

BOARD OF GOVERNORSMinutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2017

Present

Clive Edwards	Independent member	Chair of the Board
Lesley Munro		Clerk to the Board
Martin Ainscough	Independent member	
Roy Bayfield	Support Staff member	Elected
Evelyn Carnegie	Academic staff member	Elected
John Cater	Vice-Chancellor	Ex-officio
Graeme Collinge	Independent member	Chair: Resources Committee
Christine Donnelly	Independent member	
Rob Green	Independent member	
Lisa Greenhalgh	Independent member	Chair: Audit Committee
Matthew Greenhalgh	Student Member	Students' Union President
Louise Robinson	Independent member	
George Talbot	Academic staff member	Academic Board nominee
Denise Walker	Independent member	

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
Helen Smallbone	Temporary Clerk (for reserved business items)

Observers

Thomas Dodd	Student member elect
Ben Whittle	Students' Union President elect

Apologies

Richard Benjamin	Independent member
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Absent

Gareth Shanks	Student member
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The Chair welcomed Ben Whittle and Thomas Dodd to the meeting as observers.

BG.16.074 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

BG.16.075 Chair's Announcements

The Chair reported that he had attended the opening of the new University Centre (St James) in Manchester. It was noted that the centre replaced Armstrong House and catered for the growth in Faculty of Health activity. The new premises were occupied under a lease with Bruntwood who are developing the Oxford Road site.

BG.16.076 Chair's Action

There was no Chair's Action to report.

BG.16.077 Minutes of the previous meeting

Received: Document BG/056/16

The minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2017 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

BG.16.078 Action Log

Received: Document BG/057/16

The Action Log was received noting all actions as implemented.

BG.16.079 Matters arising not included elsewhere on the agenda

There were no other matters arising.

PRESENTATION

BG.16.080 Overview of the Students' Union

The President of the Students' Union and the General Manager outlined the development of the Union from a small enterprise in 2010 with few responsibilities to the substantial organisation operating today representing students, running student sport and societies and offering

a range of professional services as well as commercial activities. It was acknowledged that progress had been achieved in partnership with the University through a stable funding arrangement which had supported the expansion.

Looking to the future, the President emphasised the importance of developing a strong evidence base for, and remaining flexible and responsive to, membership needs in line with the Students' Union Vision. To this end, improving communication with members, including 'hard to reach' groups, was a key priority as was the further refinement of student representation systems to maximise effectiveness.

The Chair thanked the Students' Union President and the General Manager for the presentation.

SECTION A ITEMS

BG.16.081 HEFCE Institutional Grant Letter

Received: Document BG/058/16

The Vice-Chancellor introduced the letter noting that HEFCE funding represented a very small percentage of overall institutional funding which was now largely provided through tuition fee income. In line with previous years, there had been a further reduction in money specified for widening participation activities but the University had benefited from increased knowledge and exchange and research allocations. In relation to teaching funds, the increase for Health provision would be offset by associated costs such as DBS clearance and uniforms. It was noted that in a recent costing exercise of Nursing provision the cost per student had been calculated at £9250 so there would be no contribution to surplus from additional numbers.

It was noted that as HEFCE's funding role had decreased, its influence in the sector increasingly relied on its heightened regulatory function. This would be further reflected in the remit of the new Office for Students which was due to take over HEFCE functions.

The HEFCE Institutional Grant Letter was received.

BG.16.082 HEFCE Assessment of Institutional Risk

The Vice-Chancellor reported that the annual assessment had been received from HEFCE confirming that the institution 'met expectations' in relation to quality and standards and was not classified as 'at higher risk' – the only positive outcomes available in this exercise. The University was in discussion with HEFCE about the inclusion of some comments which were not felt to represent the current position in relation to recent matters notified to the Council.

BG.16.083 WLBC Forum (17 March 2017)

Received: Document BG/059/16

The minutes of the Forum were received noting that a verbal report had been discussed at the last Board meeting.

BG.16.084 Students' Union Election Report

Received: Document BG/060/16

The General Manager of the Students' Union presented the report from the Returning Officer which confirmed a fair and democratic process. It was noted that the elected candidate for the post of Vice-President (Welfare) had since accepted an offer of employment which would prompt a by-election.

The report on the Students' Union election process was received.

BG.16.085 Nominations Committee (15 May 2017)

The Chair reported verbally from the meeting held earlier in the day highlighting the recently concluded recruitment process for new governor appointments. He drew particular attention to the high quality of the applications received.

The Board approved recommendations for the appointment of:

Julian Bucknall
Clive Elliott
Tony Rankin
Mike Rush

Action: Clerk

SECTION B ITEMS

BG.16.086 Vice-Chancellor's Report

Received: Document BG/046/16

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

- The Higher Education and Research Bill had been passed and, whilst there had been some concessions, the establishment of the new regulator 'Ofsted' heralded a more directive environment for the sector. Of particular concern was the apparent lack of distinction made between quality and standards. The prevailing view in government appeared to be that the sector had become financially bloated. Responses to this included an emphasis on higher standards through the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF), which was likely to lead to more 'failing' institutions, and the renewed importance given to apprenticeships as an alternative to higher education;
- Pre-election restrictions had prevented progress with the Schools White Paper, placing the proposal to require universities to run schools temporarily on the back burner but also closing down the opportunity for institutions like Edge Hill to bid for three-year initial teacher training places. The shortfall of qualified teachers, partly resulting from government policy over recent years, would become increasingly challenging;
- The outcomes from the TEF would be received by institutions on 12 June and published on 14 June with the University expecting a high category placing. Whilst there would be significant media interest in the results, some of which would be counter-intuitive, it was debatable whether committed applicants for 2017 entry would be sufficiently influenced to seek to amend their choices;
- The impact of the persistent refusal to remove students from international migration figures was to increase the competition for home students against a backdrop of a decreasing 18 – 21 cohort over the next five years. Whilst this was balanced to some extent by the need for additional health professionals, the sector was entering a challenging period in a less secure economic and political environment. The key to ensuring the future would be a

focus on core business and the maintenance of quality, even if this resulted in slightly smaller intakes in the short term.

In discussion it was noted that, whilst the name did not immediately convey geographic location, the University had a proud history and was gaining increasing recognition within the sector and with feeder institutions. The University of the Year award had provided a promotional boost but the main marketing thrust was content driven and lay in the use of an extensive database to establish positive relationships with target schools.

The Vice-Chancellor's report was received.

BG.16.087 Student Report

Received: Document BG/062/16

The Students' Union President introduced the report noting activity on campaigns including the development of an accreditation scheme to recognise achievement within sport and societies, discussions with Directorate around the block grant allocation, collaboration with other North West unions to provide support for incoming sabbatical officers and participation at the NUS conference where an EHSU motion to adopt the #LoveSUs campaign was approved.

It was noted that, following the transfer of student sport to the Students' Union, efforts were being made to strengthen engagement and to revitalise the Team Edge Hill brand. Whilst this had been a challenging year, sporting performance had continued to improve with the University moving from 83rd to 79th position in the British Universities and Colleges Sport (BUCS) League.

Members received the report from the Students' Union.

BG.16.088 Board of Governors Effectiveness Review: Final Report and Action Plan

Received: Document BG/063/16

The Clerk introduced the report noting that it was a requirement for this to be published on the website, along with an associated Action Plan.

It was noted that the report was very positive overall, confirming compliance with the CUC Code of Governance and with a number of commendations for good practice.

In terms of recommendations, these were mainly concerned with implementing the new requirements for academic governance, the development of a skills matrix for governors, further augmentation of the student voice and ways of better communicating the role of the Board within the wider university community. The commentary provided indicated that significant progress had already been made in these areas.

In considering the further development of governor links with the academic community, **Christine Donnelly agreed to act as a link governor** for Academic Planning Committee and it was noted that the Chair would be discussing individual links with particular departments and services in his annual one-to-one meetings with members.

Action: Chair/Clerk

It was further agreed to introduce formal one-to-one meetings with the Chair and new student governors as part of their induction process.

Action: Chair/Clerk

Following a suggestion from the Vice-Chancellor in relation to improving communications with the wider university community, **it was agreed** that the minutes of Board meetings should be included in Academic Board papers.

Action: Clerk

Following discussion, **it was agreed** that the Clerk should derive an Action Plan from the commentary for publication.

Action: Clerk

BG.16.089 Capital Projects Update

Received: Document BG/064/16

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the report noting the excellent progress on the Phase 12 residential project. The extra costs arising

from the inclusion of additional bedspaces within the project would be the subject of a revised project update to the Resources Committee in the first instance.

In relation to the Library build, it was reported that the steelwork package had been let following a very competitive tender process whilst there were three confirmed expressions of interest from contractors for the Main Contract Works. It was noted that the University's Quantity Surveyor had undertaken a detailed costing exercise to ensure project proposals were manageable within budget and this report would come to the June meeting of Resources Committee.

With respect to the impact of capital projects on cash balances, it was noted that this would be mitigated by a significant sum which had been received from HMRC and subsequent receipt of the HEFCE capital grant.

The report on Capital Projects was received.

BG.16.090 Academic Governance

a. Curriculum Development Strategy

Received: Document BG/065/16

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary introduced this paper, approved by Academic Board, which provided the strategic context for the University's academic development and offered a backdrop for governor discussions around academic governance. It was noted that the strategy outlined the reasons and priorities for programme development with a focus on market-led demand which drove the proposals contained in Faculty Academic Development Plans.

In discussion, it was noted that, in addition to the development of new programmes which were considered and approved by Academic Planning Committee, existing programmes were scrutinised under standard academic quality review processes in terms of their continued relevance. It was further noted that, in investing in recruitment outside the local area, the University had extensive data and was alert to competitor activity.

b. Mapping to the Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) Part 1

Received: Document BG/066/16

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary introduced this paper which detailed the extensive exercise undertaken by the Director of Quality Assurance to ensure that University quality assurance processes were aligned with the standards of Part 1 of the ESG. It was noted that the Board would be required to confirm receipt of this report as part of the new academic governance conditions of the HEFCE Annual Accountability Return (AAR).

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor indicated that HEFCE had yet to produce the new template for the AAR.

Members received the papers on Academic Governance.

BG.16.091 Access Agreement 2018/19

Received: Document BG/067/16

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary introduced the paper which had been submitted to the Office for Fair Access following the Board's approval of the underlying principles at the last meeting. She drew particular attention to the University's approach to raising attainment in schools which, in addition to extensive engagement with schools across England, was focused around intensive activity in Merseyside schools with three key initiatives on school leadership, subject level enhancement and direct pupil intervention geared to improving attainment. A further initiative to encourage University staff into, and prepare them for, school governor roles was also being pursued. It was noted that HEFCE had indicated this approach represented a valid alternative to the proposal for universities to sponsor a single new or free school as part of its Access Agreement.

Final approval of the Agreement was awaited.

The Board approved the University's 2018/19 Access agreement as submitted.

BG.16.092 Draft Calendar 2017/18

Received: Document BG/068/16

The Clerk drew attention to the draft Calendar and asked members for feedback prior to final confirmation of dates. It was noted that the proposed November meeting might need to be moved one week forward.

The Clerk withdrew from the meeting at this point and was replaced by the temporary Clerk for remaining items.

BG.16.092 Any other Business

01. Appointment of the Clerk

It was agreed to offer a further 12 month fixed term contract to the current Clerk.

Action: Chair

BG.16.093 Reserved Item: Investigations Update

SECTION C ITEMS

BG.16.094 Academic Board Minutes (22 March 2017)

Received: Document BG/069/16

The minutes were received.

BG.16.095 Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 10 July 2017.