

BOARD OF GOVERNORSMinutes of the meeting held on 13 May 2019

Present

Clive Edwards	Independent member	Chair of the Board
Lesley Munro		Clerk to the Board
Paul Aplin	Academic 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	
Joanne Flitcroft	Independent member	
Lisa Greenhalgh	Independent member	Chair: Audit Committee
Fin McNicol	Independent member	
Louise Robinson	Independent member	
Mike Rush	Independent member	
George Talbot	Academic staff member	Academic Board nominee

In attendance

Mark Allanson	PVC (External Relations)
Roy Bayfield	Director of Corporate Communications (for item 11)
Lynda Brady	PVC (Student Experience) & University Secretary
Steve Igoe	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Nigel Lund	NW Region PREVENT co-ordinator (for presentation)
Paul Malone	Students' Union General Manager
Liam Owens	Director of Student Recruitment and Administration
Helen Smallbone	Academic Registrar and Clerk Designate

Observer

Kate Vickers	Students' Union President elect
--------------	---------------------------------

Apologies

Will Adams	Observer – newly elected Student Governor	
Neil Dixon	Support staff member	Elected/Co-opted
Luke Myer	Student member	Elected
Tony Rankin	Independent member	(approved leave of absence)
Margaret Williams	Independent member	

The Chair welcomed Kate Vickers as an observer and congratulated her on her recent election as Students' Union President. He also noted the thanks of the Board to Luke Myer (in his absence) for his contribution to the Board as the elected Student Governor over the last two years.

BG.18.084 PREVENT Presentation

*Received: Document BG/061/18
(Copy of the powerpoint presentation held in the minute book)*

Noting the Board's responsibilities in providing compliance assurance to the OfS in relation to the University's PREVENT procedures, the Chair welcomed Nigel Lund, the regional PREVENT coordinator for the North West, to the meeting and invited him to give his presentation.

The regional coordinator outlined the context for the PREVENT programme, noting that the current threat level was currently set at 'severe' which was the second highest level. He drew attention to the increasing sources of threat from both Islamist and far right extremists and the rise of 'lone actor' attacks which were more difficult to anticipate. The growth of on-line activity was also noted. He emphasised that the main purpose of the PREVENT programme lay in safeguarding with the prime objective to achieve early identification of those at risk of radicalisation so that tailored provision through a 'Channel' support plan could be put in place. From the University's perspective, the main duties under PREVENT were to ensure robust policies and procedures were in place to assess and manage risk and to provide staff awareness training.

In response to members' interest in the particular position in the North West, the increase in far right extremism was highlighted with a number of Universities targeted through leafleting activity from proscribed groups.

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary drew attention to the letter from OfS confirming that the University had

demonstrated due regard to the PREVENT duty and the assessment that the University was not at higher risk of non-compliance. On that basis, there would be no specific inspection but the University would be entered into a sample population for a Prevent Review meeting. She also noted that the Board received an annual report on the University's PREVENT compliance which provided the relevant assurance.

Responding to a query from the Chair about training for students, the regional coordinator indicated this could be supported (subject to capacity issues) if there was sufficient interest. The Vice-Chancellor suggested that the induction period might provide a suitable opportunity.

Action: Executive

Concluding discussion, members thanked the regional PREVENT coordinator for his interesting and insightful presentation.

BG.18.085 Declarations of Interest

There were no Declarations of Interest.

BG.18.086 Chair's Announcements

.01 CUC Plenary

The Chair reported his recent attendance at the Committee of University Chairs' (CUC) Plenary meeting where discussion had focused on the anticipated outcome from the Augar Review, pensions issues and provision for student mental health. The meeting had also received an update on the review of the CUC Governance Code noting that feedback had pointed to the need for a simpler document with more use of case studies.

BG.18.087 Chair's Action

.01 Medical School

Chair's Action in approving the appointment of the principal contractor for the Medical School was noted. The Chair confirmed that due process had been followed and that the tender was in line with the approved project budget.

BG.18.088 Minutes of the previous meeting

Received: Document BG/062/18

The minutes of the meeting held on 25 March 2019 were agreed and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

BG.18.089 Action Log

Received: Document BG/063/18

The Clerk introduced the log which identified action taken on decisions made by the Board at previous meetings. It was noted that **the log required updating** to show all actions from the September meeting as closed.

Action: Clerk

Amendment to the Students' Union Constitution

With respect to the change to the Students' Union constitution discussed at the last meeting, a written statement from the Students' Union was received confirming that the President (Union Development), who would be the serving governor from the four Students' Union Presidents, would have the authority to speak for the Union on all matters at the Board. **It was therefore agreed that the necessary changes of wording could now be made to the Constitution and the Code of Practice.**

Action: Students' Union/Clerk

The Clerk reported that a full review of the Students' Union Constitution was now due and that this should come for Board approval during the 2019/20 session. From the Board's perspective, this should include an evaluation of the Union's democratic processes. The General Manager of the Students' Union indicated that the NUS Quality Framework for Students' Unions contained a number of recommendations on governance so this was an opportune time to undertake a review of the Constitution. It was noted that he would be working on this alongside the new President (Union Development).

Faculty Presentations

A member observed that whilst the Board had received a number of important presentations during the year, there had been no opportunity

for Faculty input as had been previously agreed. In discussion, the Vice-Chancellor indicated that the ongoing consultation on subject-level TEF would preclude this from consideration at the **July Board** meeting and **it was therefore agreed that this presentation slot should be offered to the Dean of Health and Social Care.**

Action: Clerk

The Action Log was received.

BG.18.090 Matters arising not included elsewhere on the agenda

There were no matters arising.

COMMITTEE MINUTES/REPORTS

BG.18.091 Remunerations Committee (29 April 2019)

Received: Document BG/064/18

The Chair of Remunerations Committee introduced the report noting there were no recommendations to bring to the Board's attention.

The report from Remunerations Committee was received.

SECTION A ITEMS

BG.18.092 Vice-Chancellor's Report

Received: Document BG/065/18

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

.01 National Recognition

In addition to the What Uni? nominations, the University was anticipating its best ever placing in the annual Complete University Guide and clearly in the second quartile for the sector. He noted that further significant progress in this and other league tables would be dependent on performance in the next and subsequent REF assessments which carried substantial weighting in the compilation algorithms.

.02 Demand

Whilst the University had seen a 6% drop in applications, conversion rates had improved suggesting the final intake for 2019 would show an increase on the previous year although the exit of the largest cohort from 2016 would still impact overall numbers. It was noted that the strategic decision taken by the University to eschew the morally questionable practice of making unconditional offers to those who were yet to take examinations, taken alongside the emphasis on quality provision, appeared to be working in the University's favour.

In discussion of this item, a member observed that it would be helpful to see both numbers and percentages detailed in reports to fully reflect the University's position.

.03 Financial Integrity

Whilst the University's financial performance offered some protection in the short term, the impact of significant pension contribution rises along with the annual pay award settlement would place considerable pressure on all universities and a higher level of uncertainty for the longer term outlook.

.04 Alder Hey investment proposal

It was noted that there had been recent progress in negotiations with Alder Hey and it was hoped that a final agreement would be reached soon with terms and conditions as previously reported to the Board.

.05 Student well-being

Given the extensive media coverage of student mental health, the Vice-Chancellor reported on the current position.

In response to a member's question as to whether the level of resource for Student Services was sufficient to meet the needs of very vulnerable students, it was noted that the University was resourced to provide appropriate support but the availability of NHS expert services was also an important factor in ensuring suitable care. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) reported that a review was currently underway to ensure that ways of accessing support were clearly visible to students. She also pointed to the 'Let us Know' campaign which promoted a confidential service for students to report any concerns they had

about friends. In addition, it was noted that Student Services and Human Resources were working together to provide a programme for staff geared to raising awareness and supporting them to support students.

A member drew attention to the work of 'State of Mind Sport' in addressing mental health issues amongst young men in particular and it was suggested this organisation could be approached to make a contribution during student induction.

Noting the comments made, **it was agreed the Vice-Chancellor would make a further report in September.**

Action: Vice-Chancellor

The Vice-Chancellor's report was received.

BG.18.093 Students' Union Report

Received: Document BG/066/18

The President of the Students' Union presented his report which summarised work on the wide range of activities offered through the Union. He drew particular attention to the following areas:

- The popularity of 'trips' and the challenges in generating sufficient interest for other initiatives such as 'Crafternoons';
- Discussions with the Deputy Vice-Chancellor with a view to repurposing the Hub to provide a better student experience and to meet the needs of specific groups such as commuting students. In response to a member's query, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor indicated that the plans would not require a major resource input;
- Relocation of the Student Advice Centre back to the top floor of the Hub;
- The success of the second annual Student Led Staff Awards night.

In response to a member's question about the usefulness of producing activities booklets, it was noted that information was also available on-line but that the print format was still relevant and provided a talking point.

The Students' Union report was received.

BG.18.094 Brand and Reputation: Strategy Update

(Discussion taken earlier in the meeting)

Received: Document BG/067/18

The Director of Corporate Communications introduced the paper which outlined the University's strategic approach to enhancing, and increasing awareness of, brand and reputation. He drew particular attention to the following points:

- Using marketing and communication activities as an opportunity to reinforce the association of the EHU brand with quality – a fundamental mainstay of the University's overall approach to all its provision;
- Increasing brand awareness through:
 - Using enhanced market intelligence to drive more paid for promotional activity through targeted content marketing using digital online channels including social media (the recent appointment of a Digital Marketing Manager was noted);
 - Increasing media presence through the generation of positive academic and student related content. It was noted that the potential to generate a number of individual stories in local media from a single event was particularly useful;
 - A vibrant organic social media presence;
 - Emphasising the competitive benefits of study at EHU with clear messages about the product offer;
 - Working closely with the student recruitment team to ensure consistency of message.

In discussion, it was noted that the strategy was embedded throughout the University but managed/monitored centrally in order to control risk, especially in areas such as social media.

In welcoming the update, members made the following points:

- Further consideration should be given to the contribution made to brand and reputation by areas such as the alumni and activities such as partnerships, endorsements and sponsorships;
- Information on the measures used to evaluate the success of specific initiatives would be useful.

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations) indicated that a review of the marketing/communication/recruitment functions was underway with

a view to ensuring a holistic approach across services. **He agreed to provide a further update to the Board in November 2019.**

Action: Pro Vice-Chancellor (External Relations)

Members thanked the Director of Corporate Communications for the paper and, noting his retirement at the end of July, wished him well for the future.

BG.18.095 OfS Access and Participation Plan 2020/21 – 2024/25

Received: Document BG/068/18

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) introduced the five year Plan noting that, following a review, this had been introduced by OfS as a replacement for the previous annual Access Agreement. Successful submission was an OfS requirement for those institutions seeking to charge higher level fees. The Plan carried an increased emphasis on setting stretching targets (with progress monitored annually) to demonstrate commitment to providing parity of experience for students from underrepresented groups. It was noted that the format of the Plan followed OfS guidelines in referencing performance against specified groups using datasets and analytical tools provided by OfS. The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) drew attention to the evidence-based Evaluation Strategy, which had been identified by OfS as an area of enhanced monitoring for the University, noting that a new post had been established to take this forward through the development of a university-wide strategy. This would be supported by a cross-institution working group with sub-groups covering each student category.

In response to members' queries as to the level of stretch in the targets set and whether these were achievable, it was noted that those seeking to eliminate differentiation in attainment over a ten year period were ambitious whilst achieving a significant increase in the recruitment of BAME students would be particularly challenging given the institution was working from a low base. A member suggested that the development of case studies around specific target groups could be useful in further promoting the opportunities offered by the University.

Responding to a further query as to whether the University used bursaries to promote access, it was reported that this had been shown to be a relatively ineffective mechanism. It was noted that many students coming to Edge Hill lacked 'cultural capital' and that money

previously spent on bursaries was now channelled into the Student Opportunity Fund which supported students to take full advantage of activities designed to enhance CVs and increase their confidence and skills. General financial support was also available through the Student Hardship Fund.

The President of the Students' Union emphasised the importance of collaboration to achieve best results and the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) confirmed that students/Union officers would be actively engaged in each of the sub-groups being established.

Following discussion, it was RESOLVED to approve the Access and Participation Plan for submission to OfS with fee levels set at the maximum permitted level for the period (currently £9250).

Action: Vice-Chancellor

It was further agreed that the annual monitoring report to OfS should be received annually by the Board.

Action: Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience)/Clerk designate

Concluding discussion, members expressed their thanks to the Deputy Director of Student Services for her work in bringing together what was a complex document.

BG.18.096 OfS Sector Letter on Financial Sustainability

Received: Document BG/069/18

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor spoke to the OfS letter which pointed to some concerns about the credibility of some providers' student number forecasts which underpinned their projected financial position. The purpose of the letter was to bring this information to the attention of governors to assist in the consideration of institutional forecasts and the assessment of risk. The attached annex provided an analysis of sector data and clearly demonstrated a disconnect at sector level between recruitment forecasts when compared with the continuing decline in the 18-year-old population. The annex also included a series of financial indicators for the sector against which institutions could benchmark performance. The letter highlighted the need to report any material change from the five year forecast submission.

In terms of the position for Edge Hill University, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor drew attention to the prudent student number forecasts submitted in September 2018 and the strong performance of the University in relation to the financial indicators.

In discussion, it was noted that 2019/20 represented the most challenging year for the University with increasing cost pressures and the need for investment in new areas of activity set against a slight reduction in the student number base. Nevertheless, the University had now completed its major capital build programme and would still anticipate returning a small surplus.

In response to a member's question about the point of failure for a university, it was noted that institutions were more likely to lose their autonomy than to disappear with the probability that mergers would be considered.

The letter from the OfS on financial sustainability was received and noted. The Board also received a copy of the full report on financial sustainability issued by OfS in April.

SECTION B

BG.18.097 Students' Union Election Report

Received: Document BG/070/18

The General Manager of the Students' Union spoke to the report which provided confirmation from the independent returning officer that the recent student elections had been run in a fair and democratic manner.

It was noted that the number of students voting was relatively low at 11% and this was a matter for the Union to consider for the future.

To note: Students' Union

BG.18.098 Governance Working Party: Update Report

Received: Document BG/071/18

The Chair and the Clerk designate reported on the establishment of a Working Party to review the Board's operating efficiency. It was noted that a survey of members had been undertaken and that these views

would feed into Working Party discussions. The group had held its first meeting immediately prior to the Board and issues for consideration had included:

- matters around Board standards such as the format of papers for the Board; capping agendas
- the effectiveness of governance structures including committees and the number of people attending meetings.

It was noted that the group would need to be cognisant of any changes necessitated by the implementation of the new OfS regulatory framework which comes into full effect on 1 August 2019 and, in particular, of OfS reaction to the development of a revised CUC Code of Governance which was expected to be published in October 2019. Given the need to monitor the external environment, a timeframe had been drawn up which fell into two phases with recommendations that were practicable/necessary for implementation in 2019/20 coming to the July Board meeting. Second phase recommendations would be brought to the Board for implementation in 2020/21.

In presenting the **Terms of Reference for the Working Group**, the Clerk designate noted that a number of amendments had been proposed following feedback from the survey and **it was therefore agreed that a revised document would be circulated to Board members by e-mail for approval.**

Action: Clerk designate

Members' attention was drawn to the draft calendar of meetings for 2019/20 noting that some revisions could emanate from the Working Party's proposals.

The update from the Governance Working Party was received.

BG.18.099 Academic Board minutes (13 March 2019)

Received: Document BG/072/18

The Vice-Chancellor introduced the minutes drawing attention to the following decisions:

- Revisions to the Academic Regulations to accommodate Medical School courses which were linear in nature and did not follow a modular structure;

- Renaming the Faculty of Health and Social Care as the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine;
- Renaming the Department of Geography as the Department of Geography and Geology;
- Renaming the I4P Research Institute as the Institute for Social Responsibility and the PGMI Research Institute as the Health Research Institute.

The Academic Board minutes were received.

BG.18.100 WLBC/EHU Forum (22 March 2019)

Received: Document BG/073/18

The Vice-Chancellor introduced the minutes which reflected standard items of business. In relation to the aspiration for Edge Hill to become a top 30 University recorded in the minutes, he noted that this would be dependent on improved research rankings in the next two assessment exercises.

The WLBC/EHU Forum minutes were received.

BG.18.101 Any other business

On behalf of the Board and noting that this would be the last meeting for the current Student Union President, Joe Bradford, the Chair thanked him for his contribution over the year and wished him well for the future.

SECTION C: ITEMS FOR INFORMATION

BG.18.102 Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 15 July 2019.