

CONFIRMED

ROYAL COLLEGE OF ART

THE COUNCIL

Meeting of the Council held 4pm-6.30pm, on Wednesday 10 July 2024, in the Senior Common Room, 3rd Floor, Frayling Building, SW7 2EU.

1. Attendance, apologies and quorum

Members:

1. Sir Peter Bazalgette, Independent member and Chair
2. Michael Birshan, Independent member
3. Suzy Black, Independent member
4. Mary Boakye, Independent member
5. Kimberley Burrows, President of the Students' Union
6. Professor Hugh Brady, independent member (*via Zoom*)
7. Kerry Curtis, Staff member appointed by the Senate
8. Thomas Cury, Vice-President of the Students' Union
9. Jenny Duvalier, Independent member
10. Mike Forster, Independent member
11. John Gibbs, Independent Council member (Items 1-11)
12. Dr Tristram Hunt, Independent member
13. Alan Leibowitz, Independent member (Items 1-11)
14. Professor Christoph Lindner, President & Vice-Chancellor
15. Professor Ken Neil, Staff member appointed by the Senate
16. Sudhir Singh, Independent member
17. Dr Anne Toomey, Head of Programme, Textiles
18. Fields Wicker-Miurin, Independent member and Deputy-Chair
19. Ed Williams, Independent member (*Zoom*)
20. Amanda White, Chief Financial Officer

In attendance:

21. Heather Akif, Chief Operating Officer
22. Lorna Gozzard, Director of Engagement, Brand and Marketing (Item 9.3)
23. Professor Sam Jacoby, Professor of Architectural and Urban Design Research (Item 6)
24. Megan Jones, Environmental Sustainability Manager (Item 10.1)
25. Corinne Smith, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education (items 7.1 & 7.2)
26. Zioge Smith, College Secretary
27. Lucy Quarry, Governance Officer

Observers:

President elect, Students' Union, Lening Huang
Vice-President elect, Students' Union, Janmejy Singh

Apologies:

Mary Boakye, Independent member
Professor Rachel Cooper, Independent member

Jenny Duvalier, Independent member
Dr Anne-Marie Imafidon, independent member
Rama Gheerawo, Staff member appointed by the Senate

Quorum: Eight members where a majority of those present (in person or by virtual means) shall be Independent Members.

The Chair welcomed Suzy Black, newly appointed member of Council.

The Chair welcomed incoming Students' Union President, Lening Huang and Vice-President, Janmejay Singh.

2. Declaration of interests

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Approved: Minutes of the meetings held on **20.3.24, 25.4.24 and 3.6.24.**

The minutes of the meetings held on 20.3.24, 25.4.24 and 3.6.24 were approved as a true and accurate record.

4. Noted: Action log and matters arising

5. Introduction

5.1 To receive: President & Vice-Chancellor's report, Professor Christoph Lindner.

The President & Vice-Chancellor reported on changes to the monthly newsletter issued by the President & Vice-Chancellor. Any feedback from Council members on the new format would be welcomed.

The Show 2024 had attracted 5000 external visitors and had demonstrated the high quality of student work. Reviews had been positive, with a 1000% rise in social media traffic relating to the Show.

The President & Vice-Chancellor highlighted Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES) results 2023-24.

The College had exceeded KPIs across all questions, and the result was a reflection of investment in all areas of the student experience. There would be continued investment to ensure overall student satisfaction continued to rise.

Data showed a significant increase in survey participation (51% completion up from 16%). Overall, student satisfaction had increased from 49% to 71%.

The President & Vice-Chancellor gave an update on the executive restructure, and congratulated Professor Ken Neil who had been appointed as the interim Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Academic.

The newly convened Executive Board had held its first meeting at the beginning of July. An all staff meeting had shared details of the restructure and outlined portfolio changes.

The President & Vice-Chancellor reported on current HE sector recruitment challenges, caused by a variety of factors including geopolitical events, domestic policy, political landscape, and cost of living crisis. Some UK institutions were facing a 30-40% drop in postgraduate taught applications.

Key areas of focus for the Executive Board in the coming year would be:

- Student recruitment
- Global engagement strategy
- RCA Together programme
- Launch of the student information system (the President & Vice-Chancellor offered his thanks to John Gibbs for his input on this project)
- Focus on staff development and career progression to boost morale and to support positive working cultures.
- The launch of a new fundraising campaign
- To convene conversations about the development of the RCA strategy, and how this may be reviewed in a rapidly changing environment.

The Chair thanked the President & Vice-Chancellor for his report and invited questions.

The Council noted the positive results of the PTES survey, and that it was encouraging to see an increase in survey participation. The Learning & Teaching Committee (a Committee of Senate) would look at student satisfaction by programme, and address any issues. For example, some dissatisfaction with the AcrossRCA programme had been identified, and this would be addressed as a matter of priority.

6. Current, recent, and future activity on and around AI in L&T, RKEI and Professional Services, Presentation: Professor Ken Neil, Dean of School of Arts and Humanities, Kerry Curtis, Dean of School of Communication.

Professor Sam Jacoby, Professor of Architectural and Urban Design Research, introduced the presentation on challenges and opportunities relating to AI in an art and design context, and the findings of a recent study mapping types of AI projects across the RCA.

Over the past five years, there had been an increase in student work and projects which used AI tools. AI literacy and proficiency had also been mapped, as well as the types of AI tools which were being used. It was found that 66% of students had used AI tools, and 74% planned to use AI tools.

The presentation covered areas relating to AI risk such as human rights, ownerships, and social fabric, as well as ethical concerns relating to data ownership, copyright, reproduction, and amplification.

A key finding of the study, had been that there needed to be more specific guidance on AI use at the College.

There was a discussion about AI use and development in the context of the wider creative industries.

The study had engaged the RCA community, and AI would have an impact across all areas of College activity. It was important that conversations were brought together and that there was robust governance relating to AI. It would be helpful for the College to engage with Imperial College, regarding their policies and experience in this area.

The Chair thanked Professor Sam Jacoby, Kerry Curtis and Professor Ken Neil for their presentation.

7. Academic Strategy and Performance

7.1 Received: Report from the Senate to Council, Corinne Smith Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education.

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor introduced the report from the Senate to Council. The new format paper was designed to give Council a better understanding of the work of the Senate and its Committees.

A key agenda item for the most recent meeting of the Senate in May had been programme fees, which were agreed and recommended to Council on an annual basis by the Senate and the Planning & Resources Committee. There had been discussions about how to continue to balance financial sustainability and affordability for students. Key actions from the discussion had been to ensure that there was enhanced communication with students regarding how fees were spent, and for there to be additional nuance and consultation in future activities in support of setting fees.

The Postgraduate Research Experience Survey (PRES) had closed for 2023-2024. The response rate had improved by 25% to 56% of PGR students completing the survey.

The Chair thanked the Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education for her report.

7.2 Received: Transnational Education update, Dubai Business Case and Donghua University, Professor Christoph Lindner, President & Vice-Chancellor and Corinne Smith, Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Education.

The President & Vice-Chancellor gave an update on progress with transnational education opportunities.

There was strategic value to engagement with a student population in the MENASA regions, with opportunities for academic and research development, and income diversification. There were, however, challenges with the progression of negotiations with the current investor, TECOM, and the College had set a deadline of September 2024 for the agreement of terms. The President & Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor Academic had visited the Dubai Institute of Design and there had been positive discussions with potential partners. The consensus at Executive Board level was that the College should think about the development of future international partnerships and presence in the context of a revised global engagement strategy which would be informed by refreshed strategic planning.

7.3 Received: Annual Research Integrity Statement 2022-23.

8. Students' Union and Student Experience

8.1 Received: A report from the Student Council members, Kimberley Burrows, President of the Students' Union and Thomas Cury, Vice-President of the Students' Union.

There were ongoing constructive discussions regarding technical provision and feedback from students, recognising that this was a complex concern. A survey had been conducted to allow for the identification of themes which would enable an open and visible dialogue with technical services, and the development of recommendations.

There had been extensive work on EAP (English for Academic Purposes) provision and AI. Some solutions to support students had been identified, to ensure students have a positive experience at the College. One recommendation was to implement a 'buddy system' which could help match students based on language, interests, and Programmes and Schools. Another suggestion would be to introduce a free breakfast social space for students to connect. The report had been shared with Student Support and the President & Vice-Chancellor.

In answer to concerns raised about shuttle bus provision, the executive confirmed that the Estates Management Committee was currently exploring how shuttle bus service provision could be optimised.

The executive confirmed that there would be SU representation during the upcoming tendering process for catering services, in order to ensure provision reflected the needs of students, particularly in Battersea.

The Students' Union reported on upcoming revisions to policy and guidance in response to legislation regarding sexual misconduct, following the OfS consultation. It was reported that Report and Support task groups review all complaint logs with the Head of Student Experience, and that the escalation of these complaints was managed sensitively and appropriately.

The President and Vice-President of the Students' Union thanked members of the executive and members of the Council for their support over the past year.

9. Finance

9.1 Approved on the recommendation of the Planning & Resources Committee: 2024/25 Budget, Amanda White, Chief Financial Officer.

The Chief Financial Officer reported that the budget had been discussed in detail at the Planning & Resources Committee meeting 2.10.24.

The budget was constructed to deliver an Unrestricted Surplus. This was in line with the target in the 2023-28 Financial Plan. Priorities for the Executive Board were to ensure the College was delivering the right level of surplus to reinvest and to look at opportunities for income diversification and long-term sustainability informed by a granular understanding of baseline costs.

Capital investment had been included in the plan, however the amount of investment required would be clearer following the approval of the RCA Together programme business plan in the autumn.

The Council noted the revenue shortfall. Overall, the College was in a good position, and the 5-Year Plan indicated a positive trajectory.

The Chief Operating Officer reported that Workday's monthly reporting would enable the College to react quickly and take advantage of any upsides, through regular detailed cost analysis.

The Council queried whether the College's proposed digital spend was sufficient. This would be discussed further at the Executive Board, in terms of impact, risk and bandwidth to take on more systems.

Internal work on cost reduction was ongoing as well as opportunities for revenue generation. One aspect of this ongoing work was to ensure that fees remained at an affordable and sustainable level for students.

Chair thanked the Chief Financial Officer and the Finance team for their work.

9.2 Approved on the recommendation of Planning & Resources Committee and the Senate: 2025/26 Programme Fees, Amanda White. The President & Vice-President of the Students' Union voted against this proposal. There were no abstentions.

That fees for Masters programmes are increased as follows:

- | 1. Home Fees | International Fees |
|---------------------|--|
| Band A: 0% | Band A: 0% |
| Band B: 0% | Band B: 3% |
| Band C: 3% | Band C: 3% (except IDE, a joint programme with Imperial College) |
2. That Innovation Design Engineering (IDE) fees, are set by Imperial College.
 - 3.
 4. That discounts for further study, programme deposits and PhD continuation fees remain at current levels.
 5. On the recommendation of the Dean and Associate Dean of the School of Design, that the MRes Healthcare & Design programme be moved from Band B to Band A.

The Chief Financial Officer reported on the rationale for the Programme Fee recommendation for 2025-26. There had been extensive and constructive discussions with College members and overall there was support for the proposal. There were however ongoing concerns about affordability for students, which the College was addressing through fundraising for scholarships and bursaries, cost reduction and income generation.

The Chair thanked the Chief Financial Officer and invited questions.

The Council discussed the need to balance affordability for a diverse range of students, including UK students, and financial sustainability. The compound effect of 1-2% over several years, could represent a risk to the College, however. The College was looking into ways additional flexibility could be brought into its pricing model.

9.3 Approved on the recommendation of the Planning & Resources Committee

The Chair thanked the Director of Engagement, Brand and Marketing, and invited questions. The Council was assured that the contract represented good value for money for the College.

10. Estates

10.1 Received: The development of the College Environmental Sustainability Strategy, Megan Jones, Environmental Sustainability Manager.

Approved: The four pillars of the Environmental Sustainability Strategy.

The College's first Environmental Sustainability Strategy outlined the steps towards net zero and improving the College's environmental impact from 2024 to 2027, feeding into the goals and enablers within the current Strategic Plan 22-27. The agreed pillars and their objectives were:

1. *Net Zero:* Achieve Net Zero by 2035 by reducing scope 1, 2 and 3 greenhouse gas emissions by 90% from a 2022/23 baseline and building resilience to the effects of climate change.
2. *Sustainable Resource Use:* Reduce our draw on natural resources and work towards becoming a circular institution.
3. *Teaching & Learning:* Embed environmental sustainability in all forms of teaching and learning so that students can contribute to and work within a more sustainable future.
4. *Research & Knowledge Exchange:* Develop solutions to global sustainability challenges through research and innovation.

The strategy had travelled to the Audit & Risk Committee on 12.6.24, where the key pillars had been discussed and recommended to the Council for approval. The specific details of each pillar would continue to be developed in relation to the resources and budget needed to deliver against the goals.

The Environmental Sustainability Manager thanked the Students' Union for their input and perspective. There would be a survey and student facing newsletter to support sustainability initiatives. Work was ongoing with the catering service to minimise food wastage.

The Environmental Sustainability Manager reported that it had been of value to work with colleagues across South Kensington, on South Ken ZEN+ a collective response to the climate and biodiversity crisis, and to realise the benefits of collaboration.

The Chair thanked the Environmental Sustainability Manager for her report.

11. Strategic Risk Register

11.1 To receive and discuss: Strategic Risk Register, including summary of key risk movements, introduced by Sudhir Singh, Chair of Audit & Risk Committee, followed by any further points/questions Heather Akif, Chief Operating Officer.

The Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee reported that the Strategic Risk Register had been discussed in detail at the meeting of the Audit & Risk Committee 12.6.24. Overall, the Audit &

Risk Committee had gained assurance that risks were being appropriately identified and managed, however there had been recommendations regarding risk management methodologies.

The Council noted a new Strategic Risk, SR26, relating to the Student Information System. The College had partnered with Ernst & Young and Service Now to stabilise new data going into the student records system, and develop a solution.

The Council was asked to approve the risk escalation score. It was resolved that certain strategic risks must be discussed by the Council, for example, Cyber Security.

The executive confirmed that the College was reviewing its anti-discrimination statements, in response to the Israel-Palestine conflict. This would be led by the EDI Committee, and there would be extensive consultation with stakeholders.

Approved on the recommendation of the Audit & Risk Committee: The risk escalation score should be increased, however, in the case that there was an impact score of 4 or more, then that would trigger an automatic review at Executive Board level.

12. Governance & Policy

12.1 Received and discussed: Summary Report from the Governance Review Group 5.6.24, Zioge Smith, College Secretary.

The College Secretary reported that the Governance Review Group had convened a meeting on 5.6.24 to discuss the recommendations of the GGI report on Council effectiveness. Key priorities were to continue to develop a Strategic Assurance Framework, and to enhance Council assurance on academic strategy, quality and governance.

It had been agreed that the Chair of Council, Deputy Chair of Council and Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee should each attend one meeting of the Senate during the 2024-25 academic year as an observer.

The importance of a Strategic Assurance Framework mechanism, to map out Council responsibilities and accountabilities, to ensure that strategic aims and objectives were being met, was discussed. The framework should be an assistance and not a burden, ensuring that there was no duplication of effort across Committees. The framework would also serve to strengthen the Council's assurance on academic matters, and its understanding of the work of the Senate.

A draft framework would be received at the Audit & Risk Committee and Council in November.

12.2 Noted: Council Forward Agendas 24-25, **paper**, Zioge Smith, College Secretary

13 Received: minutes from Council Committees

13.1 Audit & Risk Committee 12.06.2024

13.2 Planning & Resources Committee 24.04.24, 8.5.24

14. Any other business

14.1 The President & Vice-Chancellor reported on early thinking on the format of the Council Strategy Day on 10.10.24. Given the current environment, the current plan would be reviewed and modified for a rapidly shifting world. Early thinking and questions about approach included the College's number one status, and how we define excellence. How does the College ensure

that it has the infrastructure and resources to support its strategic aims, and what was realistic and achievable.

14.2 The Council noted the importance of the work that happens in the Council and Committee cycle. How can the College could make these spaces less hidden to students and increase the visibility of governance and decision making at Senate and Council level?

15. Date and time of next meeting: 10 October 2024, 10am-3pm (Strategy Day)

CLOSE

SIGNED:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Bazalgette', with a long horizontal flourish extending from the end.

Sir Peter Bazalgette, Chair