

UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

MEETING OF COUNCIL: 12 April 2013

Agenda Item	C.13.35
Paper Number	C/21/13
Title	The Anglican Identity of the University
Author	Stephen Marston Vice-Chancellor
Status (<i>Open, Confidential, Reserved</i>) Starred (<i>for approval/for note</i>) or Unstarred	Open Unstarred
Action Required by Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• To endorse the attached paper as a statement on the Anglican identity of the University• To approve the 6 proposed actions recommended in paragraphs 12 – 17• Specifically, to endorse the formation of a new Standing Committee to bring together members of Council, the Foundation, staff, students and Chaplaincy with a remit to keep these issues under review (see paragraph 12 of the paper)
Matter previously considered by:	A working group convened by the Chaplain, including some Council and Foundation members

Executive Summary

The University has been reviewing the current meaning of our Anglican identity, how it is manifested in our current practices, and what action should be taken to develop it further. There was an external prompt in the form of a current review being undertaken by Stephen Heap for the Church of England Board of Education on “The Anglican Identity of Church of England Higher Education Institutions”. But we wanted in any case to pursue the discussion internally as part of our wider work on the University’s culture.

The discussion has included members of Council (Michael Perham, Pamela Taylor and Karen Morgan), the President of the Foundation (Malcolm Herbert), members of the University Executive, staff and the Chaplaincy. Views were also invited from staff and students at large.

The attached paper is the result of that work. It summarises how the University’s Anglican identity currently expresses itself, and proposes 6 actions for further work. **The Council is invited to endorse the paper and the actions set out in paragraphs 12 to 17.** If Council endorses the paper, it will be published on the website as a statement of University position.

One of the recommendations for further action (in paragraph 12) is that we should establish a Standing Committee of Council with the draft terms of reference attached at Annex A. **If Council is content to endorse those terms of reference,** we will put them to Governance and Nominations Committee to consider membership.

One issue arising in the discussions on which there was not full consensus concerned the recruitment of staff. It would be an option to ask candidates at interview specific questions about their awareness of the University’s Anglican foundation and whether that raised any issues for them. The view of the Executive, however, is that we should not do that, because it could risk causing some candidates to infer that they were being implicitly invited to express some faith commitment. Rather we should limit interview questions to the University’s values, and not make explicit reference to Anglican identity.

THE ANGLICAN IDENTITY OF THE UNIVERSITY OF GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Purpose

1. The University of Gloucestershire has an historic and continuing affiliation with the Christian Church. This reflects particularly the Evangelical Anglican Christian foundation of two of the institutions which were subsequently merged with others to form the University.
2. Like every other university in England, the University of Gloucestershire has been undergoing rapid change, which will continue for the foreseeable future. We now operate in a pluralist society, seeking to serve students of all faiths and none, and employing staff of all faiths and none. So we felt it was timely to review how that Anglican faith identity is, and should be, reflected in the University's current constitution and activities.
3. The purpose of this paper is to summarise the conclusions reached about how that identity is expressed, and to set out some additional ways in which it could be developed.
4. The paper has been developed through a series of discussions across the University, including two special meetings convened by the University Chaplain, an open meeting chaired by the Bishop of Gloucester (who is also Vice-Chair of Council), a meeting of the Fellows of the University Foundation, and through references in the Vice-Chancellor's newsletter and briefings for all staff. The paper was discussed and endorsed by the University's Council at their meeting on 12 April 2013.

Background

5. The University of Gloucestershire was designated as a University in 2001. But its origins date back to the 19th century. One major strand was the municipal and local authority development, from the 1840s onwards, of vocational and professional further and higher education. The other major strand was the formation in 1847 of the Cheltenham Training College with an explicit Evangelical Anglican Christian mission for the education of teachers, and the subsequent establishment of the Colleges of St Paul and St Mary.
6. The original faith basis of the Training College was sustained through several organisational changes. When the University was formed in 2001, its Articles of Association carried forward that legacy. The Articles, as last revised in 2011, continue to provide that:
 - a. the objects of the University include "through its activities and work, to reflect and show both its civic and evangelical Church of England foundations";
 - b. the curriculum of the University must include teacher training and the study of Christian theology;
 - c. there must be a Chaplain who is a priest of the Church of England and a chaplaincy for the provision of religious worship, instruction and care in accordance with the doctrines, rites and practices of the Church of England.

7. Associated with the University is an Anglican Foundation of some 200 Fellows, half clergy and half laity. The Fellows are Christians committed to the values of the University's Anglican origin, and who support the University's work and mission. Originally, the Foundation acted as an electoral college, appointing a number of members to the University's Council. That role was removed in 2011.

Goal

8. As a University, our goal is to provide an environment which is respectful of faith; a place where debate is fostered and in which people of all faiths and none feel comfortable in expressing their convictions within the law, without fear of discrimination or ridicule; a place which provides opportunities for individuals who so wish to explore, deepen and express their faith; and which promotes awareness of the historical, intellectual and cultural significance of faith (particularly the Christian Faith) for the University and our society. As a University, we are, and should always be, a place that values open and honest debate about fundamental issues, and that sustains the pursuit of knowledge, insight and truth - including in relation to faith and religion.
9. It is not a corporate objective of the University as an organisation to seek to proselytise, although the Foundation and the Chaplaincy do uphold and promote the Christian faith. As a University, we do not want our Anglican identity to be a cause of division or exclusion but want it to be a source of strength, and a distinctive characteristic and asset for the University.

Current Practice

10. Our Anglican identity and heritage expresses itself in many ways, including through the following:
 - a. Our core purpose as a University to educate students, and thereby enable individuals to achieve their own potential and goals as human beings. We are committed to playing our part in broadening access to the University, so that higher education is available to all those with the ability to benefit.
 - b. The continuing commitment to teaching, research and complementary activities in theology and religion. We have an endowed Chair in New Testament Studies, funded by the Kirby Laing Foundation, as one of three full Professors of Theology. We have an active research programme in theology, which will be submitted to the Research Excellence Framework (REF).
 - c. Offering opportunities for students to combine the study of theology/religion with other subjects, for example our postgraduate programme in Sport and Christian Outreach. We are the only University that offers research degrees in this area. The University hosts a Professor of Sport and Christian Outreach and a Visiting Professor in this area. Both are active researchers and will be entered in the forthcoming REF 2014.
 - d. Hosting the Centre for Sport, Spirituality and Religion, the only centre of its kind in the UK. Amongst other activities, the Centre supports the Sport Malawi Programme.
 - e. The programmes we offer to develop students to enter public service vocations, notably teaching, social work, community engagement, social care and youth work. The

University has been training school teachers for over 160 years, including subject area of Religious Education.

- f. The corporate values we espouse of nurture, creativity, sustainability, service, respect and trust. These are re-affirmed in our latest University strategy and reflected in our people and culture strategy. Consistent with those values, and assisted by our small size and the nature of our campuses, we aspire to create a stronger sense of belonging and community for students and staff than is found in other universities.
 - g. Our partnerships with other specialist faith-based colleges, particularly through the validation of their courses. For example, we validate programmes at the Centre for Youth Ministry, Moorlands College, Redcliffe College, and William Booth College.
 - h. Our corporate commitment to promoting concern for the environment, and for sustainability in its broadest sense. The University has an active sustainability programme, and has achieved an international reputation and won many awards for our work in this area.
 - i. The promotion of volunteering by students and staff, engaging in a wide range of community development and outreach activities, in the locality and overseas.
 - j. The work of the Chaplaincy, providing a wide range of opportunities for worship and pastoral care for students and staff. There is an active Christian Union, the Chaplaincy run a weekly “International Café” and a programme of events throughout the year, and we have close links to the many Churches and faith groups in the locality.
 - k. Our ethical investment policy, which ensures that our endowments and funds are only invested companies which meet our ethical principles.
 - l. Our links to the Diocese of Gloucester. The Bishop of Gloucester is a member of the University Council and Pro-Chancellor of the University, the Chaplain is a Minister of the Diocese, and some University graduation ceremonies are held in the Cathedral.
 - m. The lecture programme that we have agreed to support with the newly-designated Cheltenham Minster (formerly St Mary’s) on faith issues.
 - n. The work of the Foundation, supporting the University’s mission.
 - o. The continuing recognition of our Anglican foundation within the University’s constitution, and as part of our organisational history.
 - p. The architectural legacy of Francis Close Hall, including the central position of the University chapel and the provision of faith rooms on all campuses. We are investing in a major enhancement of the faith space on the Park Campus.
 - q. Our membership of, and involvement in, the Cathedrals Group of Church-founded Universities and Colleges.
11. Arguably, this set of activities already represents a broad-ranging and appropriate expression of the University’s Anglican identity and Christian foundation. In many respects, our Anglican identity will best be expressed through being integrated within our daily activities. For example, by making a reality of the commitments within our People and Culture strategy, we will work towards a culture which is respectful of people, which values diversity, which supports personal growth, and which combats bullying. We have, however, considered whether there are specific actions it would be useful to take, in order to strengthen the positive aspects of our Anglican identity. We have identified six proposed actions.

Further Actions

12. First, we propose to form a standing group of members drawn from the University Council, the Foundation, staff and students, with a remit to keep these issues under review. The group would have the status of a Standing Committee of the Council. It would be composed of three members each from the Council and the Executive of the Foundation, with interested members of the University staff and students. Following the 2011 revision of the University Articles and the removal of appointment rights from the Foundation, there are now no Foundation Fellows on the Council. We think there should be a close, ongoing link between the Foundation and the Council, to oversee this aspect of the University's mission and objects. The group should prepare an annual report to the Council reviewing progress in relation to the issues covered in this paper, linked to an annual report by the Chaplain.

13. Second, we should affirm the role of the Foundation. Since the removal of its function as an electoral college for University Council members in 2011, the Foundation has reviewed its role. It has drawn up a statement on its future operation and functions, which the University endorses. Rather than seeking further to define a corporate role for the Foundation as a collective entity, it may be more useful to identify how individual Foundation Fellows can support the University in different ways, depending on each person's interests and time availability. Those ways include:
 - a. Serving on the Foundation Executive or the joint standing Committee with the University Council, helping to achieve the goals set out in this paper.
 - b. Applying for, or encouraging other suitable candidates to apply for, membership of the University Council as vacancies arise.
 - c. Acting as mentors to individual students who are seeking help and guidance.
 - d. Contributing financial support for chaplaincy internships, students in cases of hardship, to support access to higher education, or to support volunteering activities.
 - e. Contributing as speakers to lecture and seminar programmes.
 - f. Keeping generally informed about the University; and, as opportunities arise in the normal course of events, acting as champions for the University and linking us to relevant people and networks.
 - g. Supporting the University through prayer.

14. Third, we should review how the University's Anglican identity is expressed in our recruitment of students and staff, and particularly the recruitment of international students. At present, students and staff applying to the University may well be unaware of the University's Anglican origins and how they are reflected in our current operations. For many students and staff that is not an issue, and we would not want to change our recruitment practice or literature in any way that made people of other faiths and none feel they would be unwelcome or excluded. But particularly for international recruitment, it is possible that some applicants would be attracted to a University which was explicit about its Anglican identity and its commitment to providing an environment respectful of faiths. We should research the options, and the approaches adopted by comparable Universities.

15. Fourth, we should make it easier to find relevant information about our Anglican identity on the University website, for staff, students, applicants and those wishing to know more about us. It should be part of the story we tell about ourselves, in terms of our history and our present

purposes. This paper should be made available on the website, with weblinks to the activities listed in paragraph 10.

16. Fifth, we should introduce a structured programme of “public square” opportunities for students to consider and debate issues of faith and meaning. This would complement the University’s wider mission to enable students to reach a deeper understanding of themselves, their lives, and the world around them. It could be done in various ways, and we need to research models used elsewhere. For example, it could be a seminar series. Or it could be an additional taught module, available to all students who wish to take it, with academic credit awarded for successful completion. Or it could be analogous to a Degreeplus internship or volunteering opportunity, which does not offer academic credit, but can be recorded within the Higher Education Achievement Record. Some Universities set aside a designated time each week to enable students to participate in such programmes.
17. Sixth, we should review how we might develop our links with the Diocese of Gloucester, including better links with the Board of Education and its work with schools in the county. The distinctive Evangelical Christian foundation of the original Cheltenham Training College meant that historically our links with the Diocese have been less close than some other Universities whose original foundation was prompted directly by the Diocese.

University of Gloucestershire
March 2013

COUNCIL AND FOUNDATION STANDING GROUP

Terms of Reference

18. To provide a close and ongoing link between the Foundation and the Council to oversee those aspects of the University's mission and objects relating to its Anglican identity.

19. To ensure that the University continues to work towards the following goal:

"As a University, our goal is to provide an environment which is respectful of faith; a place where debate is fostered and in which people of all faiths and none feel comfortable in expressing their convictions within the law, without fear of discrimination or ridicule; a place which provides opportunities for individuals who so wish to explore, deepen and express their faith; and which promotes awareness of the historical, intellectual and cultural significance of faith (particularly the Christian Faith) for the University and our society. As a University, we are, and should always be, a place that values open and honest debate about fundamental issues, and that sustains the pursuit of knowledge, insight and truth – including in relation to faith and religion.

It is not a corporate objective of the University as an organisation to seek to proselytise, although the Foundation and the Chaplaincy do uphold and promote the Christian faith. As a University, we do not want our Anglican identity to be a cause of division or exclusion but want it to be a source of strength, and a distinctive characteristic and asset for the University."

20. To identify ways for the Foundation Fellows to support the University in achieving its goal as outlined in point 2.

21. To review work undertaken and to suggest other areas of activity to maintain the Anglican identity of the University.

22. To ensure actions and decisions are consistent with the University's Articles of Association.

23. To report annually to Council on the work of the Group.

Specific Policy Responsibilities

No specific policy responsibilities

Specific Responsibility for Review of University Area of Activity

To ensure the continued Anglican identity of the University and to maintain the link between Council and the Foundation.

Mode of Operation

Chair: Member of Council

Vice Chair: President of the Foundation

Officer: Academic Registrar and University Secretary

Quorum

See after membership

Frequency of Meetings

Twice per year

Reporting Line

University Council

Current Sub-Committees

None

Submission /

Availability of Minutes

Minutes are held by the Academic Registrar and University Secretary, and published on the University website.

COUNCIL AND FOUNDATION STANDING GROUP

	Membership		Appointment Dates
1	3 members of Council (to include the Vice-Chancellor)		
2	3 representatives from the Foundation including the President (usually drawn from the Fellows' Standing Committee)		
3	3 staff representatives (to include representation from University Executive and Theology)		
4	3 student representatives (usually to include representation from the Christian Union)		
	Chaplaincy representative (usually the University Chaplain)		

Quorum

The Committee shall be quorate when at least one member from each of the four categories indicated plus either the Chair or Vice-Chair are present.

Where the Committee is, or becomes during the meeting, inquorate, Council will be informed of these circumstances at its next meeting. The Committee Chair shall decide whether:

- a. to adjourn with immediate effect with a Special Meeting being summoned as soon as conveniently it may be or,
- b. to continue to conduct business with decisions only being agreed by correspondence.