

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the meeting held on 30 September 2013

Present

Michael Pinfold	Independent member	Chair of the Board
Lesley Munro	PVC & University Secretary	Clerk to the Board
Martin Ainscough	Independent member	
Hilary Anslow	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	
Stephen Hesford	Independent member	
Bill Johnson	Support staff member	Elected
Bernard Laverty	Independent member	Deputy Chair & Chair Resources Committee
John Maxwell	Independent member	
Simon Pope	Independent member	
Robert Smedley	PVC & Dean of Education	Academic Board representative
Alice Walker	Student member	Elected

In attendance

Roy Bayfield	Director of Corporate Communications & Student Recruitment (for agenda item 2)
Seth Crofts	PVC & Dean of Health & Social Care (for agenda item 2)
Steve Igoe	Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Resources)
Paul Malone	Students' Union General Manager
George Talbot	PVC & Dean of Arts & Sciences (for agenda item 2)

Apologies

David Owen	Independent member	Chair: Audit Committee
Lynnette Turner	Academic staff member	Elected

The Chair welcomed Richard Benjamin, Clive Edwards and Stephen Hesford to their first meeting of the Board and introductions were made.

BG.13.001 Presentation: Brand and Reputation

Received: Document BG/001/13

The Director of Corporate Communications and Student Recruitment introduced this item which drew attention to the inextricable link between brand and reputation. In considering brand, he highlighted the importance of *identity* (who we are and what we stand for) along with *promises* (what we undertake to deliver) relating this to Edge Hill's identity derived through the motto and areas of distinctiveness as well as the promises made through the Vision and Mission. Reputation relied on delivering the right blend of the promises encompassed in the brand noting that this blend would vary for different kinds of provision. In concluding his presentation, he emphasised the University's strategy in providing high quality, targeted brand communication at every touch point and the key role of all members of the University community and its partners in co-creating reputation.

The Dean of Health & Social Care outlined the strong, professional foundation underpinning the Faculty's activities which had allowed for recent diversification in enterprise and consultancy such as the work with Care UK. He cited the establishment of the Postgraduate Medical Institute (PGMI) as example of new development involving prestigious partners which enhanced the University's reputation.

The Dean of Arts and Sciences highlighted the development of new programmes and the recent increase in entry level scores as an indication that the Faculty was attracting better qualified students. He drew particular attention to the ongoing work to improve research standing with a doubling of the percentage of staff likely to be returned in the upcoming Research Excellence Framework (REF) submission to at least two-star level. The establishment of research institutes such as the Institute for Creative Education (ICE) and the Institute for Public Policy (I4P) provided opportunities to link with a range of sponsoring partners whilst the appointment of 36 PhD students/Graduate Teaching Assistants over a three year period also made a significant contribution to raising the University's research profile. An increase in the quality of applications for academic posts was already noticeable. Whilst noting the importance of research in raising the University's standing in the sector, the Dean acknowledged the lengthy lead time required and the need to focus on delivering impact from research for the 2020 REF.

The Dean of Education drew attention to the outstanding OFSTED quality ratings achieved which underpinned the continued allocation of Initial Teacher Training places in challenging times and had supported the Faculty's successful bids for a number of government contracts. As one of the largest providers of ITT and CPD in the country the Faculty had trained many of today's teachers and built strong relationships with a significant number of school and college partners. Building on this work, the emphasis of research in the Faculty was on influencing and informing practice. The Dean also referred to the importance of ongoing work to develop employer engagement and international activity in further enhancing the University's reputation.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Resources) pointed to the importance of continuing to maintain an excellent reputation with HEFCE as the sector regulator especially in relation to data quality and financial stability which provided a high level of confidence in institutional integrity. He highlighted the importance of team working in delivering quality across all aspects of the University's provision and noted the contribution played by initiatives such as the Health and Well-Being programme in providing a supportive environment for staff.

The Clerk drew attention to the reputational value that could be derived from association with well regarded, high profile individuals citing the University's Chancellor, Professor Tanya Byron, the visit by the Countess of Wessex and honorary award holders as examples. This was an area that could be further developed. Equally, she pointed to the importance of 'under-the-wire' work on the political front highlighting the visits made by many key political players that had been instigated by the Vice-Chancellor. The significance of image to reputation was also emphasised with increased use of the Coat of Arms noticeable across the campus and in general corporate communications.

The President of the Students' Union highlighted the growth and national recognition of the Union in recent years allowing for a more active role in supporting the student experience which had been well received. He also acknowledged the benefits gained from the strong working relationship with the Executive that had been encouraged by the University.

In discussion the following points were made:

- The establishment of Research Institutes offered opportunities for all three Faculties to work together in areas such as Sport and the Performing Arts;

- The size of the partner base in Health and Education provided significant potential for the further development of research which informed practice;
- Whilst the University was expecting an improvement in the ratings from the REF, it was recognised that the impact would be limited to moving up the long tail of institutions that sat below the heavy research players. Reaching the top of the tail was a reasonable target for the 2020 REF but the extent of progress made would be affected by many variables and uncertainties;
- The advertising budget was comparatively small at around £400,000 but this reflected the growing importance of social media and the emphasis on highly targeted communications that had been shown to be more effective than large-scale, blanket campaigns. The University also preferred a marketing process which emphasised people contact and the development of personal relationships with schools and colleges.

Concluding discussion, the Chair thanked all those who had contributed to the presentation.

BG.13.002 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest specific to the meeting.

BG.13.003 Chair's Announcements

.01 Appointment of Pro Vice-Chancellor (University Secretary)

The Chair reported that Lynda Brady (currently regional director of the Open University) had accepted the appointment to this post which would become vacant on the retirement of the current incumbent. He indicated that the post had attracted a very strong field.

.02 Events

Members were reminded of a number of upcoming events to which they were invited including the new Professorial Lecture series, Scholarships evening (1 November) and the launch of Mark Flinn's new book celebrating eighty years of the University on the

Ormskirk campus followed by a community event including 'Heliosphere' (2 October).

Action: All

.03 Governor meetings with the Chair

The Chair apologised that he had not yet been able to complete his annual one-to-one meetings and indicated that he would be following these up with individuals shortly.

BG.13.004 Chair's Action

There was no Chair's Action to report.

BG.13.005 Minutes of the previous meeting

Received: Document BG/002/13

The minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2013 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

BG.13.006 Action Log

Received: Document BG/003/13

The Clerk highlighted an outstanding item in relation to consideration of the International Strategy and it was agreed that this should be taken at the January meeting. It was also noted that consideration of the pilot Annual Sustainability Statement (ASSUR) would be taken at the next meeting of Resources Committee and that the need to identify new female governors would be considered at the next meeting of Nominations Committee.

Action: Clerk

The Action Log was received.

BG.13.007 Matters arising not included elsewhere on the agenda

There were no matters arising.

SECTION A ITEMS

BG.13.008 Confirmation of Standing Orders

Received: Document BG/004/13

The Board approved Standing Orders for 2013/14 noting minor amendments made by the Clerk.

Action: Clerk

BG.13.009 Board Self-Evaluation

Received: Document BG/005/13

The Clerk introduced this item drawing attention to the documentation which followed a template agreed last year. Overall attendance at meetings had been good but, in noting the changes in membership, the lack of women governors was highlighted as an issue to be addressed.

The review of business for 2012/13 confirmed congruence with the Terms of Reference. Major discussions had been held around the new Board structure, capital developments and the Strategic Plan. The introduction of presentations at the commencement of each meeting along with regular reports on academic affairs and student matters had been particularly welcomed.

In considering business for 2013/14 the review of the Financial Memorandum, the REF submission and the revised Estates Strategy were noted as likely areas for discussion along with any further changes in government policy.

Action: Clerk

In response to a member's question concerning information on academic performance, it was noted that this could be incorporated in the later discussion of Key Performance Indicators.

In the light of the comprehensive review undertaken two years ago, it was agreed that the evaluation documentation provided sufficient assurance in relation to the Board's effectiveness.

The Self-Evaluation documentation was received.

BG.13.010 Use of the University Seal

Received: Document BG/006/13

The Clerk reported there had been no use of the University Seal during 2012/13.

The report on the Use of the University Seal was received.

BG.13.011 Minutes of Committees

.01 Audit Committee (16 September 2013)

Received: Document BG/007/13

The member introducing the minutes drew attention to the satisfactory internal audit reports received noting that this had been the last meeting for RSM Tenon who had now been replaced by PWC. The speedy end-of-year closure of accounts had been commended by KPMG.

The Audit Committee minutes were received.

BG.13.012 Financial Outturn 31 July 2013

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Resources) reported an end-of year surplus of £19.8 million against a £108 million turnover for 2012/13 and a cash position of £32.5 million despite the recent capital spend. Outstanding information (at Audit Committee) concerning pensions had been finalised and the revaluation under FRS17 showing a £6.6 million gain was reported. The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Resources) recorded his thanks to the Finance team for their work in bringing the accounts to completion.

The Board received and commended the financial outturn report.

BG.13.013 The University's Collaborative Provision

Received: Document BG/008.13

The Clerk introduced the annual report on collaborative partnerships for academic delivery highlighting the continued reduction in FE delivery partnerships with a number terminating this session. This reflected changing government policies towards student number

allocation and controls. She drew attention to the contractual arrangements which underpinned all collaborative partnerships and the emphasis on due diligence investigations prior to any agreements being signed.

In response to a member's question, it was noted that Articulation Agreements with Awarding Bodies reflected recognition of the qualifications they offered for entry (or advanced entry) to University programmes.

It was further noted that the list could usefully identify new partnerships as well as those that were terminating.

Action: Clerk

The report on Collaborative Provision was received.

BG.13.014 Capital Projects Update

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Resources) reported on the completion of all major projects during 12/13 with snagging now ongoing. Some remaining minor work was still in progress in relation to the Biosciences development. In terms of costs, it was likely that the total budget envelope would be underspent by around £475,000. He recorded his thanks to the team noting that these developments made a significant contribution to the student experience.

It was reported that further proposals would be brought to the next Board meeting for 13/14 new build which was likely to include additional residential accommodation if an appropriate location could be identified.

Board members received the update report on capital projects and commended the University on the outstanding results achieved.

BG.13.015 WLBC/EHU Forum: 12 July 2013

Received: Document BG/009/13

The Chair provided some background to the establishment of the Forum, noting that relationships with the Council had improved appreciably over time. He highlighted that attendance from the Council side had fallen off in recent meetings but that the University would continue to support the Forum as a sign of good faith.

In discussion, it was noted that the University had been unsuccessful in appealing the re-definition of the green-belt boundary which had removed a small amount of land from potential development. No further approach had been received in connection with the proposed cycle link between the rail station and the University.

The minutes of the meeting of the WLBC/EHU Forum were received.

BG.13.015 Review of Students' Union Constitution

Received: Document BG/010/13

The General Manager of the Students' Union outlined the reasons for the major changes to the constitution undertaken two years ago which had been largely driven by the requirements for charity registration. The Union had taken this opportunity to modernise its structures through the removal of some layers of bureaucracy and by linking the sabbatical officers with specific Faculties and placing them at the heart of the management process. This had opened up sabbatical representation beyond the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, which had traditionally predominated, whilst ordinary members were still able to engage on a number of different levels.

Overall, it was felt that the changes had been beneficial with the reach of the Union significantly extended and supporting a much more proactive service as detailed in the document. Whilst the model was not generally replicated elsewhere in the sector, the Union had been able to operate more effectively, achieving national recognition in a number of areas.

It was noted that the Union would be undertaking a general review during 2013/14 around the question 'are we student-led?' which remained its prime objective.

The Board received the report on the Review of the Students' Union Constitution.

BG.13.016 Annual Report from Academic Board

Received: Document BG/011/13

The Vice-Chancellor introduced the report which outlined the business of the Academic Board over the year. He indicated that individual papers were accessible to Governors via the University's web pages.

In response to a member's question it was noted that MOOCs (Massive Open On-line Learning Courses) were open to anyone to join at no cost. The movement had taken off in the USA and a number of elite British universities had recently launched a range of MOOCs. It did not offer a viable business model however and was likely to be best used as a marketing tool to generate interest in university provision. Edge Hill was offering a MOOC on Vampires in Gothic Fiction.

In considering the report, the Vice-Chancellor highlighted changes to the membership of the Board which ensured the maintenance of an appropriate balance between ex-officio and elected members.

The Board received the Academic Board Report and approved the changes to membership as detailed in the paper.

Action: Clerk

BG.13.017 Operating Framework for Higher Education in England

Received: Document BG/012/13

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Resources) introduced the document developed by the Regulatory Partnership Group (RPG) and bringing together the range of regulatory arrangements applicable to higher education providers in England. The Framework was designed to ensure accountability for public funding, protect the student interest and safeguard institutional autonomy and academic freedom. Whilst there were no specific issues to bring to the attention of the Board, it was noted the document did provide a useful and readable summary.

The Operating Framework for Higher Education was received.

BG.13.018 CUC Governance Code of Practice: Update

Received: Document BG/013/13

The Chair introduced this item indicating that the review was linked to HEFCE's parallel review of the Financial Memorandum and current discussions around the Annual Sustainability Statement (ASSUR). It also fitted well with the production of the Operating Framework previously discussed. CUC and HEFCE were working together to provide a co-ordinated approach.

The update on the CUC Governance Code of Practice was received.

SECTION B ITEMS

BG.13.019 Vice-Chancellor's Report

Received: Document BG/014/13

The Vice-Chancellor introduced his report outlining the current position in relation to recruitment which was now a complicated process seeking to maximise the free-market recruitment of ABB students whilst also staying within Student Number Control (SNC) boundaries for students with lower grades. Noting there were still some late enrolling students to register, the picture showed that numbers of ABB students had mushroomed (further enhancing entry tariff scores) whilst SNC recruitment had reached the bottom end of the range. This would secure future SNC allocations and take overall numbers well above the budgeted figure representing a strong performance in a challenging environment.

It was noted that there were around 100 students who had completed all the pre-entry requirements but had not arrived to enrol. This was a lower number than the previous year but was an indication of the uncertainties now built in to the recruitment process. In considering the need to further secure our position in future years, a new post had been established to work with good applicants who had been rejected for heavily over-subscribed courses (especially Nursing) to open their horizons and advise on alternative provision within the University which would lead them to a satisfying career. Such 'recycling' was both beneficial to the University and also to applicants who might otherwise turn away from higher education as an option.

In terms of other news over the summer, the Vice-Chancellor reported on the much improved NSS results, which placed the University either first or second in the region alongside Lancaster dependent on which measures were used. The progressive improvement (4-8 places) in the Times/Sunday Times League Table was also to be welcomed reflecting some good performance and also better management of data. He indicated however that further advances were largely dependent on REF results and improving degree classifications and graduate employment outcomes, especially in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

In conclusion, the Vice-Chancellor emphasised the increasingly challenging environment and the need to maximise the University's position before further policy changes which would inevitably follow the next election.

The Board received the Vice-Chancellor's report.

BG.13.020 National Student Survey (NSS) Results 2013

Received: Document BG/015/13

The Clerk outlined the background to the NSS which was now in its ninth year. Surveying final year students across six areas of the student experience, the NSS was commonly used as a proxy for quality assessment forming an important element in Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) Reviews and League Table compilations. Response rates were high at more than 70% and, despite initial scepticism and continued concern that some results could be misleading, the survey was now an accepted part of quality monitoring and engagement with students in all institutions. Whilst the University had generally performed well in the survey, scores for Organisation and Management had been a persistent challenge whilst other institutions had also been improving at a faster rate in recent years.

Within Edge Hill, results from the NSS had always been seen as a way to work with students, and the Students' Union, to better understand the nature of the student experience. To this end, detailed analysis and information was shared openly across the University and embedded in annual Departmental and Service monitoring arrangements. In recent years, the Internal Student Survey, which was administered across first and second years, had been revised to mirror the NSS in order to identify and address issues at the earliest opportunity.

Turning to the 2013 results, the Clerk highlighted the improved performance across all areas (including Organisation and Management) which underpinned a significant uplift in the UK ranking from 71/123 in 2012 to 32/132 in 2013. She also drew attention to the detailed comparison with other north-west institutions which placed the University first across a significant number of areas. Taken down to subject level, the results supported positive headline data which could be used for marketing and recruitment purposes.

Finally, the Clerk drew attention to the set of charts provided which mapped the University's performance against north-west competitors over the last eight years and highlighted the generally steady progress made over time culminating in a particularly good performance in 2013. The improvement in the score relating to Students' Union performance was also noteworthy.

In discussion, the general upward trend for all institutions was noted .

In response to a comment concerning the need for early provision of timetable information, it was agreed to feed this through to relevant departments.

Action: Clerk

The Board received the report on the 2013 NSS results.

BG.13.021 First Destination Survey 2013

Received: Document BG/016/13

The Vice-Chancellor introduced this report noting the favourable outcome which placed the University at the top of the north-west university rankings for students employed or in further study six months after graduation. He drew a note of caution however in terms of the more detailed analysis of those employed in graduate level jobs where rates for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences gave rise for some concern. It was noted that employability was a priority area for the University and that additional resource had been allocated to the Careers Office this year to strengthen provision.

In discussion, it was noted that many graduate jobs required a First or Upper Second degree classification and that the award of good degrees was an area for further investigation given that entry grades had been rising. It was also noted that brand and reputation were important in supporting employability.

The Board received the report on the 2013 First Destination Survey

BG.12.022 Student Report

Received: Document BG/017/13

The President of the Students' Union introduced his report highlighting:

- the success of the Advice Centre which had assisted students in accessing more than £415,000 to support their studies;
- current discussions with the Media Department to utilise facilities in Creative Edge to support the student-run VibeRadio service;
- ongoing work with Facilities Management to identify suitable locations for student locker provision;
- completion of the joint SU/University partnership to adapt and refurbish the Multi-faith Centre.

It was further noted that arrangements for Freshers' Week had gone well and that the international student programme had also been incorporated this year.

In response to a member's question about potential abuse through social media, it was explained that Codes of Practice were in operation and the position was sensitively monitored. In most instances, groups were self-managing.

In considering a further question concerning the diversity of the student body, it was agreed that profile data should be provided to the next meeting.

Action: Clerk

The Board received the Student Report.

BG.13.023 Draft Key Performance Indicator Report

Received: Document BG/018/13

The Clerk introduced the report which outlined discussions on the provision of a new KPI report for the Board. Initial consideration had been given to the performance measures attached to the new Strategic Plan but it was noted that many of these were retrospective measures and were already received by the Board through separate reports. Whilst there was a case for bringing these together on an annual basis to consider progress on the Strategic Plan, it was suggested that regular KPI reporting to the Board should be geared to current indicators related to business critical activity including academic quality as previously agreed. A draft was presented for consideration.

In discussion, it was agreed that KPIs should include current indicators covering recruitment, enrolment, retention and relevant financials with annual indicators around reputation including reportable incidents, academic quality, employability and League Table positions. The first full report would be made to the December meeting.

Action: Clerk

The Draft KPI report was received.

BG.13.024 Any other Business

There was no other business.

SECTION C ITEMS

BG.13.025 Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 2 December 2013.