

BOARD OF GOVERNORSMinutes of the meeting held on 26 September 2016

Present

Bernard Laverty	Independent member	Chair of the Board
Lesley Munro		Clerk to the Board
Martin Ainscough	Independent member	
Roy Bayfield	Support Staff member	Elected
Richard Benjamin	Independent member	
Evelyn Carnegie	Academic staff member	Elected
John Cater	Vice-Chancellor	Ex-officio
Graeme Collinge	Independent member	
Lisa Greenhalgh	Independent member	Chair: Audit Committee
Matthew Greenhalgh	Students' Union President	
Simon Pope	Independent member	
Louise Robinson	Independent member	
Gareth Shanks	Student member	
George Talbot	Academic staff member	Academic Board nominee

In attendance

Lynda Brady	PVC (Student Experience) & University Secretary
Jacqui Howe	Head of Careers (for item 22)
Steve Igoe	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Paul Malone	Students' Union General Manager

Apologies

Mark Allanson	PVC (External Relations)
Clive Edwards	Independent member
Rob Green	Independent member

Absent

Denise Walker	Independent member
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BG.16.001 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

BG.16.002 Chair's Announcements

There were no Chair's Announcements.

BG.16.003 Chair's Action

There was no Chair's Action to report.

BG.16.004 Minutes of the previous meeting

Received: Document BG/001/16

The minutes of the meeting held on 4 July 2016 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

BG.16.005 Action Log

Received: Document BG/002/16

The Action Log was received with all actions implemented noting the following updates:

- Negotiations with Alder Hey concerning a potential capital investment to provide an on-site presence were ongoing;
- The workshop on academic quality assurance for Board members had been scheduled for 7 November at 3.00 pm;
- Internal Audit had been asked to include ethical and equality and diversity monitoring within existing audit processes.

BG.16.006 Matters arising not included elsewhere on the agenda

There were no other matters arising.

SECTION A ITEMS

BG.16.007 Confirmation of Standing Orders

Received: Document BG/003/16

Noting no major changes to the documentation, **the Board approved the Standing Orders for 2016/17.**

Action: Clerk

BG.16.008 Board Self-evaluation

Received: Document BG/004/16

Members considered the documentation presented by the Clerk which summarised attendance and membership aspects, the business conducted over the year and the schedule of business for the coming year. It was noted that the Board had approved an Ethical Framework during the year along with the PREVENT strategy and associated Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech. New reports on Equality and Diversity and Complaints and Appeals had been received whilst the Board had embraced new approaches to funding including the successful bid to the Lancashire LEP and ongoing discussions with Alder Hey.

The possibility of further recruitment to the Board was due to be discussed at Nominations Committee and would take into account the skills mix of members.

It was agreed that performance had been satisfactory and noted that the final report from the full effectiveness review undertaken by the LFHE was expected shortly. **A small revision to the Terms of Reference was approved** to recognise the increased importance of the Annual Accountability Return to HEFCE.

Action: Clerk

BG.16.009 Use of the University Seal

Received: Document BG/005/16

Use of the University Seal during 2015/16 was noted as documented.

BG.16.010 Minutes of Committees

.01 Remunerations Committee (16 July 2016)

The Chair gave a verbal report from the Remunerations Committee which had met to agree salaries for those senior staff identified in the Instrument and Articles of Government.

In reaching its decisions, the Committee was informed by:

- The national pay rise likely to be agreed for the main body of staff;
- Senior staff appraisals which had been conducted by the Chair and Deputy Chair;
- National benchmark data on senior staff salaries.

Where bonuses had been approved this reflected exceptional performance.

The verbal report from Remunerations Committee was received.

.02 Audit Committee (12 September 2016)

Received: Document BG/006/16

The Chair of Audit introduced the minutes drawing attention to the following points:

- Satisfactory committee evaluation;
- Three satisfactory internal audit reports covering Performance Management, Arts and Sciences Faculty Review and the Follow-up audit which monitored progress from previous reports. All provided substantial assurance;
- A satisfactory audit opinion contained in the annual report.

The Audit Committee minutes were received.

BG.16.011 Provisional Financial Outturn 31 July 2016

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor gave a verbal report on the year-end financial outturn and recorded his thanks to all staff involved in achieving a fast closedown of the accounts with only a couple of minor control issues raised by the auditors. He highlighted income at £128 million, cash balances at £31.7 million and a surplus of £25.5 million which was well above budget projections and represented another excellent year. It was noted that the increased income was largely due to the improved realisation of a prudent tuition fee projection and robust controls on costs with a particular reduction in travel costs in Education. The Balance Sheet would be impacted by the inclusion of pension deficits following the implementation of FRS 102 and, whilst this was a paper transaction, there was a real cost involved through increased employer contributions and the special payment made to the Local Government Scheme (LGPS).

In discussion, the Vice- Chancellor indicated that the move of Higher Education into the Department for Education would bring some challenges with an inevitable comparison of funding levels between schools and universities. The proposal for universities to set up or sponsor schools could be seen as a consequence of this but, whilst some review of the use of funds distributed by universities under Access Agreements might be justified, it would be a mistake to think that universities had the expertise to run schools.

In response to a member's question it was noted that the University intended to implement the new fee level of £9250 from 2017 but that parliamentary approval for the increase was necessary and there was likely to be a debate. The fact that a number of Universities had already declared increased fee levels reflected the pressure on the sector to ensure students had clarity around these issues prior to submitting applications.

Members congratulated the University on an excellent outcome noting that the full financial statements would come to the next meeting of the Board for approval.

BG.16.012 The University's Collaborative Provision

Received: Document BG/007/16

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) and University Secretary introduced the report drawing attention to the changing nature of the provision with a move away from traditional educational partnerships towards a more selective approach with NHS hospitals and private sector professional organisations and an emphasis on articulation arrangements in international collaborations. She highlighted the role of the Executive in vetting any higher risk proposals.

In response to a member's question, it was noted that a detailed business case was considered in relation to all proposals but that not all approvals were predicated on high levels of income generation; rather, the importance of long-term, reputation-enhancing partnerships with prestigious institutions was key to the University's strategy.

The report on Collaborative Provision was received.

BG.16.013 WLBC/EHU Forum: 15 July 2016

Received: Document BG/008/16

The Chair introduced the minutes from the last meeting. It was observed that little progress had been made on local plans for the Town Centre and it was likely that any proposals would need to be led by the University. Car parking had been discussed and information sharing about planned overspill arrangements agreed. Local hostility to street parking was still evident.

A member commented on the improvement to the frontage area to St Helens Road which was a result of the University's latest residential project. It might have been hoped that this kind of development would have encouraged the Council to seek collaborative opportunities.

The minutes of the WLBC/EHU Forum were received.

BG.16.014 Academic Board Committee Structure

Received: Document BG/009/16

The structure and membership of the Board was noted and **approved**.

Action: Vice-Chancellor

BG.16.015 Annual Report from Academic Board

Received: Document BG/010/16

The report on business over the last year was received.

BG.16.016 Students' Union Budget 2016/17

Received: Document BG/011/16

Members received and welcomed the final budget papers for 2016/17 noting that a covering narrative would be useful in future.

Action: Students' Union General Manager

BG.16.017 Policy on Freedom of Speech

Received: Document BG/012/16

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) and University Secretary introduced this item noting that, following submission of the University's PREVENT documentation to HEFCE, some minor amendments to the Freedom of Speech Policy had been requested to ensure full compliance. The revised documentation now included a new role of 'Principal Organiser' with responsibility for checking risk assessments in relation to external speakers whilst Annex 1 of the Code of Practice had been removed as it largely duplicated information contained in other documentation.

In response to a member's question, it was noted that, to date, the procedures had been tested on two occasions with both being satisfactorily resolved.

It was further noted that the Board would be required to provide annual confirmation that arrangements for the implementation of PREVENT were satisfactory and a request for this to be included as part of the Annual Assurance Return had been submitted to HEFCE.

The Board received and **approved** the revisions to the Freedom of Speech Policy.

Action: PVC (Student Experience)

SECTION B ITEMS

BG.16.017 Vice-Chancellor's Report

Received: Document BG/013/16

The Vice-Chancellor introduced his report and highlighted the following points:

- 2016 HEFCE recruitment had been very strong, matching the highest ever intake of 2011 but with better qualified applicants, less reliance on Clearing and more 3 year full-time students underlining a more resilient financial position;

- With the improvement in entry qualifications, the University was now in the top half of the sector on this measure;
- Health professional programmes had recruited to target and whilst the market remained reasonably buoyant, the lifting of restrictions on recruitment in 2017 would be balanced by a likely fall in demand with the removal of grants and bursaries;
- Recruitment to undergraduate Teacher Training provision had held up reasonably well against reduced targets although the position for PGCE was more challenging. Whilst the government was showing more short-term flexibility, the move away from university led teacher training was continuing with the likely introduction of a 2/3 year degree apprenticeship scheme which would be accredited through schools. This marked a significant policy shift from knowledge-based to skills-based training. Recognising the special significance of teacher training in the history of the University, programmes would continue to be supported where there was a sustainable market but the University had been planning for reductions. The overall contribution to core business had already fallen significantly with increases in HEFCE recruitment offsetting the difference;
- Excellent results from the National Student Survey (NSS) and Destination of Leavers in Higher Education (DLHE) survey had contributed to the University's best ever placing in the Sunday Times League Table although maintaining this position was dependent on achieving equally good results year on year. More progress was possible but, with Research Excellence Framework (REF) scores held until the next exercise in 2021, a further significant shift in the rankings would be challenging;
- The three major capital build programmes had gone well with the extension of GeoSciences, the new residential build and the Tech Hub all completed to a high standard. The Tech Hub was an outstanding development and would be officially opened on 19 October by the entrepreneur, Sir Robin Saxby;
- The full ramifications of transferring higher education to the Department for Education were not yet known but the new Secretary of State was not unfamiliar with the sector. The progress of the Green Paper would be an important indicator of the future.

In discussion, it was noted that university-based undergraduate teacher training was more likely to survive within the Primary field which was less dependent on subject specialisms.

The Vice-Chancellor's report was received.

BG.16.018 Capital Projects Update

Received: Document BG/014/16

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the report noting all projects (GeoSciences upgrade, Phase 11 residences and the Tech Hub) had been delivered in budget and largely on time. Some fit-out work was still ongoing on the top floor of the Tech Hub which was expected to be completed over the next 4 – 6 weeks but the rest of the building was open for use. Despite the short timescales, the University was pleased with the quality of the work. Car park upgrade work had also been completed.

It was noted that the appointment of a Compliance Officer to oversee arrangements associated with the funding from the Lancashire LEP could prove useful in relation to future projects.

A member indicated that there had been positive feedback from the LEP in terms of dealings with the University which had been very straightforward. The speed of delivery had been particularly impressive. This could prove useful in terms of any future bids the University might make.

The Update report was received.

Moving to future projects, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor indicated that new proposals were being prepared for a major investment programme around the old running track to provide a new Library incorporating Student Services and the Careers Service which was the most pressing priority. A further residential build to meet demand from postgraduate and continuing students was also planned. The remaining buildings which would be vacated could then be re-modelled for academic use.

In discussion, it was noted that care would be needed to ensure a good fit with existing buildings such as Forest Court and members requested

that that the Estates Masterplan should be revisited and brought to the Board at the same time.

It was agreed that a refreshed version of the Masterplan would be made available at the next meeting of Resources Committee where new proposals would be considered in detail.

Action: DVC

BG.16.019 National Student Survey Results 2016

Received: Document BG/015/16

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) and University Secretary introduced the report noting the high response rate with all question areas maintaining or improving scores from the previous year. The University remained ahead of the sector on the average for satisfaction levels whilst the benefits from the University's focus on Organisation and Management and Assessment and Feedback were particularly evident in the results. It was hoped that a new Library build would further improve scores for Learning Resources.

In discussion, it was noted that detailed results were provided to all Departments for action and that the University would pay particular attention to academic areas where there was a significant variation in performance.

The National Student Survey results were received.

BG.16.020 First Destination Survey 2016

*Received: Document BG/016/16
(Discussion taken at the commencement of the meeting)*

The Head of Careers presented the report highlighting the improvements achieved both in overall employment rates and in the number of students in graduate level jobs. It was noted that all Departments now produced Employment Plans and the creation of the Employability sub-committee supported sharing experience and a constructive approach to the identification of best practice. The Careers Service worked in partnership with academic departments to provide the best possible service to students.

Acknowledging the importance of this survey to the new Teaching Excellence Framework, it was reported that proposals for change in the method of data collection were out to consultation and would need to be carefully considered.

In discussion, the following points were made:

- A significant number of students were moving on to further study rather than entering the employment market directly on graduation;
- Overall results were above the national average and a substantial improvement on earlier years. There was considerable variation across subject areas but this was to be expected and was reflected nationally;
- The University recognised the importance of the acquisition of transferable skills which were often embedded in the curriculum. The PVC (Student Experience) indicated that the position would be considered as part of reviews of the curriculum model and the Personal Tutor system;

Action: PVC Student Experience

- A student enhancement fund was available to assist students in widening their experience to improve their employment potential but it was acknowledged that students also needed to better articulate the full scope of their learning;
- The University was supporting student run entities such as the Record Label and Edge Hill Press as a means of offering real experience of developing products and taking them to market. In the future, it was hoped that this could extend to the production of a feature film.

Members received the report on the 2016 First Destination Survey and welcomed the University's focus on this important area.

BG.16.021 Students' Union Report

Received: Document BG/017/16

The Students' Union President introduced the report highlighting the following main areas of focus for the year:

- Communication/Publication
- Engagement and Inclusion
- Student Opportunities/Development
- Sustainability
- Collaboration with other Unions

In terms of specific initiatives the President indicated that the Union was seeking to offer more day-time events and he drew attention to the Give-it-a-Go scheme which offered taster sessions for clubs and societies to encourage engagement. He also noted the review of the course representative system which was geared to improve effectiveness.

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) thanked the Students' Union for the outstanding contribution to Freshers' Week and the wide range of activities offered to new students.

In discussion, it was agreed that the Student Report should be taken earlier in the meeting and could perhaps be presented in different formats.

Action: Clerk/SU President

The Student Report was received.

BG.16.022 Any other Business

There was no other business.

SECTION C ITEMS

BG.16.023 Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 5 December 2016.

BG.16.024 Academic Board Minutes (16 July 2016)

Received: Document BG/018/16

The minutes were received.

BG.16.025 Students' Union Code of Practice

Received: Document BG/019/16

The Code of Practice was received noting minor amendments.