

## BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the meeting held on 12 May 2014

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### Present

Bernard Laverty	Independent member	Chair of the Board
Lesley Munro		Clerk to the Board
Martin Ainscough	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
Stephen Hesford	Independent member	
David Owen	Independent member	Deputy Chair & Chair Resources Committee
Lynnette Turner	Academic staff member	Elected

### In attendance

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

### Apologies

Richard Benjamin	Independent member	
Bill Johnson	Support staff member	Elected
Paul Malone	Students' Union General Manager	
John Maxwell	Independent member	
Robert Smedley	PVC & Dean of Education	Academic Board representative
Alice Walker	Student member	Elected
Denise Walker	Independent member	

The Chair welcomed Kayley Wilson and Connor Richmond to their first meeting of the Board.

**BG.13.085 Presentation: The Careers Service**

*Received Document BG/062/13 (copies circulated subsequent to the meeting)*

The Head of Careers outlined the functions and scope of the Service which, as well as employer introductions, advice and guidance, co-ordinated part-time job and volunteering opportunities. It was noted that the Service was actively involved in the delivery of the University's Employability Strategy working closely with academic departments in developing Employment Plans. The Head of Service highlighted the importance of a whole University approach to employability and the need for early engagement with students. Following additional resourcing, the Service was increasing its employer engagement activity and was ambitious for the future in seeking to build on the University's excellent record for employment to provide access to more graduate level jobs.

In response to questions, the following points were noted:

- The Service was hoping to introduce new specialist web software to support the advice and guidance function;
- Information about, and preparation for, Assessment Centres was incorporated in the Careers web portal and the Service was working to identify employers to provide further assistance through practice sessions;
- The additional resourcing would help in the development of relationships with SMEs which were an important element of the graduate employment market;
- Whilst teaching and nursing were generally recognised as graduate entry professions, the focus of careers activity in relation to students in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences was to raise student ambition and increase access to graduate level jobs which was increasingly seen as a more important indicator than employment per se. The success of the University in getting students into work remained important however and it was noted that being in employment was helpful in applying for higher levels posts;
- The University was concerned to ensure that student performance was properly reflected through award classifications and Faculties

were already investigating modules with poorer results and working to ensure tutor feedback best supported student achievement;

- Current work on enhancing the University's brand and image was a critical, though long-term, activity in improving employment prospects with graduate recruiters;
- The power of the University's alumni was recognised and realising this potential had been identified as a priority.

The Vice-Chancellor confirmed the University's commitment to this area of activity and highlighted the executive support specified in the remit for the new Pro Vice-Chancellor appointment.

Members thanked the Head of Careers for the presentation and for the work of the Service in this critical aspect of the University's work.

**BG.13.086 Declarations of Interest**

There were no Declarations of Interest specific to the meeting.

**BG.13.087 Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's Announcements.

**BG.13.088 Chair's Action**

There was no Chair's Action to report.

**BG.13.089 Minutes of the previous meeting**

*Received: Document BG/063/13*

The minutes of the meeting held on 31 March 2014 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

**BG.13.090 Action Log**

*Received: Document BG/064/13*

Members received the Action Log noting the final version of the OFFA agreement was included on the agenda.

**BG.13.091 Matters arising not included elsewhere on the agenda**

*.01 Industrial Action (BG.13.074.02)*

The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that, following a UCU vote accepting the 2013 pay award, the threatened marking boycott had been withdrawn. It was noted that the University had drawn up temporary academic regulations which would enable the majority of students to graduate under such circumstances.

<b>SECTION A ITEMS</b>
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**BG.13.092 Capital Projects Update**

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor gave a verbal update on the progress of current Capital Projects noting that work on residential accommodation was well underway whilst the steel structure for the Sports development was being delivered. He drew attention to the need to temporarily drain the lake on the eastern campus to allow work to continue. Costs were on target and the VAT recovery plan for the Sports project would be implemented as agreed with advice from KPMG.

It was noted that significant planting was being undertaken around the sports pitches established last year which would meet concerns from local residents concerning the visual environment.

The report from the Deputy Vice-Chancellor was received.

**BG.13.093 Proposed Revisions to the Framework for Inspecting Initial Teacher Training**

*Received: Document BG/065/13*

The Vice-Chancellor explained that the Dean of Faculty of Education was not available to speak to this item following recent notification of the anticipated OfSTED inspection which was currently taking place. It was noted that the inspection was being carried out under the existing scheme but that the Faculty would demonstrate that we were moving towards the new framework which emphasised the performance of newly qualified teachers (NQTs). The inspection covered all three areas of provision (Primary & Early Years, Secondary and Post-Compulsory) with twelve judgement cells across the three areas.

Inspectors would visit partner schools as part of the process.  
Provisional feedback was expected on Thursday.

In response to a member's question, it was noted that the OfSTED team comprised members with previous HE inspection experience.

Members received the report from the Vice-Chancellor and wished the Faculty well. Discussion of the new framework was deferred to a future meeting.

**Action: Clerk**

**BG.13.094 Access Agreement 15/16**

*Received: Document BG/066/13*

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (University Secretary) introduced the Agreement noting that the underlying principles had been agreed at the previous meeting. She drew attention to the three key areas addressed through the Agreement which covered Outreach, Retention and Progression in relation to widening participation. It was noted that given the significant percentage of WP students in the University, support in these areas was largely mainstreamed forming an approach which considered the whole student experience and emphasised the importance of 'belonging' and 'engagement'.

The President of the Students' Union indicated that, whilst there had been consultation around specific provisions of the Agreement through the Fees and Bursaries group, the Students' Union had some suggestions for inclusion in the final document which had not been seen prior to the meeting.

**Action: Pro Vice-Chancellor (University Secretary)**

**The Access Agreement was approved.**

**BG.13.095 CUC meetings**

The Chair reported on useful discussions at recent CUC meetings which had covered pensions, industrial action and the draft Governance Code at the Northern Group. An item on MOOCs at the national plenary meeting had led to its inclusion on this agenda.

The Chair's report on CUC meetings was received.

**BG.13.096 Executive and Senior Management Structure**

*Received: Document BG/067/13*

The Vice-Chancellor confirmed the final Executive and Senior Management structure drawing attention to the incorporation of Enterprise and Employer Engagement within the remit for the vacant Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations) post. The importance of the Academic Quality function was emphasised in relation to preparation for the upcoming QAA Institutional Review. It was also noted that the proposal to establish a new Legal and Secretariat Service was still under discussion.

The Executive and Senior Management structure was received.

<b>SECTION B ITEMS</b>
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**BG.13.097 Vice-Chancellor's Report**

*Received: Document BG/068/13*

The Vice-Chancellor introduced his report providing a commentary on the following seven priorities for the University:

*.01 Recruitment (HEFCE) and .02 Portfolio*

The last date for first round acceptances through UCAS had passed with some 400 EHU applicants now declined by default. Also, as expected, the higher acceptance level, which had been maintained through the majority of the cycle, was beginning to fall off – although this was still better than the previous year. In addition, the University's Fastrack programme for mature learners was recruiting strongly. The current position indicated that the University should meet the budgeted student number target with recruitment of around 200 students in Clearing but it was unlikely that the maximum HEFCE student number allowed would be reached.

In looking to the future, it was clear that the University needed to extend market reach and revitalise the portfolio to secure the recruitment position. In this respect, the Student Recruitment team were looking to run campaigns into new areas such as Yorkshire and the Midlands whilst plans were already in place for

new programmes in subjects such as Music, Genetics and Food Technology. Additional academic programme initiatives were likely to come through the annual spring planning cycle. Given the financial underpinning provided through undergraduate student numbers, the need to focus on securing this position was emphasised as a pre-requisite for the further development of postgraduate and international recruitment.

*.03 Retention*

The position in relation to retention had seen considerable improvement in recent years and was a significant factor in maximising income to the University.

*.04 National Student Survey (NSS)*

The University's strong performance in the NSS made a vital contribution to building brand and reputation although this was challenging to maintain as it had to be renewed annually.

*.05 Award classifications*

The importance of ensuring students were able to realise their full academic potential was central to the University's mission. Given improved entry standards, it was expected that this would be appropriately reflected in student performance and consequent award classifications.

*.06 Graduate Employment*

Whilst the University's performance in relation to graduate employment was strong, the appointment of a new Pro Vice-Chancellor with responsibility for employer engagement recognised the need to enhance opportunities for students to obtain graduate level jobs.

*.07 Research*

Maintaining momentum in relation to research was critical to the long-term future of the University, especially in terms of brand and reputation. The extensive partner networks operating through the Faculties of Health and Education provided a considerable resource for applied research which would have demonstrable impact but had yet to be fully developed.

In discussion, the following points were noted:

- The new Creative Edge facility had supported a significant improvement to recruitment on Computing courses although this was not yet reflected to the same extent in Media. Recruitment in Performing Arts was also disappointing although there were innovative plans to redress this. Overall, the recruitment environment had become highly competitive;
- Whilst all Faculties were delivering above the national average acceptance rate (23%), the variation was significant with Health at 70%, Education at 50% and FAS at 27%;
- The impact of campus development and events such as the recent UCAS Fair were significant factors in supporting the recruitment effort but targeted activity was necessary to extend the University's reach to new regions;
- The practice of a small number of 'elite' universities in offering some unconditional places to 'A' level applicants had the potential to undermine school performance if it was applied more generally across the sector;
- Growth was necessary to support continued improvement to the student experience but this could not be at the expense of academic standards which had the potential to bring long-term damage to brand and reputation.

In concluding, the Vice-Chancellor highlighted the University's strong track record over recent years which provided a firm foundation for extending market reach and he emphasised the impact of further likely changes in government policy which could support a less restrictive environment for recruitment in areas such as Nursing.

The Vice-Chancellor's report was received.

### **BG.13.098 Students' Union Report**

*Received: Document BG/069/13*

The President of the Students' Union introduced his report highlighting in particular the work to ensure inclusivity for minority groups within

representative structures. He noted that the formal report from the Returning Officer in relation to recent elections was yet to be received but that turn-out had been significantly better this year.

Recent Students' Union Awards evenings to celebrate the success of students across a range of activities were reported along with the recognition achieved by the Union itself through the NUS, where it had received the top award for Green Impact and a Bronze Award for the Student Bar.

It was noted that the annual Student Led Staff Awards was underway and was attracting a very good response. It was hoped that the analysis of responses would be used to provide evaluative feedback to further enhance the student experience.

The incoming Students' Union President (Kayley Wilson) and the newly elected Student Governor (Connor Richmond) introduced themselves and were welcomed to the Board.

The Students' Union report was received.

#### **BG.13.099 Appointment of External Auditors**

*Received: Document BG/070/13*

The Chair of the Audit Committee reported the appointment of KPMG as external auditors for the University following a competitive tender process agreed by the Committee in March. It was noted that four firms had been interviewed.

**The Board noted and approved the appointment of KPMG as the University's external auditors for a three year period to 31 July 2016 with an option to extend for a further two year period subject to satisfactory performance.**

**Action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor**

#### **BG.13.100 Estimating the Public Cost of Student Loans: Institute for Fiscal Studies Report**

*Received: Document BG/071/13*

The Vice-Chancellor introduced this paper which set out the issues in relation to the current higher education funding model based on

student loans. In particular, the paper highlighted the rising cost of provision at subsidised interest rates and the likely cost of non-recovery. In recognising the inherent uncertainties in the variable factors involved, it was doubtful that the system would offer a sustainable solution and it was probable that there would be a further review following the 2015 General Election.

It was noted that Universities UK had established a Panel to make recommendations on the future development of the fees and loans system.

The report from the Institute for Fiscal Studies on the Public Cost of Student Loans was received.

### **BG.13.101 What is a MOOC?**

*Received: Document BG/072/13*

The Clerk introduced this paper which outlined the recent growth of Massive Open On-line Courses (MOOCs), especially in the US, and the implications for traditional delivery of higher education. Whilst there had been a lot of publicity given to the concept of 'free' learning on a global basis offered through MOOCs, delivery was largely dependent on specialist platforms funded through venture capital with no satisfactory financial model for the delivery of full degree programmes yet established. Initial experience also suggested that very few participants completed courses and that the role of 'face-to-face' teaching remained the preferred, and most effective, pedagogic delivery mechanism for initial degree level study.

In discussion, it was noted that the MOOC format and technology was likely to be particularly relevant to major distance learning providers such as the Open University (owners of the first UK MOOC platform) and could also be useful in relation to short supporting programmes and for some professional development provision.

It was reported that the University had offered a MOOC through the Department of English and History this year which had attracted over 1,000 registrations but only 31 completions with no students taking up the option to convert this to academic credit. A national conference on MOOCs and the Humanities was being held at the University on 15 May at which David Willetts was speaking.

The report on MOOCs was received.

**BG.13.102 Any other Business**

*.01 Bank Mandate*

**The Board approved an amendment to the existing Mandate with Barclays Bank in order to add Bernard Laverty (Chair of the Board) and Lynda Brady (Pro Vice-Chancellor & University Secretary) as authorised signatories.**

**Action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor**

A copy of the mandate is attached to the minutes of this meeting.

*.02 HEFCE Assurance Inspection*

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor reported that HEFCE would be undertaking a one day Assurance inspection on 7 July as part of its standard procedures. This would involve meetings with the Chair of the Board, the Chair of Audit Committee and the Clerk as well as University officers. The last inspection was in 2008.

*.03 MEP Question Time*

The President of the Students' Union invited members to an MEP Question Time session on 19 May at 1.00pm at which all major parties would be represented.

<b>SECTION C ITEMS</b>
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**BG.13.103 Draft Calendar 2014/15**

*Received: Document BG/073/13*

The draft calendar of meetings for 2014/15 was received. Members were asked to notify the Clerk of any issues arising.

**BG.13.104 Date and time of next meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for 7 July 2014.