enhanced further.

There may be further scope for considering how Council and Senate interact and increase the understanding between the two bodies. Senate remains sovereign for determining academic quality and standards, whilst Council is responsible for ensuring effective oversight of academic governance. The new Committee of University Chairs Code of Governance (item 26/38 below) strengthens the requirements on governing bodies to assure academic governance.

26/36 Office for Students

COUN26-P48

Council **RECEIVED** assurance on the University's compliance with its Office for Students regulatory duties and how it met the OfS Conditions of Registration.

The OfS is currently consulting on a new ongoing Condition 'Treating students fairly' (C6) focussed on student and customer protections. The proposed Condition extends the core student contract into ancillary services, including areas such as sport. Although Loughborough anticipates being compliant with the new condition, substantial work will be required over a short period of time to ensure compliance once the requirements are confirmed.

Council was assured that the University was compliant with Condition E6 Harassment and sexual misconduct, which came into effect from 1 September 2025 but some areas of attention remain. A Harassment and Sexual Violence Working Group had ensured initial compliance and is now focused on strengthening consistency. Ongoing activity continues across investigations,

training, and support pathways to provide assurance, embed good practice, and monitor and evaluate effectiveness.

The Chair of Council reported that Edward Peck, Chair of OfS had written to all Chairs of University governing bodies in June as part of regular communications. The letter emphasised that governing bodies should be focus on the following: the new Committee of University Chairs Code of Governance; financial sustainability and the importance of not signing off unrealistic student numbers; and compliance with Condition E6 Harassment and sexual misconduct.

26/37 Audit and Risk Committee

COUN26-P49

Council **RECEIVED** a report on the meeting of Audit and Risk Committee held on 03 June 2026 from Naomi Hudson (lay member of Council who sits on ARC).

Cyber security remains an important area of risk with a number of universities recently being subject to serious cyberattacks. Loughborough has a good foundational readiness across the university to respond to an attack and ARC was assured that the Business Continuity Planning Board is monitoring and mitigating relevant risks.

ARC also considered the risk of Loughborough not maintaining a top 10 position in the National Student Survey [results due 08 July] and the impact of the imminent departure of the Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience. Key activities under the Education and Student Experience portfolio have been identified, appropriate delegations are in place with Deans fully briefed on actions required.

26/38 Governance and Nominations Committee

COUN26-P50

Council **RECEIVED** an update on the Committee of University Chairs new Code of Governance. The Code indicates a shift in expectations of Governing Bodies and has been supported by the Department for Education and Office for Students. The general principles set out in the new Code accord well with Loughborough's values and much of our practice is already compliant. Areas for enhancement will focus on how Council receives assurance around strategy, risk and financial sustainability, as well as academic governance.

Council were reassured that the removal of the mandatory inclusion of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Considerations from the Code would not bring any change in the University's commitment to EDI.

26/39 Health, Safety and Environment

Council **RECEIVED** a verbal report from the meeting of the Health, Safety and Environment Committee held on 19 May 2026.

The Committee had received an update from the Director of Student Services on student suicide prevention and actions being taken to mitigate risk in this area.

Risks arising from construction activity remains a heightened focus owing to the work currently being undertaken on campus.

26/40 University Honorary Degrees and Medals

COUN26-P51

Council **APPROVED** the award of Honorary Degrees and University Medals to the individuals named in the paper.

26/41 Matters for Report by the Vice-Chancellor

COUN26-P52

Council **RECEIVED** a written report from the Vice-Chancellor. The Vice-Chancellor particularly highlighted the following items not discussed elsewhere:

The Vice-Chancellor had been part of a British trade delegation visit to Los Angeles. The visit explored opportunities for developing partnerships with American Universities and international student recruitment.

The Vice-Chancellor, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research and Innovation and other colleagues attended an event at London Tech week focused on regional development for the East Midlands and connecting investors with the UK's science and research innovation ecosystem.

The Chair noted that the Vice-Chancellor had been awarded the 2026 International Joint Conference on Artificial Intelligence Award for Research Excellence – one of the most prestigious accolades in the field of artificial intelligence.

SECTION B – Starred Items for Approval

[These items will be approved unless otherwise decided]

26/42 *Loughborough Students' Union

42.1 *Annual Report

COUN26-P53

Council **RECEIVED** the Students' Union Annual Report.

42.2 *Executive Officer Elections

COUN26-P54

Council **RECEIVED** assurance that the elections for Students' Union Executive Officers in 2026 (offices to be held in 2026/27) were free and fair.

26/43 *Students Complaints Annual Report

COUN26-P55

Council **APPROVED** the Student Complaints Annual Report 2024-25.

26/44 *Ordinance VIII – The Council

COUN26-P56

Council **APPROVED** an amendment to Ordinance VIII regarding the number of lay members of Council. First Hearing.

26/45 *Ordinance IX - Senate

COUN26-P57

Council **APPROVED** an amendment to Ordinance IX regarding the process for staff elections. Second Hearing.

26/46 *Ordinance XVII – Student Disciplinary Procedure

COUN26-P58

Council **APPROVED** amendments to Ordinance XVII – Conduct and Discipline of Students. First Hearing.

26/47 *Council Staff Election Process

COUN26-P59

Council **APPROVED** arrangements and the joint committee for the appointment of a new Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education and Student Experience.

SECTION C – Starred Items for Information

26/48 *Matters for Report

Council **RECEIVED** the following reports:

48.1 *Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor including student recruitment COUN26-P60

48.2 *Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Education and Student Experience) COUN26-P61

48.3 *Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Research and Innovation) COUN26-P62

48.4 *Pro-Vice-Chancellor (Sport) COUN26-P63

26/49 *Office for Students

***49.1 Prevent Duty**

COUN26-P64

Council **NOTED** that the Office for Students has concluded the 2024/25 process for monitoring the University's compliance with its Prevent duties.

***49.2 Reportable Events**

COUN26-P65

Council **NOTED** the report made to the Office for Students.

26/50 *Capital Framework Progress Report

COUN26-P66

Council **RECEIVED** a progress report.

26/51 *Common Seal

Council **NOTED** the common seal had not been used since the last meeting in March.

26/52 *Reports from Committees

Council **RECEIVED** reports from the following Committees:

COUN26-P67	**Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Governance Committee 21 May 2026**
COUN26-P68	**Finance Committee – 20 March 2026**
COUN26-P69	**Governance and Nominations Committee – 05 June 2026**
COUN26-P70	**Health, Safety and Environment Committee – 19 May 2026**
COUN26-P71	**Information Technology Governance Committee – 06 May 2026**
COUN26-P72	**Research and Innovation Committee – 31 March 2026 and 02 June 2026**

COUN26-P73	**Senate – 11 March 2026**
COUN26-P74	**Sport Committee – 06 March 2026**
COUN26-P75	**Strategic Portfolio and Resources Committee (Part B) – 09 March 2026, 30 March 2026, 05 May 2026 and 08 June 2026**

26/53 Thanks to departing members

The Chair thanked members coming to the end of their terms on Council for their contributions: Matthew Inglis, Mia Jackson, Sheryl Williams.

Jennifer Maxwell-Harris had completed 9-years on Council, and was particularly thanked for her contribution.

26/54 Date of Next Meeting

Thursday 15 October 2026, all-day, Away Day, Loughborough Campus

2026/2027 Meetings

Wednesday 25 November 2026, 9:00-12:00, online

Tuesday 23 March 2027, 9:00-12:00, Loughborough University London

Thursday 24 June 2027, 14:00-17:00, Loughborough Campus