

COUNCIL
Thursday 19 March 2026

UNCONFIRMED MINUTES

Present:

Lan Tu (Chair)	Professor Adrian Armstrong	Professor Colin Bailey CBE
Professor Liam Campling	Patricia Gallan QPM	Malcolm Hitching
Indy Hothi	Dr Michaela Macdonald	Tracey McDermott CBE
Dr Anthony Phillips	Dr Alix Pryde	Diya Selastin
Melissa Tatton CBE	Rob Whiteman CBE	

In attendance:

Karen Kröger	Samarth Lakhanpal	Dr Maggie Leggett
Dr Nadine Lewycky	Jonathan Morgan	Maria Rubbani

Apologies:

Ken Batty	Paul Goswell	Maryanne Matthews
Dr Natalie McCloskey		

Welcome, apologies and declaration of interests

2025.046 The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and noted the apologies. There were no declarations of interests.

Chair's update

2025.047 The Chair said that she was continuing to meet with internal and external stakeholders as part of her induction. Her meetings showed that there was great enthusiasm for the University and that this should be encouragement to publicize our successes more broadly. The Chair recently attended the Drapers' Education Lecture and the Night of Science and Engineering. The events had been uplifting, and Council members were encouraged to attend future events where possible.

President and Principal's Report (QM2025/40)

2025.048 *Minute 2025.048 is confidential.*

QMSU President's report (QM2025/41)

2025.049 Council **considered** the QMSU President's report. The following points were noted in the discussion:

[a] The January Welcome Fair was the largest to date, attracting 1,500 students to over 100 stalls from societies, clubs, student services and

partner organisations. The event was a great introduction for new students and an opportunity to re-engage with returning students.

- [b] This year's annual survey by the Students' Union focused on the use of generative AI among students for academic and non-academic activities. Over 500 students had participated and the results, once analysed, would be presented at the Student Experience Forum and to the University's AI Strategy Group.
- [c] The Students' Union had been engaging with the Tower Hamlets Women's Commission to add student voices into discussions on women's safety in the local area, highlighting the experiences of women students navigating campus, accommodation and the wider borough. This formed part of QMSU's wider work on contributing student perspectives to local policy discussions.
- [d] Barts and the London Students' Association was seeking membership in international student organisations to strengthen global connections and expand professional opportunities for students.

Strategic Risk Register and Institutional KPIs (QM2025/42)

2025.050 *Minute 2025.050 is confidential.*

Approach and timeline to update Strategy 2030 and the Brand (QM2025/43)

2025.051 *Minute 2025.051 is confidential.*

Update on progress to reduce operating costs (QM2025/44)

2025.052 *Minute 2025.052 is confidential.*

Budget 2026–27 (QM2025/45)

2025.053 *Minute 2025.053 is confidential.*

Capital plan and budget for 2026–27 (QM2025/46)

2025.054 Council **considered** and **approved** the capital plan and budget for 2026–27.

Update on delivery of the Access and Participation Plan (QM2025/47)

2025.055 Council **considered** an update on delivery of the Access and Participation Plan.

Finance and Investment Committee minutes (QM2025/48)

2025.056 Council **noted** the minutes from the Finance and Investment Committee meeting held on 05 March 2026.

Current financial position (QM2025/49)

2025.057 Council **considered** the current financial position.

Update on the Whitechapel development site (QM2025/50)

2025.058 *Minute 2025.058 is confidential.*

Audit and Risk Committee minutes (QM2025/51)

2025.059 Council **noted** the minutes of the Audit and Risk Committee meeting held on 03 March 2026 and **considered** a recommendation to reappoint the internal and external auditors. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] The Committee had considered a deep dive on plans to make the University fully AI enabled by 2028. The Committee had discussed the governance and leadership structure, risks, the importance of agility and the different comfort levels among staff in using AI. Given the speed at which AI was moving, the Committee requested a further update in six months' time.
- [b] The Committee had considered an update to the internal audit plan. Two planned audits would be combined to create space for an additional report on fraud risk management in human resources. The Committee had approved the update to the internal audit plan.
- [c] The Committee had reviewed the appointments of the internal and external auditors. Both firms had been appointed to their current contracts in 2022. It was proposed to stagger the length of the renewals to avoid going out to tender for both at the same time. The relationship with BDO was working well and there were benefits in continuity. The Committee recommended to Council to extend the contract with BDO for external audit services for a further three years. As BDO were in their first term as auditors, this would bring the contract to the maximum allowed under the CUC Audit Committee Code of Practice before going out to tender. KPMG had been our internal auditors for 11 years and the Committee recommended to Council to reappoint KPMG for just one further year.
- [d] Council **approved** the reappointment of the internal and external auditors.

Governance Committee minutes (QM2025/52)

2025.060 Council **noted** the minutes of the Finance and Investment Committee meeting held on 23 February 2026. The Committee discussed the outcome of the recent governance effectiveness review by KPMG and an update on the internal review of academic governance. It was noted that there were two vacancies on committees for external members of Council and that expressions of interest would be invited in due course.

Governance effectiveness review (QM2025/53)

2025.061 Council **considered** the governance effectiveness review by KPMG. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] The University Secretary said that Governance Committee had been pleased with the robustness and evidence base of the review. It had been

decided to await the publication of the revised CUC Higher Education Code of Governance and an expected consultation from the Office for Students on the regulation of university governance before proposing specific actions in response to the report.

- [b] There were four recommendations in the report, two of which were more substantive. Council had previously decided that the work of the Senior Independent Governor would be incorporated into the role of the Vice-Chair. This practice was seen elsewhere in the sector, but it remained to be seen whether the new Higher Education Code of Governance would tip the balance towards splitting the roles. The role of governing bodies in academic assurance was also a topic of debate across the sector. The question to be asked was whether Council's role was to seek assurance from Senate on the effectiveness of academic governance arrangements or to play a more active part. Council members were encouraged to feed in any thoughts on the report.
- [c] Council members asked how they could be assured that appointments to Council and committees addressed the right gaps in skills and experience. A skills matrix was maintained to inform discussions about current and future skills and Council was routinely invited to feed in at the start of any recruitment process so that the advertisement and brief could be framed to attract the right candidates.

Minutes of Senate (QM2025/54)

2025.062 Council **considered** the minutes of the Senate meetings held on 11 December 2025 and 12 March 2026. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] At its meeting in March, Senate considered a paper outlining the principles of the future composition of Senate. The principles centred around curating a membership with the right skills that was diverse, balanced and effective.
- [b] Senate discussed the revised Code of Practice on Free Speech, which had been refined in response to Senate's comments before being brought to Council. Senate also endorsed the proposal to change the name of the School of Business and Management to the 'Queen Mary Business School'.
- [c] Council asked for the terms of reference for Senate and its sub-committees to be made available in the document library.

Action: [c] Head of Secretariat

Code of Practice on Free Speech (QM2025/55)

2025.063 Council **considered** and the revised Code of Practice on Free Speech. The following points were noted in the discussion:

- [a] The Code of Practice on Free Speech had been revised with input from external legal advisers to reflect the Freedom of Speech (Higher Education) Act 2023 and new regulatory advice from the Office for Students. Procedures and accountabilities for events had been updated,

including the creation of a panel for dealing specifically with safety and public order risks. The Office for Students was developing its regulatory approach in this area and it remained to be seen how it would assess the reasonableness of decisions taken by universities. The Act introduced a new duty on universities to promote free speech and the executive would be developing a plan with input from Senate in due course.

[b] Council noted that there would be additional security costs to the University resulting from the new legislation. While the cost per event was not high, it could accrue over time.

[c] Council **approved** the revised Code of Practice on Free Speech.

Changes to Ordinance 3 and Ordinance 9 (QM2025/56)

2025.064 Council **considered** and **approved** updates to Ordinance 3 and Ordinance 9.

Minutes of the last meeting (QM2025/57)

2025.065 Council **confirmed** the minutes of the meeting held on 27 November 2025.

Matters arising* (QM2025/58)

2025.066 Council **noted** the matters arising from the last meeting.

Decisions taken and use of the Common Seal since the last meeting* (QM2025/59)

2025.067 Council **noted** the decisions taken and the use of the Common Seal since the last meeting.

Agenda for the next meeting* (QM2025/60)

2025.068 Council **noted** the agenda for the next meeting on 14 May 2026.

Reserved (QM2025/61)

2025.069 *Minute 2025.069 is reserved.*

Dates of Meetings 2025–26:

- Thursday 14 May / Friday 15 May 2026 – Annual conference including Council meeting.
- Thursday 09 July 2026 at 1600 hours.