

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the meeting held on 24 September 2018 (17.45 pm)

Present

Clive Edwards	Independent member	Chair of the Board
Lesley Munro		Clerk to the Board
Martin Ainscough	Independent member	
Paul Aplin	Academic staff member	Elected/Co-opted
Roy Bayfield	Support Staff member	Elected/Co-opted
Joe Bradford	Student member	Students' Union President
Julian Bucknall	Independent member	
John Cater	Ex-officio	Vice-Chancellor
Graeme Collinge	Independent member	Chair: Resources Committee
Christine Donnelly	Independent member	
Clive Elliott	Independent member	
Rob Green	Independent member	
Lisa Greenhalgh	Independent member	Chair: Audit Committee
Fin McNicol	Independent member	
Louise Robinson	Independent member	
George Talbot	Academic staff member	Academic Board nominee
Margaret Williams	Independent member	

In attendance

Mark Allanson	PVC (External Relations)
Lynda Brady	PVC (Student Experience) & University Secretary
Steve Igoe	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Helen Smallbone	Academic Registrar and Clerk designate

Apologies

Joanne Flitcroft	Independent member	
Luke Myer	Student member	Elected
Tony Rankin	Independent member	
Mike Rush	Independent member	

BG.18.005 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

BG.18.006 Chair's Announcements

The Chair welcomed new members to the Board.

BG.18.007 Chair's Action

There was no Chair's Action to report.

BG.18.008 Minutes of the previous meeting

Received: Document BG/003/18

The Chair noted an omitted word in the last paragraph of minute BG.17.118. Subject to amendment for this, the minutes of the meeting held on 9 July 2018 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

BG.18.009 Action Log

Received: Document BG/004/18

The Clerk introduced the log which represented action taken on decisions made by the Board over the last year. There were three matters for report/discussion:

.01 PwC Review

It was noted that, following further discussion at Audit Committee, all issues emanating from the PwC Faculty Assurance Review had been satisfactorily resolved and this matter was now closed.

.02 Attendance of PVC/Deans at Board meetings

Following referral of this question by the Board, the recommendation from Governance and Nominations Committee that PVC/Deans should attend strategy meetings but not be required to attend ordinary meetings of the Board, was agreed. It was further noted that regular presentations from PVC/Deans would be welcomed.

.03 Strategic Plan and International Strategy

It was noted that no firm decision had been taken on the timing for discussion of these items. In relation to the Strategic Plan the Vice-Chancellor expressed the view that this should be a high level, relatively short document with an emphasis on culture and

ethos rather than detailed targets although it was noted that the plan would need to drive the major KPIs considered by the Board. Members acknowledged the need for flexibility however and it was suggested that this could be provided through regular review.

Following discussion, it was agreed that the Strategic Plan should be the main item for discussion at the January strategy meeting whilst international matters should be considered at the March 2019 meeting.

Action Clerk/Executive

The Action Log was received.

BG.18.010 Matters arising not included elsewhere on the agenda

There were no matters arising.

SECTION A ITEMS

BG.18.011 Board Self-Evaluation

Received: Document BG/005/18

Members considered the documentation presented by the Clerk which summarised the number of meetings, attendance and membership aspects; the business conducted over the year in relation to the Terms of Reference and the schedule of business for the coming year. The following points were highlighted:

- Overall, attendance levels had been good with a number of members achieving 100% attendance;
- Agendas had been busy but business had been completed within the allocated time;
- Membership had been stable throughout the year and, taking account of the new members appointed, encompassed a wide range of expertise;
- The Statement of Primary Responsibilities had been recently updated as part of the major review of governance procedures and committee terms of reference;

- In terms of Equality and Diversity, it was noted that this had been a major consideration in the recruitment of new members although minority ethnic representation was still lacking. Referring to the Board's general responsibilities in this area, the Board received an annual report in relation to staff and students and it was noted that equality and diversity had been identified as a cross-cutting theme within the Internal Audit Plan;
- The Board had been proactive in identifying a number of areas for specific presentation such as recruitment and KPIs. It had also authorised work to be undertaken by other committees such as the detailed consideration of the tendering process which had been referred to Resources Committee;
- The Board had been fully involved in monitoring the progress of two serious incidents reported to HEFCE (both now closed) and had received the report from PwC, commissioned by the Audit Committee, providing comprehensive assurance in relation to the University's fraud controls.
- The Board had approved the Action Plan developed in response to the HEFCE Assurance Review (HAR) with detailed oversight referred to the Audit Committee;
- The Board had been alert to areas of risk as shown in relation to recruitment and the decision to support the University's position in maintaining entry standards during the demographic downturn despite the potential impact on income and the need for tight controls on costs;
- In addition to the major review of governance procedures and committee terms of reference, the Board had reaffirmed its commitment to, and compliance with, the CUC HE Governance Code, approved a revised scheme of delegation and adopted the CUC Remuneration Code.

Overall, **members agreed that the Board had operated effectively** over the year with an appropriate level of challenge. The link governor scheme (not noted in the papers) was acknowledged as a particular strength in adding to members' understanding of issues.

The following suggestions were made by members for improvement:

- Whilst the quality of documentation was high, **papers** were often lengthy and **lacked an executive summary** with a number of documents not page numbered which made referencing difficult. In particular, the Board would value **the identification of key issues** (as noted on the new style cover sheets) in future;

- There was agreement that the inclusion of brief presentations within meetings had been valuable and that this practice should be maintained. **It was suggested that the three PVC/Deans should each make a presentation during the year.**

Action: Clerk/Executive

BG.18.012 Use of the University Seal

Received: Document BG/006/18

The report on the use of the University seal was received noting this had been authorised on one occasion over the year.

BG.18.013 Minutes of Committees

.01 Audit Committee (3 September 2018)

Received: Document BG/007/18

The Chair of Audit Committee introduced the minutes drawing attention to the following items:

- A thoughtful presentation from the Director of Student Services providing assurance in relation to the University's student mental health provision;
- Satisfactory committee evaluation;
- Approval of a revised Serious Incident Reporting Policy and updated Whistleblowing Policy;
- Receipt of two low risk audit reports and one medium risk report relating to Workforce Planning;
- Receipt of the Follow-up Audit report which indicated a high level of compliance with recommendations from previous audits;
- Receipt of a satisfactory Annual Internal Audit report;
- Approval of the Internal Audit Plan for 18/19 incorporating an audit of Remunerations Committee operational procedures;
- Completion of all agreed actions arising from the PwC final review of fraud controls.

Noting the national concern in relation to student mental health, the Chair of the Board queried **the number of those presenting with mental health issues at Edge Hill and where these were reported.**

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) agreed to provide this information to the Clerk for circulation to members.

Action: Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience)

The Audit Committee minutes were received.

.02 Governance and Nominations Committee (3 September 2018)

Received: Document BG/008/18

The Chair introduced the minutes noting the recommendations for the appointment of new members and the Clerk which had been agreed at the earlier meeting of the Board. With respect to membership renewals, he drew attention to the recommendation from the committee to approve renewals for the following members who had given exemplary service to the Board:

Lisa Greenhalgh
Martin Ainscough
Graeme Collinge
Louise Robinson

The Chair reported that, following discussion with each member, Martin Ainscough had indicated that, having served two full terms, he felt this was an appropriate time to leave the Board.

In RESOLVING to approve renewals for Lisa Greenhalgh, Graeme Collinge and Louise Robinson, members noted Martin Ainscough's decision to complete his membership at the end of November and voiced their appreciation of his contribution to the Board over the last six years.

Action: Clerk

The Clerk referred members to the recommendation to change the current agenda format in order to improve the efficiency of the Board. The essence of the proposal was to transpose sections A and B so that items likely to require discussion appeared at the start of the agenda when minds were fresh. An exception would be made for the minutes of Board committees since these often contained important recommendations and information pertinent to other agenda items. It was also proposed to make more use of Section C (items for

information only). The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) and University Secretary indicated that a similar system had been in operation for Academic Board for some time and appeared to work well.

It was RESOLVED to approve the revised agenda format for future meetings.

Action: Clerk

The Governance and Nominations Committee minutes were received.

.03 Remunerations Committee (9 July 2018)

Received: Document BG/009/18

The Chair of the Committee referred members to the formal report from the meeting which had determined the remuneration for designated postholders and had been orally reported at the July Board meeting.

The report from Remunerations Committee was received.

BG.18.014 Provisional Financial Outturn 31 July 2018

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor provided an oral report on the likely end of year outturn noting that the external audit of the financial statements was largely complete with only minor technical issues such as the accounting treatment of the Woodlands campus outstanding. He indicated that income was slightly ahead of budget at £127.5 million with a very close match to tuition fee targets achieved. The surplus, whilst down from the previous year, was also ahead of both the budget and the late mid-year reforecast at £19.8 million although it was noted that this would be shown as significantly higher given the new accounting treatment for pensions. The net cash position at £45.2 million was strong and ahead of the forecast.

In discussion, it was noted that the pension adjustments would affect all institutions and, given government concerns about excess surpluses, could have an unfortunate impact in overstating the real position.

In response to a member's query concerning the reason for the improved cash position, it was noted that this was due to better operating performance and a lag on the costs associated with the Catalyst building. Responding to a further member's query as to whether it was appropriate to carry this level of cash, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor indicated that this provided additional security for contingencies such as increased pension payments and was a sensible precaution during a period of uncertainty. He noted that a minimum level of £30 million was necessary in any event to meet the income fluctuations from Student Loan Company payments.

In terms of the outlook in comparison with the sector, the University would progressively become less of an 'outlier' than in previous years.

The oral report on the financial outturn for 31 July 2018 was received.

BG.18.015 The University's Collaborative Provision

Received: Document BG/010/18

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor introduced the report which set out the University's approach to collaborative work detailing current and recently approved partnerships. He indicated that the nature of the University's collaborative provision had changed over time with the major focus now centred on Faculty of Health provision.

In response to a member's question concerning the relationship between 'value' and 'risk' and how this affected decision-making, it was noted that the University followed Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) best practice with a detailed pro-forma setting out the costs and benefits. Protection of the University's academic integrity was seen as paramount in collaborative arrangements.

The Vice-Chancellor pointed out that whilst a number of new arrangements were identified as having been approved in 2017/18, most of these related to Nurse apprenticeship provision which was a single programme with multiple partners requiring separate agreements. He also noted that current arrangements between the Faculty of Arts and Sciences and Virridor were being wound down.

The Chair suggested that it would be helpful to see a **full table** of all the University's current and proposed arrangements **listed by risk category** and the **Deputy Vice-Chancellor agreed to provide this along with a copy of the pro-forma noted above for circulation.**

Action: Deputy Vice-Chancellor

The report on the University's Collaborative Provision was received.

BG.18.016 WLBC/EHU Forum (22 June 2018)

Received: Document BG/011/18

The Vice-Chancellor introduced the Forum minutes noting that the meeting had focused on the University's capital development programme and recruitment for September 2018.

In response to a member's question about the draft Local Plan and the provision for residential housing, the Vice-Chancellor indicated that the Forum was precluded from discussion of specific planning matters for reasons of impartiality.

In terms of the land opposite the University main entrance, it was noted that Local Plan development options included the possibility of a Business Park and a student village although this would be dependent on the cost of land purchase. From the University's perspective, other options were available for expansion if required.

The minutes from the WLBC/EHU Forum were received.

BG.18.017 Annual Report from Academic Board

Received: Document BG/012/18

The Vice-Chancellor introduced the report which outlined the business of the Academic Board over the year and the forward business plan for 2018/19. Drawing attention to the responsibilities of the Board of Governors as outlined in the Articles of Government, he sought approval for changes to the Standing Orders and membership of the Academic Board as outlined in Appendix 3.

The Board **RESOLVED** to approve revisions to the Standing Orders and membership of the Academic Board as noted in Appendix 3.

Action: Vice-Chancellor

The annual report from Academic Board was received.

BG.18.018 Reports from Link Governors

The following verbal reports from link governors were received:

.01 Learning and Teaching Committee (L. Robinson)

The link governor for this committee indicated that time pressures had prevented her attendance at some meetings but she had attended the meeting where changes to the TEF had been discussed. This had been an interesting, informative and detailed discussion which demonstrated how the University was managing a very complex process.

.02 Academic Planning Committee and Student Services (C. Donnelly)

The link governor for these areas indicated she had found her engagement in this role increased her effectiveness as a governor. Attendance at Academic Planning Committee had been helpful in showing how overall strategy is followed through into individual course proposals such as the postgraduate medical programmes. This was also evident in the committee's focus on the student journey and value for money when considering improvements to existing provision.

The link with Student Services showed how strategy impacted directly on departmental delivery as, for example, the focus on supporting students at risk of withdrawal. The emphasis on evidence based research informing activity was also reassuring. In relation to the move to the Catalyst building, it was useful to see the helpdesk in operation and the arrangements made for privacy which could sometimes otherwise be a block on students seeking support.

.03 Research Committee (C. Elliott)

The link governor for this committee indicated that time pressures had prevented him from attending meetings but he had linked with the PVC/Dean who chaired the committee and was responsible for Research in the University. There was clear evidence of significant progress in this area with discussions focused on how this could be maintained.

.04 Department of Computing (J. Bucknall)

The link governor for this department indicated that his meetings with the Head of Department had been open and had provided valuable insight into the challenges of day-to-day operations.

In general discussion of the link governor role, it was noted that the main purpose of the scheme was as a means to develop governor understanding of the University in operation. **In terms of departmental links in particular**, it was important that the limits of the relationship were understood. **It was suggested that some further clarification around this should be developed.**

Action: Clerk

BG.18.019 The Chancellor: Completion of Term

The Chair confirmed that the Chancellor, Professor Tanya Byron, officially completed her term of office on 31 July 2018. He noted that the Chancellor had always played a major part at graduation ceremonies and had shown a particular interest in the student experience. Due to personal circumstances, it had not been possible for the Chancellor to attend the July graduations and the University had therefore been unable to formally recognise her service over the last ten years. Whilst no longer in post however, she had agreed to attend Scholarships Evening on 13 December thereby providing an opportunity to incorporate an event for a more formal farewell to which members of the Board would be invited.

Recognising her unique contribution over many years, members asked the Chair to write to the Chancellor to express the Board's appreciation for her service and to wish her well for the future.

Action: Chair

SECTION B ITEMS

BG.18.020 Vice-Chancellor's Report

Received: Document BG/013/18

The Vice-Chancellor introduced his report noting the following points:

.01 Recruitment

Despite the national demographic and application downturn, the University was set to recruit close to last year's numbers at 3710. This represented a drop of around 100 overall which was mainly evidenced in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. By any measure, this was a significant achievement in the current climate and the Vice-Chancellor emphasised that this had been reached without lowering entry standards or resorting to the questionable practice of making unconditional offers recently reported in the press. Recruitment from Clearing represented a small percentage of the intake and these applicants had been carefully selected to ensure they had the potential to succeed. There had been a slight downturn in the grades for BTEC students reflecting increased competition for these students from traditional universities in the region. Overall, this year's results gave a clear signal that the University's recruitment strategy, with its emphasis on relationship building and 'stickability', was working. Success had placed some pressure on demand for residential places with many continuing students also looking to remain on campus, but these had now been largely resolved.

.02 Finances

As outlined by the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, the University would return another strong financial performance providing protection from the vagaries of the market and changes in government policy.

.03 Teaching and Learning

The latest NSS results were very positive showing improvement across all areas. The scores for Teaching and Learning and Student Experience indicators placed the University in the top 25 institutions nationally and this was an important marker for the next TEF assessment. Given the changes in methodology,

retaining TEF Gold status would be challenging, requiring at least a top 20 performance in Teaching and Learning in the 2019 NSS.

.04 Research

The PVC/Dean with responsibility for research would be reporting more fully on the excellent progress made towards REF 2021.

.05 Reputation

The Vice-Chancellor pointed to the University's consistently improving profile and ranking in national league tables where the Edge Hill was now in the second quartile. He noted however that this had yet to filter through to the public perception of the University. Changing that perception was a major task for the University requiring continued effort in carefully targeted marketing.

In discussion, members raised a number of issues:

.01 Public Information

A member noted that a number of institutions had been recently found to be overclaiming their success in information on their websites/marketing materials and questioned the University's position on this. The Vice-Chancellor indicated that this was not a position that could ever be endorsed and confirmed that the University had clear procedures to ensure the accuracy of published information.

.02 Name of the University

A member questioned whether the name of the University was a factor in the way the University was perceived and whether it would be useful to commission research on this. The Vice-Chancellor indicated that there had been a significant discussion around this at the time of university designation. The view taken was that distinct alternatives were hard to find and gain approval for and would lose the connection and history with which Edge Hill was associated. Essentially, it was felt this was a marketing issue.

.03 TEF

A member sought clarification of the University's vulnerability in the next TEF assessment. The Vice-Chancellor indicated the scale of the challenge noting that, under the new methodology, the importance of teaching and learning indicators (which were very positive for the University) had halved with more emphasis being placed on long term graduate earnings data (more challenging for a young university with graduates often employed in public service and tending to stay in the North West where salary levels were lower). Further improving retention rates would have a positive impact.

The Vice-Chancellor's report was received.

BG.18.021 Student Report

Received: Document BG/014/18

The President of the Students' Union introduced the report which outlined the services offered by the EHSU Advice Centre and the trends in service usage since 2012. Currently, the service provided advice across a number of areas including housing, student finance, welfare and benefits and academic issues. The report highlighted the increasing number of cases around academic appeals and a perceived increase in the delays experienced by students in cases requiring a panel hearing. Given the costs associated with training advisors on student finance, welfare and benefits, where advice was also available directly from the University, the report suggested that Union resources might be more effectively targeted at assisting students on housing and academic issues in future.

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) indicated that the EHSU Advice Centre offered an important source of independent advice for students across a wide range of areas which had a positive impact on retention. She suggested it would be useful to have **further discussions** on how best to collaborate to ensure students received the best possible service.

Action: PVC Student Experience/SU President

In discussion, members sought clarification on the reasons for the increase in academic appeals and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student

Experience) indicated that, whilst this report identified the number of cases being handled through the EHSU Advice Centre, actual numbers would be clarified in the annual report due to be received by the Board in November. She noted that many cases were lodged as a result of mitigating circumstances which had not been notified at the appropriate time or misunderstandings around plagiarism and collusion. Both these areas were being addressed through an awareness campaign.

In response to a member's question as to how different groups were affected, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) indicated that an equality and diversity analysis would be included in the November report.

A member sought clarification in relation to the continuum of responsibility between the University and EHSU in relation to support through the student journey. The Vice-Chancellor indicated that the University had full responsibility for advising students throughout all aspects of their time at Edge Hill but that the EHSU Advice Centre was an important source of support for this.

The Student Report was received.

BG.18.022 OfS Registration/IER arrangements

Received: Document BG/015/18

The Vice-Chancellor introduced the documents which covered the University's OfS registration and details of the upcoming OfS review.

.01 OfS Registration

It was noted that the University's application to register with the OfS had been successful with no specific ongoing conditions imposed. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary drew attention to the varying dates on which general ongoing conditions came into effect and highlighted the role of the Board in ensuring that these conditions were met and maintained. It was noted that a Working Group had been established to consider the requirements for meeting ongoing conditions and an Action Plan was in development which would be circulated to the Board. In discussion around this, it was noted that the Board already received, had the opportunity to input to, and approved reports on the majority of areas covered by the conditions and it was assumed that an annual declaration in some form

would probably be required, possibly as part of the Annual Accountability Return. Whilst it was expected that further guidance would be issued around this, **members agreed that a formal report drawing together the information provided against the various conditions would be helpful in ensuring that the Board was in receipt of, had discussed and had confidence in, all the necessary assurances.**

Noted as an ongoing action: PVC (Student Experience) & University Secretary

.02 Reportable Events

It was noted that the OfS definition of reportable events had been substantially expanded under the new framework and attention was drawn to the revised Serious Incident Reporting Policy which had been approved at the last meeting of Audit Committee.

In response to a member's question as to whether all partnerships were reportable, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor indicated that, given the University's extensive network of partnerships with schools and hospitals in relation to student placements which ran into many hundreds, a proportionate approach would have to be taken with a judgement made as to what was material.

.03 Enhanced Monitoring

Whilst no specific conditions of registration had been imposed, the OfS had indicated two areas where enhanced monitoring was required. The first of these related to the Access and Participation Plan and concerned reducing gaps in attainment and progression from underrepresented groups and some ethnic minority groups and also ensuring robust evaluation of the University's financial support package. The PVC (Student Experience) & University Secretary indicated that additional resource had already been put in place to help the University in addressing these issues. This condition required engagement and co-operation with the Director of Fair Access and Participation although the detail of this had not yet been specified. **Noting that the timescales for this might not fit with the Board's schedule of meetings and it was agreed that, where necessary, Chair's Action could be taken in relation to any approvals required.**

To note: Chair/PVC (Student Experience) & University Secretary

The second area identified for enhanced monitoring (of which the Board was already aware) related to action taken in relation to the HAR and supplementary reports and noted the requirement for the University to undertake an independent review, to be specified by the OfS, of the adequacy and effectiveness of management and governance arrangements. Whilst the enhanced monitoring requirement stated that the self-assessment for registration had shown limited evidence of positive action in relation to the requirements and observations identified in the reports, the PVC (Student Experience) & University Secretary indicated that no progress update had been requested as part of the registration process and there was no obvious place where such an update could have been provided. She noted that the Action Plan addressing these issues had been fully implemented except in relation to end of year documentation which was not yet due. It was noted that the Board had been actively monitoring progress on the Plan through the Audit Committee and that the University had now provided the OfS with updated Action Plans copies of which were included in the Board papers.

.04 Effectiveness Review Arrangements

The Vice-Chancellor drew attention to recent correspondence received concerning the Effectiveness Review arrangements noting that this was due to commence in November 2018. The consultant appointed was from BDO and he had made initial contact with the University setting out the terms and conditions of the engagement. It was noted that the scope of the review was wide but detailed arrangements had not yet been received. A list of those likely to be required for interview included senior governors, the Clerk and members of the Executive.

In response to a member's question, it was noted **that a working group would be established**, including the Clerk, to consider preparations for the review and any necessary briefings.

Action: PVC (Student Experience) & University Secretary

The Deputy Chair observed that, despite the unfortunate events contributing to the requirement for a review, it was important to look forward and focus on achieving the best outcome.

The report on OfS registration and the arrangements for the Independent Effectiveness Review was received.

BG.18.023 National Student Survey Results 2018

Received: Document BG/016/18

The PVC (Student Experience) introduced the survey results noting a strong performance with improvements across all areas from the previous year. This placed the University well above benchmark and fourth out of twelve universities in the North West. The paper provided a detailed analysis of the scores for individual questions and a breakdown by Faculty, Department and discipline as well as a comparison with overall sector scores. It was notable that even in those areas where the University appeared to have performed less well, scores had improved from the previous year and were ahead of the sector average. It was also pleasing to see that the legacy issues related to education placements did not appear to have affected results as they had last year. There was a degree of evidence that particular groupings of students felt less satisfied than others and there was more work to do in this respect although the numbers involved in some instances were small.

It was noted that all Departments had access to the data for their areas and were expected to produce an Action Plan to address aspects of comparative weakness. In addition, it was reported that a group had been established last year to look at cross-institutional priorities in relation to the TEF and that the actions taken in areas such as personal tutoring and retention had also contributed to improvements in the NSS.

In discussion, members raised a number of queries:

.01 Departmental performance

Members noted what appeared to be a relatively poor performance in relation to a particular department which had also been highlighted in previous years and queried the action to be taken. The Vice-Chancellor indicated that there had been some improvement this year, that an experienced new Head of Department had been appointed, and that a revised curriculum had been validated. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) explained that, whilst the departmental analysis

was useful as an internal indicator, all departments had performed well against the sector and the results should be viewed in this light.

.02 Sourcing the reasons for dissatisfaction

Noting the importance of identifying the underlying reasons for any dissatisfaction, a member queried whether a further survey would be appropriate. It was noted that the students completing the NSS had now left the institution but the University had access to the open responses made by students and this offered a good insight into any aspects of their experience that had been less satisfactory. This information was available to individual departments.

.03 Framework for responses

In considering those areas where the University had performed less well, a member (not present) had asked whether any guidance was provided to students or whether responses were purely subjective. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) indicated that the survey was handled by an external independent agency and that it was important that institutions did not interfere with the process. The University did not offer personal inducements to complete the survey, as was the case elsewhere, and the individual responses were entirely independent. It was noted that any level of dissatisfaction on any matter could impact on student responses in unexpected ways so, for example, a difficulty with parking could impact on the scores for teaching and learning if a student had been made late for lectures.

Concluding discussion, members congratulated the University on an excellent set of results and the Vice-Chancellor paid tribute to staff for their work in bringing this about.

The National Student Survey results 2018 were received.

BG.18.024 First Destination Survey 2018

Received: Document BG/017/18

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations) introduced the report which provided information on the employment status of graduates from the 2016/17 graduating cohort. This was a very positive report with improvements across all key measures. In particular, the number of unemployed students had shown a further drop and was now

significantly below the national average whilst those in graduate level employment (a current TEF indicator) had improved significantly and now exceeded the national average.

Whilst graduates from the professional Faculties of Health and Education were generally expected to take up graduate level employment, this was a much more challenging task for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences but there had been big improvements here with almost 70% of graduates in highly skilled employment. This reflected an increased emphasis on work-based learning which was embedded in the curriculum and a more systematic approach to supporting the development of employment skills. It was expected that this would bring further improvements in the future.

Responding to a member's question in relation to return rates, it was noted that the lower rates in some institutions appeared to correlate with good results. The return rate for Edge Hill was commendably high.

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations) reported that this was the last iteration of the Destination of Leavers survey which was being replaced by a Graduate Outcomes survey to be conducted centrally in future by a third party agency. This survey would look at graduates 15 months after graduation rather than the current 6 months and meant that there would be no survey next year. The Graduate Outcomes survey would be a key TEF indicator.

Noting a highly commendable outcome, members received the 2018 First Destination survey report.

BG.18.025 Research Report and REF 2021 Update

(Discussion taken earlier in the meeting. Copies of presentation slides circulated after the meeting and included in the minute book)

Received: Document BG/018/18

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) and Dean of Arts and Sciences commenced his report on preparations for the 2021 REF with a presentation of the complexities inherent in the rules for determining staff eligibility for submission and the associated number of outputs required. He noted that the University was developing a Code of Practice outlining the selection process which would need to be approved by Research England and that the decisions made would be subject to REF audit in 2021. It was further noted that, whilst there was

a minimum requirement in terms of outputs which was related to the total number of staff submitted, reductions could be agreed for individual researchers under certain circumstances such as secondment or maternity leave. Reductions were subject to approval by the REF Equality and Diversity Panel (EDAP).

Looking at the current position against revised KPIs, the University expected to make a submission in 14 units of assessment (up from 12 in REF 2014) with around 50% of staff eligible to be returned (up from 27%) and was making good progress towards these targets. It was noted that a significant number of impact case studies were in development with the number required dependent on the number of staff submitted in each unit of assessment. With respect to research income, some considerable progress had been made towards target with 4 new grants recently announced valued at £900,000 over 3 years. The separate target for research income from industry was more challenging given that the University did not have a strong hard science and engineering capability. The number of PhD completions was on target.

The Chair observed that the proportion of eligible staff varied significantly by department and it was noted that, whilst all departments were now research active, this reflected their particular stage of development on the research journey.

In response to a member's question, it was noted that measuring GPA was not an exact science but it was anticipated that the University would improve on the overall 2.2 score in the 2014 REF.

In discussion, members raised the issue of staff incentivisation to undertake research, especially in relation to generating grant funding. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) indicated that a new approach had been adopted in terms of the use of the University's internal research fund which was now geared to support early career research staff proposals with a consequence that senior researchers were expected to seek external funding. The Vice-Chancellor noted that, on a personal level, a successful research profile aided career progression with additional posts of Reader and Professor available and the potential of bonus payments for senior researchers. Responding to a further question, the Vice-Chancellor indicated that those receiving promotion were expected to maintain activity and that this was monitored through performance review. As with any member of staff, there were mechanisms in place to deal with poor performance.

Concluding discussion, the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research) confirmed that there had been a cultural step change in the University in relation to research as demonstrated by the proportion of staff eligible to be returned in REF 2021.

Members welcomed and received the positive report on preparations for REF 2021.

BG.18.026 Capital Projects Update

Received: Document BG/019/18

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor reported on three major projects:

.01 Catalyst Building

The Catalyst building was now fully operational and the team were dealing with any final snagging issues. Work on the surrounding public realm had been completed to a very high standard. It was noted that although this had been a complex build which had also presented a significant logistical challenge in the transfer of significant numbers of staff as well as bookstock, it had generated very few complaints which was a tribute to all those involved in managing the move.

.02 Phase 13 Residences

It was reported that, whilst Phase 13 was now occupied, there had been a delay in delivery and there were still a number of snagging issues to be resolved. It was noted however that the original scope of this project had been expanded and that the start date had been put back to facilitate the January exam period whilst work had been paused after Easter to accommodate summer exams. Nevertheless, it was acknowledged that some students had been inconvenienced and the University was considering an appropriate compensation scheme. Responding to a query from the President of the Students' Union as to the detail, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor indicated that the priority was to complete any outstanding works and that any recompense would be considered in the light of the length and level of any inconvenience experienced.

.03 Old Library Refurbishment

Work on this project was still continuing although handover was expected in the near future. It was noted that the timescales for the delivery had been extremely ambitious. A particular obstacle had been the contractor's difficulty in sourcing sufficient qualified staff which was a reflection of the current labour market.

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor reported that all projects were expected to complete within budget.

The Capital Projects Update report was received.

BG.18.027 Any other business

There was no other business.

SECTION C ITEMS

BG.18.028 Academic Board minutes

Received: Document BG/020/18

The minutes of the Academic Board meeting held on 11 July 2018 were received.

BG.18.029 Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 26 November 2018