

**LONDON SCHOOL OF HYGIENE & TROPICAL MEDICINE
COUNCIL
MINUTES FROM MEETING HELD ON 25 MARCH 2025
APPROVED BY COUNCIL ON 26 JUNE 2025**

MEETING OF COUNCIL

Date of meeting: Tuesday 25 March 2025, 14:00 to 16:30

Place of meeting: Hybrid via LSHTM Board Room (G05) and ZOOM Video Conference

Present: Don Robert (Chair), Mohamed Osman, Angela Darlington, Liam Smeeth, Clare Chandler, Matt Lee, Hitesh Patel, Mike Turner, Nazira Amra, Jocelyn Prudence, Lethukwenama Letsoalo, Nambusi Kyegombe (*virtual attendance*), Mark Poulton (*virtual attendance*), James Hargreaves, Richard Calvert, Joanna Price, Diana Layfield, Naomi Stewart (*virtual attendance*) and Lindsay Northover (*virtual attendance*).

Partial Attendance: José Bengoechea (*for item 2*), Alana Luckraft (*up to item 5.2*), Ahmed Rashid (*for item 5.2*) and Derfel Owen (*for item 5.2*).

Minutes: Ayisha Govindasamy.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Welcome & Introduction

1.2. Declarations of Interests: None declared.

1.3. Minutes from the previous meeting

Resolved:

1.3.1. Council approved the minutes from the previous meeting held on 25 November 2025, subject to minor amendments to the attendee list.

1.4. Actions taken by the Chair

Noted:

1.4.1. The postponed visit from the UK's Higher Education sector regulator, the Office for Students (OfS), was held on Monday 03 March 2025.

1.4.2. LSHTM had received a request from the OfS to submit an interim Financial Return in April 2025, this was being prepared by the Finance Team.

2. RESEARCH SPOTLIGHT SESSION

Received: A presentation on infection biology of antibiotic-resistant pathogens laboratory from José Bengoechea, LSHTM's Dean of the Faculty of Infectious & Tropical Diseases.

Noted:

2.1. Since visiting the Uganda Unit in March, Professor Bengoechea was exploring the possibility of carry out part of their research in facilities in Entebbe, Uganda. There was a general feeling that more collaboration could be encouraged between the Uganda Unit and London, and the Uganda Unit and The Gambia Unit e.g., clinical trials.

2.2. Council queried whether any of Professor Bengoechea's research could generate Intellectual Property. It was noted that most of the research has been published and commercial partners are often cautious about supporting major infectious disease programmes.

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2.3. It was confirmed that Professor Bengoechea's research was not significantly affected by the recent cuts in US Federal Aid and UK Overseas Development Assistance but that the indirect impact would be an overall reduced pool of research funding available in the future, which will hamper academic ideas and opportunities.

3. REPORT FROM THE DIRECTOR

Noted:

- 3.1.** The Director outlined LSHTM's current priorities, this included financial sustainability, creating a sustainable employment model, and delivery of the revised Education Strategy.
- 3.2.** The Executive Team would be hosting a Strategic Leadership Network meeting and an all-staff Q&A based on LSHTM's financial sustainability and to issue new guidance on research grant cost recovery.
- 3.3.** While the UK government acknowledged the importance of the Higher Education Sector, there was unlikely to be any additional financial support available.
- 3.4.** The OfS has now appointed a permanent chair, Professor Edward Peck.
- 3.5.** The OfS visit went well and the OfS met with members of LSHTM's Executive Team, as well as members of LSHTM's staff and student community.
- 3.6.** It was an extraordinarily challenging time for research funding, particularly for public health programmes. For example, the UK Overseas Development Aid budget had been cut along with US Federal Aid cuts. It was likely that the research funding landscape will be more competitive than ever before. This could have a devastating impact on global public health, and there were genuine concerns about the increase in AIDS and TB. The public health sector would need to reorganise its resources and significantly prioritise its activities going forwards.
- 3.7.** An update was provided on senior appointments recruitment. An external candidate had been recruited as the new Dean for the Faculty of Public Health and Policy. Recruitment has commenced for the Director of The Gambia Unit. Recruitment for the Head of EDI was unsuccessful so that role would be re-advertised.
- 3.8.** The inaugural Unit Committees visits and meetings held in February and March 2025 were successful and there was positive engagement between the Committees and Unit staff.
- 3.9.** Graduation for the 2023/24 student cohort took place in February 2025 and was a great success.
- 3.10.** It was confirmed that currently there was not a significant increase in US based academics wishing to take roles up at LSHTM. However, it was reported that other academic institutions had experienced increased interest and so LSHTM may need to anticipate such a scenario in the future.
- 3.11.** Council commented on the pressure the UK Higher Education Sector was facing, including difficulties in recruiting international students, funding pressures and changes to the external research funding landscape. LSHTM is lobbying relevant UK government officials where possible.
- 3.12.** Council recommended that LSHTM would need to revisit the assumptions in its business plan and remodel its finances to account for the range of challenges it now

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faces. It was suggested that this be a future agenda item at a Council meeting and/or the annual Away Day.

- 3.13.** Council commented that the EDI data shows that good progress has been made, but perhaps this hasn't been well communicated and understood by the LSHTM community.
- 3.14.** Council encouraged the Executive Team to think creatively about how the Head of EDI role could be recruited to.

4. STUDENTS' REPRESENTATIVE COUNCIL (SRC) PRESIDENT REPORT TO COUNCIL

Noted:

- 4.1.** The SRC have been discussing the rationale not to implement instalment-based tuition fee payments with LSHTM's management. Currently, LSHTM does not implement this as often international students need to demonstrate they have the full tuition fee to obtain a UK Student Visa. While this was understood, LSHTM's student community felt this could be hindering international student recruitment, along with the high cost of living in London.
- 4.2.** The SRC hosted an end of the calendar year party for students and have introduced pronoun badges. It had also been exploring how best to communicate and engage with the student community e.g., online feedback forms.
- 4.3.** There remains some discontent with the quality and consistency of assessment feedback, which aligns to feedback from the previous Postgraduate Taught Experience Survey (PTES). It was noted that Senate recently received a report from the Marking and Assessment Working Group who had been set up to address issues raised.
- 4.4.** The SRC were encouraged by Management reconsidering the English Language Policy and requirements to ensure they were aligned with the rest of the UK Higher Education Sector.
- 4.5.** The SRC noted that the careers support available to them was not meeting student needs. Currently, provision was primarily a one-to-one service where they review CVs and offer interview preparation. There was a career's event online, but students would like events where they can network and meet potential employers in person. Staff in the Careers team were only part time, so it was difficult for staff to respond to student feedback.
- 4.6.** Many students were concerned about the timing of graduation; for the 2023/24 cohort, graduation took place in February 2025, which meant international graduates had to apply for visas to attend as their student visa had expired.
- 4.7.** Council asked the Executive Team to thoroughly investigate the feasibility of moving Graduation earlier so that it takes place within the existing student visa timeframe.
- 4.8.** Council recognised that many of the issues raised by the SRC President would impact student experience.

5. REPORTS FOR DISCUSSION

5.1. Strategy Implementation & Balanced Scorecard

Noted:

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- 5.1.1. Council noted the progress made to implement the strategy and the associated measures of success which were displayed as a balanced score card.
- 5.1.2. Good progress has been made to increase the ethnic diversity of Assistant and Associate Professors and LSHTM was generally performing better than the sector in this regard. However, there was slower progress in improving the ethnic diversity of LSHTM's Professors.

5.2. Education Strategy - Ahmed Rashid (Pro-Director of Education) and Derfel Owen (Registrar & Director of Education Services) joined for this item.

Noted:

- 5.2.1. Council was provided with an overview of progress made in relation to the Education Strategy.
- 5.2.2. Updates to the Education Strategy had been made in light of the reduction in student numbers LSHTM has been facing in recent years.
- 5.2.3. It was reiterated that LSHTM faces many education risks, and there was a risk in doing nothing. LSHTM was therefore considering a range of other education income opportunities with a broad set of partners.
- 5.2.4. Council queried why LSHTM wasn't seeking quick wins such as increasing its Distance Learning income. It was advised that the Distance Learning market was diminishing, and competitor institutions are moving towards a model of delivering education in country as opposed to online. Though this wasn't to say LSHTM couldn't gain more of its market share back.
- 5.2.5. Given the number and breadth of opportunities being sought, LSHTM needed to consider where best to invest its limited resources. Five risk categories had been identified covering finances, reputation, opportunity, values, legal/compliance, and it was proposed that an internal Risk Review Panel be convened when an education income opportunity arises outside of LSHTM's standard education provision.
- 5.2.6. Council commended the range of education income opportunities being pursued and noted the challenges in sequencing and prioritising these.
- 5.2.7. Council acknowledged that each education opportunity was likely to need an individual governance pathway and oversight arrangements.
- 5.2.8. Council encouraged the Executive Team to progress relevant proposals as soon as possible, given LSHTM's financial position.

6. REPORTS FOR APPROVAL

6.1. Anti-Fraud, Bribery & Corruption Policy

Noted:

- 6.1.1. It would be useful for the Units to develop guidance on any additional considerations to ensure that LSHTM's Anti-Fraud, Bribery & Corruption Policy is adhered to within their legal jurisdictions.

Resolved:

- 6.1.2. Council approved the updated Anti-Fraud, Bribery & Corruption Policy.

7. REPORTS FROM COMMITTEES

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7.1. The Gambia Unit Committee

Noted:

- 7.1.1. Council noted the summary report from the committee's trip to The Gambia Unit and the inaugural meeting on 14 February 2025.
- 7.1.2. Since The Gambia Unit Committee last met, there has been an important development with the announcement that The Gambia Unit Director will be stepping down in March 2026.
- 7.1.3. The committee were impressed with middle management and would engage with relevant Heads of Services in upcoming meetings.
- 7.1.4. As evidenced in the meeting summary, there was a lot of work to be done at the Unit to ensure there was appropriate governance and oversight arrangements. However, there were huge opportunities for The Gambia Unit which were yet to be explored.

7.2. Uganda Unit Committee

Noted:

- 7.2.1. Council noted the summary report from the committee's trip to Uganda and a copy of the draft minutes from the inaugural meeting on 14 March 2025.
- 7.2.2. As reported with The Gambia Unit, there was huge amount of opportunity for the Uganda Unit.
- 7.2.3. The Unit faces challenges to building and maintaining an appropriate talent pool and pipeline, specifically those at mid-career level.
- 7.2.4. Other risks identified by the committee included securing funding for the upcoming QQ funding period.
- 7.2.5. The committee acknowledged that there was a lot of work needed on certain issues such as cyber security, and deep dives would be taking place on these at future meetings.
- 7.2.6. It was confirmed that despite the anti-homosexuality legislation in Uganda, there were no plans for the UK to withdraw its presence from in Uganda as confirmed by the British High Commission. The risk re. anti-homosexuality legislation would be monitored by the Unit, particularly with upcoming national elections due to take place in January 2026.

7.3. People, Equality Diversity & Inclusion Committee

Noted:

- 7.3.1. Council noted the summary from the People, Equality Diversity & Inclusion Committee meeting held on 04 March 2025.
- 7.3.2. The committee had discussed what more could be done to ensure LSHTM's expectations within its Hybrid Working Framework were adhered to. It was appreciated that for many staff hybrid working was more inclusive and organisations that have mandated staff back to offices have faced significant staff opposition. Council suggested more could be done to ensure staff were adhering to the expectations within the Hybrid Working Framework.
- 7.3.3. Another element to the Hybrid Working Framework was the impact on the student community. For students who were studying on intensive programmes, there was disappointment when there was unnecessary remote teaching e.g., pre-recorded

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lectures. This practice was particularly stark for students on joint programmes where in-person teaching was better at the partner universities.

- 7.3.4. Council acknowledged that this must be disappointing from a student perspective.
- 7.3.5. Council queried whether there was any guidance on remote teaching, and it was confirmed by the Executive Team that there was nothing explicitly written down.
- 7.3.6. The results of the recent Staff Pulse Survey were reported to the committee and while there were many positives, there was a drop in staff feeling valued, specifically staff at mid-career level.
- 7.3.7. The committee noted the gender and ethnicity pay gap reports; while there were no significant surprises, further interventions and actions were needed.

Resolved:

- 7.3.8. Council recommended that the Executive Team consider areas, such as teaching, where they could be more prescriptive on hybrid working expectations.

7.4. Senate

Noted:

- 7.4.1. Council noted the summary from the Senate meeting held on 19 March 2025.
- 7.4.2. Steps were being taken to address student feedback on assessment and marking. There was a general feeling that LSHTM's students were being over assessed and LSHTM's marking processes could be more efficient.
- 7.4.3. Senate also considered and approved light touch revalidation process as part of LSHTM's degree awarding power deployment.
- 7.4.4. The Chair reported that Senate was evolving into a more active and engaged academic decision-making body which was encouraging.

7.5. Finance & Development Committee

Noted:

- 7.5.1. Council noted the summary from the Finance & Development Committee meeting held on 30 January 2025.
- 7.5.2. The committee reviewed the drop in LSHTM's research income over the past couple of years and was assured that this was due to a number of large research projects come to a natural end, and that LSHTM's focus on larger grants with good cost recovery was also contributing to an overall drop in research income. This would continue to be monitored by the committee.
- 7.5.3. The committee noted that LSHTM's fixed cost base was quite large and given the financial challenges, the Executive Team would need to take significant action around this to ensure LSHTM's financial sustainability.

7.6. Nominations & Governance Committee

Noted:

- 7.6.1. Council noted the summary from the Nominations & Governance Committee meeting held on 04 March 2025.

Resolved:

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- 7.6.2. Council exceptionally approved the renewal of Hitesh Patel's appointment as an Independent Member of Council, Deputy Chair of Council, and Chair of the Audit & Risk Committee for a third and final term.

7.7. Audit & Risk Committee

Noted:

- 7.7.1. Council noted the summary from the Audit & Risk Committee meeting held on 20 March 2025.
- 7.7.2. BDO were preparing for the upcoming External Audit 2024/25; they have raised some concerns over LSHTM's Sustainable Climate Impact Fund (SCIF) in relation to its risk management and accounting. The committee have requested further information from SCIF about its risk management and adherence to key policies such as Anti-Fraud, Bribery and Corruption.
- 7.7.3. The committee noted changes to LSHTM's strategic risks; this included additional risks around the research funding landscape due to US Federal Aid cuts and UK Overseas Development Aid cuts, and opportunities to work in partnerships with other organisations in pursuit of LSHTM's research and education objectives.
- 7.7.4. The committee received an update on LSHTM's compliance with its data protection responsibilities.
- 7.7.5. The committee commended the work of the Artificial Intelligence Working Group and has encouraged the Executive Team to consider what investment and/or relevant controls may be needed in this area.
- 7.7.6. The committee received presentations from the Units on their cyber security and while work in this area is underway, there was a significant amount of work to still be completed which would require Unit resources to be allocated. The committee recommended that the Unit Committees monitor the cyber security efforts for each Unit.
- 7.7.7. A whistleblowing disclosure has been received. The Deputy Chair of Council and interim Secretary to Council have instigated a short externally facilitated investigation.

Resolved:

- 7.7.8. The KPMG/WonkHE Higher Education Policy Landscape report would be electronically circulated to members for their information.

8. Chair of Council Recruitment

The Chair of Council recused himself for the following item and the Deputy Chair of Council outlined the process to recruit a new Chair of Council.

- 8.1.1. Following notification of the Chair of Council's intention to step down at the end of his second term in April 2026, a Special Nominations & Governance Committee was established to consider appropriate recruitment process.
- 8.1.2. The Special Nominations & Governance Committee decided that it was appropriate to engage an external search partner to help with the recruitment.

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- 8.1.3. Council queried why the Special Nominations & Governance Committee had appointed Russel Reynolds Associates Ltd(RRA) when the other search firms appeared to have more substantial experience in the Higher Education sector.
- 8.1.4. The role of Chair of Council was unremunerated, and some search partners had raised concerns about the challenges of finding suitable candidates given the financial pressures faced in the sector. However, RRA provided the Special Nominations & Governance Committee with assurance that they had a wide reach across commercial and public sectors in the UK and internationally and that they would be able to find high calibre candidates for the chair role.
- 8.1.5. The proposed Chair of Council recruitment timeline aims to appoint a new Chair of Council by Autumn 2025.
- 8.1.6. Currently, there were no limitations on the role of the Chair of Council; the search was expected to be global, and while the candidate did not need to be UK based there was an expectation that the candidate would be able to frequent LSHTM's London sites to carry out their role.
- 8.1.7. All Council members would be offered the opportunity to meet with RRA to provide their input into the role profile of the Chair of Council.
- 8.1.8. It was expected that the members of Special Nominations & Governance Committee would form the interview panel with a few additional members.
- 8.1.9. Council deemed the creation of a wider reference group to be appropriate and a good way to elicit staff and student input and allow candidates to get to know LSHTM.
- 8.1.10. The recruitment of a new Chair of Council provided a good opportunity to promote the work of Council to the wider LSHTM staff and student community.

Resolved:

- 8.1.11. Council members who wished to be included on the Chair of Council reference group and/or the interview panel were encouraged to send an expression of interest to the interim Secretary to Council.

9. DATE OF NEXT MEETING: 26 June 2025