

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 July 2014

Present

Bernard Laverty	Independent member	Chair of the Board
Lesley Munro		Clerk to the Board
Martin Ainscough	Independent member	
Richard Benjamin	Independent member	
John Cater	Vice-Chancellor	Ex-officio
Gareth Dowling	Student member	Students' Union President
Clive Edwards	Independent member	
Rob Green	Independent member	
Lisa Greenhalgh	Independent member	Chair: Audit Committee
David Owen	Independent member	Deputy Chair & Chair of Resources Committee
Simon Pope	Independent member	
Robert Smedley	PVC & Dean of Education	Academic Board representative
Lynnette Turner	Academic staff member	Elected
Denise Walker	Independent member	

In attendance

Lynda Brady	PVC & University Secretary
Steve Igoe	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Resources)
Paul Malone	Students' Union General Manager
Connor Richmond	Incoming elected student member
Kayley Wilson	Incoming President of the Students' Union

Apologies

Stephen Hesford	Independent member	
Bill Johnson	Support staff member	Elected
John Maxwell	Independent member	

A tour of the new student residential build preceded the meeting.

BG.13.105 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest specific to the meeting.

BG.13.106 Chair's Announcements

The Chair reported on a number of events he had attended since the last meeting including the first alumni dinner for the Masters in Surgery (MCh) programme, the Times Higher Awards evening where the University had been shortlisted for three awards, and the dinner held at the University and attended by Tristram Hunt, Shadow Education Secretary. He had also been interviewed as part of the HEFCE Assurance Review which was ongoing.

BG.13.107 Chair's Action

There was no Chair's Action to report.

BG.13.108 Minutes of the previous meeting

Received: Document BG/074/13

The minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2014 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

BG.13.109 Action Log

Received: Document BG/075/13

Members received the Action Log noting that, in the absence of any contrary comments, the 14/15 Calendar of Meetings was now confirmed.

BG.13.110 Matters arising not included elsewhere on the agenda

There were no matters arising.

SECTION A ITEMS

BG.13.111 Minutes of Committees

.01 Audit Committee (9 June 2014)

Received: Document BG/076/13

The Chair of Audit introduced the minutes highlighting the strong performance of the University identified through the Higher Education Financial Statements Benchmarking survey, the positive Internal Audit reports received and the agreement of the Internal Audit strategy for 2014/15.

The Audit Committee minutes were received.

.02 Resources Committee (23 June 2014)

Received: Document BG/077/13

The Chair of Resources introduced the minutes which had considered and recommended the 14/15 Operating Budget to be discussed later in the meeting. Other matters to note included:

.01 Financial Forecasts 2013/14 to 2016/17

Received: Document BG/078/13

Drawing attention to the challenges of forecasting through to 2016 given the volatile environment, the Chair of Resources noted the prudent assumptions underlying the data which still provided for strong cash balances and a significant profit in 2016. He recommended the Forecasts to the Board for approval.

The Board approved the Financial Forecasts 2013/14 to 2016/17 for submission the HEFCE.

Action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor

.02 Capital Projects Update

Received: Document BG/079/13

The Chair of Resources commended the report which identified good progress on the new build with well-controlled costs and savings from previous projects. He noted the continuing discussions on a previously identified VAT issue.

The Vice-Chancellor drew attention to progress in relation to the Sports Centre project which was being delivered in stages and provided flexibility in terms the timing for commissioning work. This did not reflect a deferral of delivery as suggested in the report.

The Capital Projects Update report was received.

.03 Students' Union Budget 2014/15

Received: Document BG/080/13

In introducing the paper, the Chair of Resources highlighted the considerable progress made by the Students' Union and its positive impact on the student experience. The budget made provision for the further development of the bar along with a revised structure for democratic representation which had been commended by the Committee.

The Chair of the Board praised the achievements of the Union and the competence shown in managing its affairs. He encouraged the further disbursement of profits to provide additional benefits to the student community.

The Board received the Students' Union Budget 2014/15.

.03 Remunerations Committee (7 July 2014)

The Chair reported orally on the meeting of the Remunerations Committee held earlier in the day. He welcomed the recent resolution of national pay award negotiations which, along with average incremental increases, had informed the agreement of the Committee to an overall envelope allocation to the Vice-

Chancellor for the remuneration of management grade staff. This reflected standard practice over a number of years.

The Chair's report from Remunerations Committee was received.

BG.13.112 Proposed Revisions to the Framework for Inspecting Initial Teacher Training

Received: Document BG/081/13

The PVC Dean of Education introduced this paper which outlined the new OFSTED inspection regime which would apply from June 2014. In highlighting key changes, he drew attention to the new two-stage process which incorporated trainee observations during their final summer term and follow-up observations during the autumn when they would be in their first employment as Newly Qualified Teachers (NQTs). This focus on the performance of individual trainees would be additional to the current framework inspection judgements for trainee outcomes, the quality of training across the partnership and the leadership and management of the partnership and would require additional engagement with schools to ensure appropriate support for NQTs in their first post.

In discussion, it was noted that:

- There would be a particular focus on trainees' understanding of disadvantage and low attainment and the appropriate strategies to address this;
- The emphasis on professional dress would be interesting in relation to Early Years trainees;
- Trainees working in any type of school would be included;
- Inspection under the new methodology would be undertaken on a regular cycle but could be brought forward if quality indicators such as the results of the annual NQT survey suggested higher levels of risk.

The PVC Dean of Education indicated that a number of working parties had been established in the Faculty to consider the implications of the new requirements and a new programme for NQTs was being developed. The challenges of meeting the new requirements,

especially if additional placements were necessary, were acknowledged.

In relation to the inspection of the University's provision which had recently taken place, it was noted that this had been undertaken under the existing framework although influenced by the new requirements. With respect to the final report, there was some disquiet that this was dated January 2014 although the review had taken place in March and it was suggested this might be queried through the Board.

Action: Chair/Clerk

The report on the new Framework for the Inspection of Initial Teacher Training was received.

BG.13.113 Reports from Link Governors

.01 Research Committee

The Link Governor for Research reported on the operation of the Research Committee highlighting the wide range of matters discussed over the year. These encompassed new policies on Research Ethics, Research Conduct and Misconduct and the Research Excellence Framework (REF) Equality Impact Assessment as well as standing items such as external bids. New developments such as the establishment of Research Institutes were acting as a stimulus for research activity and provided the foundation for better promotion both nationally and internationally. A Research Strategy Group had been set up with an eye to the next REF and a core Panel created to consider applications to the Research Investment Fund. Whilst noting that the Committee was large, it was well led with a clear purpose. It was suggested that the work of the Committee could usefully form the basis of a future presentation to the Board.

The report from the Link Governor for Research was welcomed.

It was noted that similar Link Governor roles were available for the Academic Planning and Learning and Teaching Committees and any members interested in taking these up should contact the Clerk.

Attention: Independent Members

BG.13.114 Student Procedures

.01 Students' Union Constitution Amendment

Received: Document BG/082/13

The General Manager of the Students' Union introduced this item noting that the main changes followed guidance issued by the National Union of Students (NUS) in differentiating between company law members (for Trustee purposes) and general student members (for democratic purposes).

Recognising the legal status of the Students' Union as an autonomous body, the Board noted the changes observing that these continued to uphold the democratic rights of students for which the Board had responsibility.

SECTION B ITEMS

BG.13.115 Edge Hill University and its subsidiaries: Operating Budget 2014/15

Received: Document BG/083/13

The Chair of Resources introduced the 2014/15 Operating Budget drawing attention to the detailed consideration undertaken at Resources Committee. He highlighted the recognition of the new fee regime across all years and the consequent rise in income leading to a projected surplus of £21.5 million. This was supported by the application of tight controls on expenditure and appreciation of a more challenging environment.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor outlined the main assumptions underpinning the budget as follows:

- Recognition of the changing balance between student fees and HEFCE grant in terms of income;
- Stable student numbers with no planned increases;
- Increased expenditure to accommodate the new bursary scheme, replacement costs for the loss of government funding for aspects of

student support such as the Access to Learning Fund (ALF), pay awards, increased pension costs and incremental drift. In this context, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor indicated that, whilst such increases in expenditure were affordable for 14/15, the cap on fees suggested a less sustainable position for future years. This would certainly impact on sector performance with a number of institutions operating with much smaller surpluses.

- Additional numbers for Teacher Training which had been recently awarded were not included;
- A growing investment in staffing directly associated with improving the student experience such as Careers;
- No major Capital spend with an emphasis on building back the cash balances necessary to provide essential liquidity against a more uneven income line from fee income payments.

In discussion, the Vice-Chancellor suggested some changes to the tone of aspects of the commentary. It was also suggested that it would be interesting to see a fees breakdown by Faculty at a future meeting.

Action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor

The Chair supported the prudence of the underpinning budget assumptions and the Chair of Resources confirmed the confidence of the Resources Committee in recommending approval of the budget to the Board.

The Board approved the 2014/15 Operating Budget for the University and its Subsidiaries.

Action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor

BG.13.116 Vice-Chancellor's Report

Received: Document BG/084/13

The Vice-Chancellor introduced his report drawing attention to the following points:

- The judgements of the recent OFSTED inspection noted many commendations with relatively limited criticisms. Given the

particularly rigorous nature of the inspection framework which mitigated against the attainment of the highest grade 'Outstanding', the final outcome of 'Outstanding' for PCET and 'Good' for Primary and Secondary was predictable and on a par with other large providers of Initial Teacher Training. This did not impact on the allocation of places for 2014/15 which were protected;

- There were signs of increasing recognition by civil servants that current policy with respect to Teacher Training could lead to a crisis in teacher supply. This was borne out by the continuing recruitment difficulties faced by Schools Direct and the recent allocation of 159 additional places to the University. It was noted that the Vice-Chancellor had recently agreed to take lead responsibility for Universities UK on teacher education;
- Whilst recruitment to professional Health programmes remained buoyant and there were no cuts to the number of places available, there was continuing pressure from the Department of Health to reduce the unit price for training in order to cut costs. This was being resisted by the sector and the matter had been escalated to ministerial level;
- Whilst retention levels had improved significantly over recent years with the University exceeding its benchmark for this indicator, the number of early leavers was still significant and represented an area for further improvement which would both decrease individual lost opportunity and increase institutional income;
- The importance of a 'good' degree (defined as first or upper second class) was critical in terms of employment outcomes for graduates. Degree outcomes showed an improving trajectory but remained a key performance indicator for the University, especially for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences;
- Future recruitment depended heavily on the continued development of the University's portfolio, brand and reputation. A number of projects were underway in relation to this with a range of new programmes at the planning stage.

In response to members' questions, it was noted that:

- The University did seek to capture the reasons for early withdrawal although it was difficult to know whether student responses were completely transparent;
- Transfers were accommodated wherever possible in the event that students became unhappy with their initial course choice;
- There had been an indirect attack on ITT provision with Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) (usually gained through successful completion of an approved ITT programme) no longer a requirement for teachers in Academies. This position could be reversed however with Labour policy supportive of all teachers achieving QTS;
- Trainee teachers' classroom practice was graded with grades 1 to 3 specified as passing grades. Grade 3 which had indicated 'Satisfactory' had been recently re-defined as 'Requires Improvement' and, although still technically a passing grade, was not considered acceptable by OFSTED. The Faculty of Education had put measures in place to allow any students on this grade to undertake further training and reassessment.

The Vice-Chancellor's report was welcomed and received.

BG.13.117 Students' Union Report

Received: Document BG/085/13

The President of the Students' Union introduced his report which outlined the work of the Union over the year. He drew particular attention to the very successful campaign on Mental Health Issues; the adoption of a new democratic structure which was aligned to the NUS model; the achievements of the Advice Centre especially in relation to the release of financial support from the Student Loans Company; involvement in the University's replacement scheme for ALF; continuing links with West Lancashire Borough Council on projects to support the local community; the development of political engagement both through the Union's election processes and, more widely, through events such as the MEP Question-Time; and the extremely successful 'Rate Your Landlord' and Staff Awards schemes.

The General Manager highlighted changes in the office structure with two new roles identified which would enhance sustainability given continued growth in activities.

In discussion, members also commended the work of the LGBT network, work with international students and the reintroduction of RAG activities which had raised £4,500 this year.

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) praised the efforts of the Union in relation to academic matters and particularly work with the University around Personal Tutoring and Assessment and Feedback as well as the input made to the recent Learning and Teaching Conference.

In response to a member's question, it was noted that feedback on assessment could take many forms and this was not always recognised by students which could lead to lower scores on this aspect in student surveys. This was a sector-wide issue. It was observed however that feedback in this area varied by Department and that this would be further investigated whilst work was also being undertaken to identify possible links between assessment and feedback and degree outcomes.

In conclusion, the Chair thanked all members of the Union for their valuable contribution to the student experience, paying special tribute to Gareth Dowling, outgoing President, for his leadership over the year and his active participation in Board matters.

The Students' Union report was received.

BG.13.118 Key Performance Indicators

Received: Document BG/086/13

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the report which highlighted the slowdown in application rates balanced by an increase in conversions. Employment rates remained high although there was more work to be done to ensure more students gained graduate level jobs. It was noted that Internal Student Survey (ISS) results continued to improve whilst results from the National Student Survey (NSS) were awaited.

The Key Performance Indicator report was received.

BG.13.119 Any other Business

.01 Events

The Chair reminded members of the upcoming Graduations and the Robin Hood outdoor event on 13 July.

SECTION C ITEMS

BG.13.120 Calendar 2014/15

Received: Document BG/086/13

The calendar of meetings for 2014/15 was received.

BG.13.121 Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 29 September 2014.