

BOARD OF GOVERNORSMinutes of the meeting held on 21 March 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	
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	
Louise Robinson	Independent member	
George Talbot	Academic staff member	Academic Board nominee

In attendance

Lynda Brady	PVC (Student Experience) & University Secretary
Craig Hutchinson- Howorth	Director of Strategic Planning (for items 17 and 19)
Steve Igoe	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Paul Malone	Students' Union General Manager

Apologies

Mark Allanson	PVC (External Relations)	
Jade McDonald	Student member	Elected
Steven Rouke	Students' Union President	
Denise Walker	Independent member	

Clerk's Note: In order to facilitate discussion and the attendance of officers, some changes to the order of agenda items was agreed.

BG.15.062 PwC investigation - Reserved Item (noted as agenda item 19)

Received: Document BG/065/15

Independent members received an update report.

BG.15.063 Declarations of Interest

As a Non-Executive Director and Senior Independent Director at Alder Hey Children's NHS Foundation Trust, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor declared an interest in connection with agenda item 14.

BG.15.064 Chair's Announcements

There were no Chair's Announcements.

BG.15.065 Chair's Action

There was no Chair's Action to report.

BG.15.066 Minutes of the previous meeting

Received: Document BG/043/15

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2016 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

BG.15.067 Action Log

Received: Document BG/044/15

The Action Log was received noting all actions as complete.

BG.15.068 Matters arising not included elsewhere on the agenda

There were no other matters arising.

SECTION A ITEMS

BG.15.069 Minutes of Committees

.01 Nominations Committee (21 March 2016)

The Chair gave an oral report on the meeting held earlier in the day noting that, following the recent search process, it had been agreed to see two applicants for potential membership of the Board.

.02 Resources Committee (22 February 2016)

Received: Document BG/045/15

The Chair of Resources Committee introduced the minutes noting the recommendation for Board approval in relation to the GeoSciences capital bid and the support for continued negotiation with Alder Hey in relation to an investment proposal.

.03 Audit Committee (7 March 2016)

Received: Document BG/046/15

The Chair of Audit Committee introduced the minutes drawing attention to the interesting discussion on the Value for Money Update report and the positive internal audit reports received.

BG.15.070 Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech

Received: Document BG/047/15

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary introduced the documentation which had been revised to take account of HEFCE guidance relating to the government's PREVENT programme. The revisions represented minor amendments and did not incorporate changes to the principles embodied in the document which had been previously approved by the Board.

In response to a member's question, it was reported that the Code covered Students' Union activity and that, to date, there had been only two occasions where some minor restrictions on events had been deemed necessary. It was noted that, in implementing the Code of

Practice, the University sought to ensure the entitlement to Freedom of Speech was maintained.

The Board approved the revised Code of Practice on Freedom of Speech.

Action: PVC (Student Experience) & University Secretary

BG.15.071 Management Information January 2016

Received: Document BG/048/15

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the Management Accounts noting that income was slightly ahead of budget whilst gap savings in staffing had contributed significantly to lower than budget expenditure. The cash position was £8 million ahead whilst the early mid year reforecast showed a £2.5 million surplus increase.

In response to a member's question, it was noted that the position with respect to staff gap savings largely represented the lead time necessary for replacement appointments rather than a reduction in the staffing complement and did not impact negatively on the student experience.

The Management Information for January 2016 was received.

SECTION B ITEMS

BG.15.072 Vice-Chancellor's Report

Received: Document BG/049/15

The Vice-Chancellor introduced his report drawing attention to the supplementary paper provided (copy included in minute book) which provided information on the Education White Paper and the future of Teacher Training. He highlighted the following points:

- Applications and conversions to HEFCE monitored programmes remained robust although there was some deterioration in retention;
- The BIS Grant Letter to HEFCE had been recently received and confirmed the continued fall of HEFCE funding for higher education with a 50% decline in the Student Opportunity Fund over the next

two years. Research funding would receive some protection. The HEFCE Grant Letter to institutions was expected on 19 April although its overall importance to University income was now seriously diminished;

- Proposals for a Higher Education Bill would be included in the Queens Speech on 18 May although this was unlikely to give much detail given that the Technical Consultation on the Teaching Evaluation Framework (TEF) was unlikely to have commenced. The timing for legislation was tight given local elections in May and the EU Referendum in June and this could therefore be delayed;
- The publication of the Education White Paper on 17 March was significant with far-reaching implications for schools and for providers of initial teacher training. The requirement for all schools to become Academies with their consequent removal from Local Authority control marked a major policy decision by the Government whilst the abolition of Qualified Teacher Status (QTS) was likely to render much Initial Teacher Training provision in HE institutions redundant. Teacher accreditation would now lie in the hands of Headteachers with the majority of new teachers being trained/ employed directly by schools following graduation from non ITT degrees. The timescale for these changes was unclear but the Vice-Chancellor reported that, as Chair of the joint Universities UK/Guild HE Teacher Education Advisory Group, he was meeting with DfE representatives to ensure the current recruitment round for September 2016, already well underway, was not affected;
- In terms of the implications for Edge Hill, there would be some opportunities for continued diversification of provision within the Faculty of Education which, coupled with increased recruitment in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, would change the shape rather than the size of the institution. The Vice-Chancellor advised that this was a significant transition that would need to be carefully managed to ensure the quality of provision was maintained in areas of both increased and reduced recruitment.

In discussion, it was noted that:

- Diversified degrees in the Faculty of Education such as Education and Maths could prove popular to students seeking to be Primary school teachers;

- Whilst every effort would be made to secure 2016 recruitment to ITT programmes, some fall-off in demand might be inevitable;
- Media attention had been focused on the requirement for all schools to become Academies. The abolition of QTS appeared not to have been picked up as a major policy change;
- Partnership possibilities with school-based consortia offering training were unlikely to offer a good business model;
- The potential for the closure or merger of institutions that were heavily dependent on ITT provision was increasingly likely.

In receiving the Vice-Chancellor's report, members noted the significant changes heralded by government policy.

BG.15.073 Students' Union Report

Received: Document BG/050/15

The General Manager of the Students' Union introduced the report highlighting the work undertaken to refresh the Course Representative system and the development of a new affiliation system for Societies. Additional staffing to support activity and engagement within Societies had proved particularly successful. Attention was also drawn to the decision taken by the Trustees to operate a deficit budget in order to provide for three new posts to boost income generation.

The Students' Union report was received.

BG.15.074 Capital Projects Bid: GeoSciences

Received: Document BG/051/15

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the bid which was for the construction of additional floor space to the roof area on the second floor of the GeoSciences building in order to provide two new laboratories. It was noted that the expenditure requested (£1.1 million) would also provide for some improvements and reconfiguration of the existing building. In support of the bid, attention was drawn to the increasing demand for GeoScience programmes and the current challenges in sharing laboratory space with BioSciences. It was also

noted that provision of these facilities would enhance the student experience.

The Chair of Resources Committee highlighted the discussion and recommendation of the bid at Resources Committee indicating that this would provide a substantial return from a relatively small investment.

In response to a member's question, it was noted that the project would include recladding for the whole building.

Following discussion, **the Board approved a £1.1 million budget for the extension to the GeoSciences building.**

Action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor

BG.15.075 Capital Projects Bid: Alder Hey (Commercial In Confidence)

Received: Document BG/052/15

Minute withheld for commercial reasons.

BG.15.076 Capital Projects Update

Received: Document BG/053/15

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor updated Board members on progress with current projects noting that the Phase 11 residential build was on schedule for completion in the summer. He confirmed that the bid to the Lancashire Local Enterprise Partnership in connection with the Technology Hub had been successful but that this did have implications for internal design which would involve some delay to this project. Work would be commencing shortly on the steel frame which was not dependent on design changes.

The Capital Projects Update report was received.

BG.15.077 Access Agreement 2017/18

Received: Document BG/054/15

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) introduced this report which outlined the proposed principles for the University's 2017/18 Access Agreement. Members were reminded that all institutions charging fees above £6,000 were required to produce an Access

Agreement, approved by the Office for Fair Access (OfFA), which demonstrated how they were using the additional income to support access, success and progression in relation to disadvantaged groups in society. It was noted that government policy had been to incrementally remove state support for these groups with the burden falling increasingly on institutions.

Given the University's profile in terms of student recruitment with over 70% from under-represented groups, the thrust of the University's approach would be to mainstream the support provided with a focus on long-term, sustained strategies which encompassed the whole student life-cycle. Within this, the recent reversal in retention rates suggested a more targeted approach was needed and it was proposed to put some resource into staffing specifically to support transition.

In terms of prioritised support for specific groups, it was reported that the University would look to identify those where most improvement could be achieved given local demography and the University's expertise. In line with OfFA guidance, more emphasis would be placed on evaluation activity to demonstrate impact and outcomes. Total spend on the Access Agreement would be around £3 million which was similar to previous years.

In discussion, the need for sustained activity to effect improvement was acknowledged and that continually changing targets was not helpful. It was also felt that the best way to boost recruitment from specific groups was through the provision of a high quality experience to those currently at the University.

Whilst noting that the timescale for submission of the Agreement did not fit in with the Board meeting schedule and therefore discussion was restricted to the underlying principles, members were reminded that full documentation would be provided to the next meeting and any comments could still be acted on if appropriate.

Following discussion, the Board approved the principles underlying the 2017/18 Access Agreement.

Action: PVC (Student Experience)

BG.15.078 Key Performance Indicators (annual update)

Received: Document BG/055/15

The Director of Strategic Planning introduced the document which provided an update on all the University's agreed KPIs which were derived from the Strategic Plan. He drew attention to the continued increase in applications for HEFCE monitored programmes, the pleasing rise in the tariff points score of new entrants, better graduate employment rates, the increase in the percentage of students achieving first or upper second degrees, improved League Table positions and the percentage of staff considering the University an excellent or good employer. The fall in retention rates had already been noted in the meeting and action to address this was underway whilst the fall in income from overseas business reflected the University's cautious approach to this activity. Financial indicators remained strong.

It was noted that a number of important policy areas were currently under review and this suggested that a reassessment of both the Strategic Plan and its associated KPIs would be appropriate over the next twelve months as policy became clearer.

In discussion the following points were noted:

- The Board already received a wide range of performance data through the HEFCE returns;
- Research indicators had been developed internally and could provide the Board with a more immediate picture of progress;
- The new QAA framework defined an enhanced role for Governors in relation to process and the Board would receive appropriate reports on this;
- Some more focused indicators around widening participation might be appropriate although it was noted that the Board was due to receive a new report on staff and student diversity before the end of the year.

The Board received the KPI update report acknowledging the need to review the Strategic Plan and associated KPIs over the next twelve months.

Action: Directorate

BG.15.079 Any other Business

There was no other business.

SECTION C ITEMS

BG.15.080 Academic Board Minutes

Received: Document BG/057/15

The minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2015 were received.

BG.15.081 Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 9 May 2016.