

BOARD OF GOVERNORSMinutes of the meeting held on 26 January 2015

Present

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
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
Denise Walker	Independent member	
Kayley Wilson	Student member	SU President

In attendance

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

Apologies

John Cater	Vice-Chancellor	Ex-officio
Stephen Hesford	Independent member	
John Maxwell	Independent member	

The Chair extended a welcome to Evelyn Carnegie who was attending her first meeting as the newly elected academic staff representative.

BG.14.046 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest specific to the meeting.

BG.14.047 Chair's Announcements

There were no Chair's Announcements.

BG.14.048 Chair's Action

There was no Chair's Action to report.

BG.14.049 Minutes of the previous meeting

Received: Document BG/035/14

The minutes of the meeting held on 1 December 2014 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

BG.14.050 Action Log

Received: Document BG/036/14

Members received the Action Log noting that a meeting had been held concerning the VIBE media facilities and proposals from the student representative had been invited. It was further noted that the issue concerning the Residences and Catering budget had been resolved and an explanation for the variance included in the management accounts.

BG.14.051 Matters arising not included elsewhere on the agenda

There were no matters arising.

SECTION A ITEMS

BG.14.052 Public Relations Activity

Received: Document BG/037/14

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Affairs) updated members on PR activity since the production of the circulated paper. He drew attention

to the main aims of the strategy which were to widen the geographical reach for recruitment and extend the influence and authority of the University's voice. In relation to recruitment, the target market included sixth forms, teachers, careers advisers and parents and was supported by a Schools and Colleges targets model developed by the Student Recruitment team. Work on extending influence incorporated a greater emphasis on civic engagement with key cities through cultural activities. Sponsorship and collaborative opportunities which enhanced the University brand were also being explored and reference to the sponsorship of an upcoming exhibition at Liverpool Tate was cited as an example of this. Press coverage and ambient marketing of the University of the Year award, linked to key aims, would continue throughout the year.

In discussion, the following points were noted:

- Information about the award had been sent to the British Council and the University's international partners and had elicited positive feedback. A meeting with the British Council had also been scheduled and it was expected that the award would enhance the University's reputation abroad. However, as the International Strategy was still emerging, the University was not looking for significant growth in international recruitment at this stage;
- Analysis of applications data showed a significant increase in applications received for the University's general Arts and Sciences programmes in the weeks since the award was confirmed but it was expected that the major impact would show in applications to study for 2016/17;
- Upcoming Visit Days were over-subscribed.

In concluding discussion, it was agreed that, whilst sponsorship arrangements needed careful consideration and should be closely allied to the University's core Mission, there were substantial benefits to be obtained from the association with quality brand names such as the Tate.

The report on Public Relations Activity was received.

SECTION B ITEMS

BG.14.053 REF 2014 – Results and Ramifications

Received: Document BG/038/14

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research/Dean of Arts and Sciences) provided an interesting and informative account of the University's REF submission and the outcomes which had been published just before Christmas. He drew particular attention to the progress made since the 2008 exercise with a significant increase in the range and quality of submissions and in the number of individual staff members submitted. In terms of outcomes, the University achieved some 4*/3* (world leading/internationally excellent) gradings in all twelve units of assessment submitted with History performing particularly well in terms of research power as well as output GPA and achieving a second quartile position. Law, Sport, Psychology and Media had also made an impressive showing especially as they had not been included in the previous RAE in 2008. The considerable reduction in unclassified work was also noteworthy. Overall results had moved the University from near the bottom of the table to the third quartile for power and intensity and this would have a positive impact on both funding and league table rankings. *(Clerk's note: A copy of the presentation slides incorporating the detailed analysis of results is circulated with the minutes).*

In discussion, the following points were noted:

- The University was enhancing research culture through professorial and early career researcher appointments and the continued support for PhD completions through the Graduate Teaching Assistant (GTA) scheme;
- The University's strong general performance in recent years had been helpful in attracting high quality applicants for staff posts allowing for better capacity building. The University of the Year award would further strengthen this position;
- More work was required to generate external funding for research. External training on bid-writing had been provided and a challenging target set for 2020;

- The GTA scheme was internally funded although costs were partly offset as the position included some teaching duties. It was hoped that some externally funded PhDs could be recruited in the future;
- Research success was a criteria for internal progression;
- The comparatively low levels of research intensity in the Faculties of Health and Education were largely due to lower staff turnover and the requirement for a strong practitioner staff base. New appointments in both Faculties would provide a focus for the development of a more active research profile.

In concluding discussion, it was noted that there had been a step change in the University's research activity which was important for securing reputation. Members congratulated the University on the REF outcomes and the efforts of all staff submitted for assessment.

The report on the results and ramification of REF 2014 was received.

BG.14.054 International Activity: Update

Received: Document BG/039/14

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations) introduced the report which outlined the existing position and set out early thoughts for a revised strategy. Whilst noting that the current number of overseas students and partnerships was small, the importance of developing an international perspective to enhance the student experience was recognised. The fact that the University was not income dependent on overseas student recruitment allowed for a principled approach which added value.

In relation to earlier work in China, it was reported that an active relationship had been established with Chengdu University and negotiations were continuing with one further institution. The University also had a long-standing relationship with FY Institute of Technology, Singapore and a link with India through the very successful Masters in Surgery programme run collaboratively with Wrightington Hospital is being developed. There was further potential for growth in Health through innovative partnerships such as the recently approved collaboration with the Royal College of Physicians. In terms of overseas students on campus, there was a small cohort recruited from

a variety of countries and a core of Study Abroad students, mostly from the USA.

Looking towards a future strategy, discussions were ongoing with a view to developing a broader approach, encompassing collaborative international research opportunities and enhancing cross-cultural experiences for all students. There was enthusiasm for this in Faculties and positive feedback in relation to the experience of international students on campus. However, given the constraints of the University's geographic location and subject mix, and conscious of the risks involved in international recruitment, the strategy was likely to focus on the establishment of a small number of high quality strategic partnerships in niche areas alongside the development of inward and outward study abroad opportunities.

In discussion, the following points were noted:

- In addition to research opportunities, collaboration to identify 'best practice' in professional areas, such as the current project with paramedics in Finland, was equally valuable;
- The new OFFA agreement would incorporate a student enhancement fund which could support students in gaining international experience;
- Integration was an important aspect of the University's offer given the acknowledged impact of large numbers of overseas students within a small number of programmes on the student experience.

Concluding discussion, members welcomed the thrust of the paper and endorsed the emphasis on quality over quantity.

The update on International Activity was received.

BG.14.055 Improving the Student Experience

Received: Document BG/040/14

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) and University Secretary introduced her report which outlined work within the University to further improve the student experience based on an analysis of National Student Survey (NSS) outcomes. Whilst overall NSS performance was good, the areas of Organisation and

Management and Assessment and Feedback lagged behind other aspects and had therefore been selected as the focus of Project Groups established in September 2014.

Interim findings from the O&M group suggested that students were particularly influenced by their experience on the day they completed the questionnaire so, for example, difficulty in finding a parking space could impact on the O&M score. In terms of Assessment and Feedback, the findings suggested a need for more consistent practice. More generally, there was evidence to suggest that where survey completion was facilitated in class time, contextualised within the learning and teaching environment, response rates were higher and better aligned to the specific questions. Taking account of these findings, a more co-ordinated approach had been adopted for the 2015 survey with Departments facilitating completion within specified learning settings.

In addition to the NSS analysis, work was also underway to ensure that all students were able to maximise their potential in terms of final degree outcomes and that support mechanisms were effective in shaping intervention strategies.

In discussion, the following points were noted:

- Departmental NSS performance was considered through the Annual Review process with action plans expected for low scoring areas;
- Module performance was analysed annually with 'hot' modules identified for review. It was suggested that the University might consider ways to mitigate the impact of outlying modules on student performance;
- The continued growth of 'good' degree outcomes and consequent challenges for employers in differentiating applicants on the basis of degree classifications was noted as a national issue.

The report on Improving the Student Experience was received.

BG.14.056 LEPs and External Funding Opportunities

Received: Document BG/041/14

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations) introduced the paper outlining the emergence of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) following the demise of Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and their role in identifying area priorities for economic growth through the

development of Strategic Economic Plans (SEPs). Opportunities for universities were likely to flow from LEP roles in developing the knowledge economy and as the holders of significant EU funds.

It was noted that the five North West LEPs were at very different stages of development and, whilst there was some university representation on most LEP Boards, there was little co-ordination of activity around HE. Edge Hill had hosted two meetings of North West Vice-Chancellors, the Chairs of the North West LEPs and HEFCE in order to promote better understanding and engagement and it had been agreed that these meetings should continue.

Whilst the Lancashire SEP was heavily Preston-centric and largely silent in relation to Edge Hill, bridges had been built with LCC officers and an invitation to join key LEP committees was expected.

In discussion, the following points were noted:

- Given that universities were not constrained to work with a specified LEP, and taking account of Edge Hill's boundary location, it was suggested that the University should take a broad approach, encompassing any North West LEP where appropriate opportunities arose;
- West Lancashire was marginalised within both the Lancashire and Merseyside LEPs;
- There could be benefits from seeking to participate as a delivery partner within bids for large projects from other universities;
- There was potential for a significant project (possibly logistics) across the North West region;
- The first tranche of European money would start to roll out in April.

Concluding discussion, members agreed to facilitate contacts with LEP members where possible and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Affairs) invited any further comments or suggestions for development by e-mail.

Action: All

BG.14.057 Any other Business

There was no other business.

SECTION C ITEMS

BG.14.058 Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 23 March 2015.