

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 May 2015

The meeting was preceded by a tour of the new Sports Centre project which was entering the final stage of development.

Present

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| Bernard Laverty | Independent member | Chair of the Board |
| Lesley Munro | | Clerk to the Board |
| Martin Ainscough | Independent member | |
| Richard Benjamin | Independent member | |
| Evelyn Carnegie | Academic staff member | Elected |
| John Cater | Vice-Chancellor | Ex-officio |
| Clive Edwards | Independent member | |
| Lisa Greenhalgh | Independent member | Chair: Audit Committee |
| Rob Green | Independent member | |
| Bill Johnson | Support staff member | Elected |
| David Owen | Independent member | Deputy Chair & Chair of Resources Committee |
| Simon Pope | Independent member | |
| Connor Richmond | Student member | Elected |
| George Talbot | Academic staff member | Academic Board nominee |
| Kayley Wilson | Student member | SU President |

In attendance

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| Mark Allanson | PVC (External Relations) |
| Lynda Brady | PVC (Student Experience) & University Secretary |
| Steve Igoe | Deputy Vice-Chancellor |
| Paul Malone | Students' Union General Manager |

Observers

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| Liz Mear | Chief Executive NW Coast Academic Health Science Network |
| Jade McDonald | Student member elect |

Apologies

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| Stephen Hesford | Independent member |
| John Maxwell | Independent member |
| Steven Rouke | SU President elect |
| Denise Walker | Independent member |

The Chair welcomed Liz Mear and Jade McDonald to the meeting as observers.

BG.14.079 **Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest specific to the meeting.

BG.14.080 **Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's Announcements.

BG.14.081 **Chair's Action**

There was no Chair's Action to report.

BG.14.082 **Minutes of the previous meeting**

Received: Document BG/058/14

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2015 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record noting Denise Walker had sent apologies for the meeting.

BG.14.083 **Action Log**

Received: Document BG/059/14

Members received the Action Log noting all actions as complete.

BG.14.084 **Matters arising not included elsewhere on the agenda**

There were no matters arising.

SECTION A ITEMS

BG.14.085 Capital Projects Update

Following the tour of the development, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor reported that the Sports Centre was on target for completion in August. There were some budget challenges in relation to the final fit-out costs but it was hoped these could be recouped through VAT savings. In discussion, it was agreed that delivery of a high quality facility was of primary importance.

It was noted that the Phase 10 residential project was on target for delivery within time and budget but that, although planning permission had been received, it had been decided not to progress with the 5A proposal at this stage following a review of the plot size and likely visual impact of the development. Future projects could be considered around Slack House Cottages and the Hawthorns.

Members congratulated the Director of Capital Projects and team for the excellent progress and quality of the developments.

The update on Capital Projects was received.

BG.14.086 Access Agreement 2016/17

Received: Document BG/060/14

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) introduced the Agreement which incorporated the principles approved at the last meeting. She indicated that the purpose of the Agreement was to ensure that an appropriate proportion of additional income accrued from fee levels above £6,000 was targeted towards improving access, retention and progression. The withdrawal of the National Scholarship scheme had provided an opportunity to draw up more flexible arrangements with a focus on helping students in hardship and ensuring all students were able to benefit from access to opportunities, such as work placements, during their studies. It was noted that the Agreement had been submitted to the Office for Fair Access but had not yet been approved.

In response to a member's question, it was reported that comparisons with other universities were difficult as each institution had its own priorities depending on the profile of the student body.

The Board approved the 2016/17 Access Agreement welcoming the holistic and coherent approach adopted.

Action: PVC (Student Experience)

BG.14.087 CUC Meetings

The Chair gave a verbal report on recent regional and national CUC meetings which had provided good opportunities for networking. He drew particular attention to an interesting session given by the National Union of Students on student mental health and, noting the University and Students' Union's work in this area, he suggested that there could be opportunities for the University to become more involved in the campaign. There had been an illuminating case study of the University of East London as well as a session on recruiting a new Vice-Chancellor which had highlighted some of the challenges of working with headhunters.

The report on recent CUC meetings was received.

BG.14.088 HEFCE Institutional Grant Letter

Received: Document BG/061/14

The Vice-Chancellor introduced the grant letter noting that, since the introduction of full fees, the grant only represented a small proportion of the University's income. However, he drew particular attention to the welcome and significant increase in research income following the outcome of the recent Research Excellence Framework exercise.

It was noted that the 15/16 allocations followed the Treasury financial year and that some changes might therefore be anticipated after 31 March.

The HEFCE Institutional Grant Letter was received.

BG.14.089 HEFCE Assessment of Institutional Risk

Received: Document BG/062/14

The Vice-Chancellor introduced the letter from HEFCE which confirmed that the University was not at higher risk noting that this represented the best assessment that could be given. In relation to the attached table, he drew attention to the University's performance

across a range of indicators with surplus as a percentage of income showing as the second best in the country, a falling percentage for external borrowing, good reserves and cash flow and controlled staff costs.

Members congratulated the University on an excellent set of statistical indicators.

The HEFCE Assessment of Institutional Risk was received.

BG.14.090 WLBC Forum

Received: Document BG/063/14

The Chair reported on the last meeting of the Forum noting that it continued to prove difficult to generate discussion on strategic issues which could benefit the whole community with the focus of meetings remaining on minor aspects of student behaviour. There had been no progress on proposals for the use of Section 106 monies whilst the potential to stimulate student electoral registration had not been fully realised.

It was suggested that a change to the Terms of Reference of the Group should be proposed in order to promote a more productive agenda.

Action: Chair

The minutes of the WLBC Forum were received.

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| SECTION B ITEMS |
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BG.14.091 Competition and Markets Authority (CMA): An Effective Regulatory Framework for Higher Education

Received: Document BG.064/14

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations) introduced this report which outlined the key points of the recently issued CMA advice to institutions in relation to the remit of consumer law in the protection of students' interests. In particular, he drew attention to the importance of ensuring clarity around information provision, terms and conditions and complaints procedures at each of the major stages of the application and enrolment process.

The CMA advice followed on from an investigation undertaken by its predecessor, the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) which suggested that, whilst there was no evidence of endemic bad practice in the sector, more clarity around university responsibilities under consumer protection law was desirable.

It was noted that compliance with CMA advice would be subject to audit and the University was taking steps to review relevant practices, policies, rules and regulations so that changes could be made if necessary.

The report on the CMA policy paper was received.

BG.14.092 Vice-Chancellor's Report

Received: Document BG/065/14

The Vice-Chancellor introduced his report, acknowledging the importance of the outcome of the general election and highlighting the following points:

- Having taken full advantage of the new tuition fee regime against political expectations, universities were unlikely to be considered a funding priority. Coupled with the continuing decline in the 18-21 age cohort (which would not reverse until 20/21) and an inevitably rising cost base, the next few years were likely to be characterised by more aggressive competition for which some institutions were ill prepared;
- Changes in the school curriculum posed particular challenges with the increased emphasis on examinations expected to lead to a fall in 'A' level grades. Taken alongside a reduction in subject availability, this could encourage some schools towards BTEC qualifications with a consequence of making these more attractive to Russell Group universities, further exacerbating competition. Most importantly, the University needed to ensure its transition arrangements matched the changing nature of the student intake;
- Increased regulation was a strong possibility with the potential for the introduction of a new framework for teaching excellence to match the Research Excellence Framework;

- Teacher training remained in a precarious state with reduced numbers of applications nationally and the likelihood of a teacher shortage looming. Recent policy changes had combined to make teaching a less attractive profession and this would take some years to reverse even if a more collaborative approach with university training providers was realised. There was potential for similar policy shifts with respect to Social Work education and whilst the position for other healthcare professionals was more positive, this was likely to be accompanied by increased pressure on the unit of resource. Overall these conditions supported the decision taken some years ago for both the Health and Education Faculties to diversify their portfolios;
- Whilst noting future challenges, University recruitment for 2015 was holding up well and should provide for a good intake with less pressure on Clearing.

In concluding his report, the Vice-Chancellor indicated that the issue of placements for a small number of final year teacher training students had been resolved so that all students should be able to graduate in the summer. He particularly thanked the Students' Union for their co-operation in this regard and students for their flexibility.

The Vice-Chancellor's report was received.

BG.14.093 Students' Union Report

Received: Document BG/066/14

The President of the Students' Union introduced the report, drawing attention to the following range of activities undertaken since the last meeting:

- Attendance at the annual NUS Conference with an opportunity to contribute to setting policy on important issues such as support for postgraduate students, changing the structure of maintenance loans and tackling the ethnicity attainment gap;
- Research on sexual assault and sexual harassment in relation to the <3 Consent Report which had resulted in a number of recommendations discussed with and supported by Directorate;

- Further work on revising the current course representative system to provide a more consistent and effective approach;
- Expansion of the training programme for elected officers to ensure continuity.

In addition, a report from the returning officer on the recent elections was received which confirmed a fair and democratic process.

In discussion, it was noted that:

- Election turnout at 10% was similar to the previous year and around average for the sector but the Union was seeking to improve engagement with a greater emphasis on activities such as subject-based societies to make the Union more relevant to a greater number of students;
- The post of BME officer had not been filled in the recent elections but there had been a number of expressions of interest since and a further election would be held in February;
- The focus on the ethnicity attainment gap linked well to targets in the Access Agreement and would be supported through Faculty Teaching Fellow appointments.

The report from the Students' Union was received.

BG.14.094 HEFCE Report: Financial Health of the Sector 2013/14

Received: Document BG/067/14

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the report highlighting the strength of Edge Hill's performance in relation to the surplus percentage, retained reserves and cash balances and noting the decreasing commitment to external borrowing. Whilst the report was generally positive for the sector and no institutions were currently in danger of insolvency, there was considerable variation in individual institutional performance.

In terms of long-term sustainability, the increasing pressures from a rising cost base set alongside relatively static income were noted together with a significant increase in capital spending across the sector which, with few opportunities to increase income, suggested a

reliance on borrowing that could create future challenges. In addition, many institutions needed to invest heavily in upgrading older parts of their estate, an aspect Edge Hill did not have to contend with given a largely 'new build' campus.

In conclusion, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor emphasised the increasing reliance on good levels of recruitment to maintain a sound business model.

The HEFCE report on the financial health of the sector was received.

BG.14.095 FSSG Report: The Sustainability of Learning and Teaching in Higher Education in England

Received: Document BG/068/14

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the report from the Financial Sustainability Strategy Group (FSSG) which provided an overview of the prospects for sector-wide academic and financial sustainability in the new financial environment since the last report in 2008. It also identified key challenges over the next five to ten years and offered a set of recommendations for institutions, government and funders/regulators.

Whilst the report sought to take an open and honest approach in relation to the financial position, there was little that was new and, in terms of recommendations, it was unlikely that the call for a reduced regulatory burden would be realised.

In discussion, it was noted that much of the University's provision was at the lower end in terms of the cost of delivery and this could be important in any review of the current fee structure.

The FSSG report on sustainability was received.

BG.14.096 Any other Business

.01 Lease Surrender

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor reported that, following a meeting of the Board of Property Services, a University subsidiary, it had been recommended that the lease held by the company for the LINC building be surrendered as it was no longer providing value for money. The LINC would revert to full University ownership.

Following discussion, the Board approved the surrender of the lease from Property Services in relation to the LINC building.

Action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor

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| SECTION C ITEMS |
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BG.14.097 Draft Calendar

Received: Document BG/069/14

Members were asked to consider the proposed calendar for 2015/16 and inform the Clerk of any issues prior to confirmation at the next meeting.

Action: All

BG.14.098 Concluding Remarks

The Chair thanked Connor Richmond, retiring Student Governor, for his contribution to the Board and wished him well for the future.

BG.14.099 Academic Board Minutes

Received: Document BG/070/14

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 March 2015 were received.

BG.14.100 Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 6 July 2015.