

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the meeting held on 11 July 2022

Present

Clive Edwards	Independent member	Chair of the Board
Helen Smallbone		Clerk to the Board
Ben Broadhurst	Student member	<i>[Following item BG.21.150]</i>
Julian Bucknall	Independent member	
John Cater	Ex-Officio	Vice-Chancellor
Graeme Collinge	Independent member	
Christine Donnelly	Independent member	
Clive Elliott	Independent member	Chair-Elect
Amanda Fulford	Teaching staff member	Elected/Co-Opted
Lisa Greenhalgh	Independent member	Deputy Chair, Chair of Audit
Andy Jackson	Support staff member	Elected/Co-Opted
Lauren King	Student member	<i>[Following item BG.21.150]</i>
Jane Moore	Academic Board nominee	
Jo Nettleton	Independent member	
Louise Robinson	Independent member	
Mike Tate	Independent member	

In attendance

Lynda Brady	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Experience) & University Secretary
Steve Igoe	Deputy Vice-Chancellor
Paul Malone	Chief Executive, EHSU

Apologies

Mike Rush	Independent member
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BG.21.149 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

BG.21.150 Chair's Announcements

.01 Board membership

The Chair presented two student nominees for membership of the Board:

- Ben Broadhurst, elected Faculty of Education President – and nominated Students' Union's representative to the Board
- Lauren King, directly elected by students as their Student Governor

The Chair gave a brief summary of each student's campaign manifesto, and confirmed that both nominees had declared their fit and proper person status in line with the Office for Students (OfS) definition.

The Board approved Ben and Lauren's membership to the Board.

.02 Meeting arrangements

The evening would be split into two sessions. The first, involving members and officers, would consider standard business. A private governors' session would follow to allow an evaluation of the Board reforms approved in July 2021, use of Convene, and discussion on the Board's approach to progressing its aspirations around diversity and inclusion.

BG.21.151 Chair's Action

There was no Chair's Action to report.

BG.21.152 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Received: Document BG/104/21

The minutes of the meeting held on 20 June 2022 were agreed as an accurate record.

BG.21.153 Action Log

Received: Document BG/105/21

Members noted that all actions were either completed or in progress.

BG.21.154 Matters arising not included elsewhere on the agenda

.01 EHU/WLBC Forum

The Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) provided an update on work to optimise the effectiveness of the EHU/WLBC Forum.

The Chair noted that the Forum's Terms of Reference had been reviewed and these remained appropriate.

SECTION A ITEMS

BG.21.155 Vice-Chancellor's Report

Received: Document BG/106/21

Tabled: The 2022 National Student Survey: The Headlines

Reported: The Vice-Chancellor introduced the report, which provided contextual information for governors on national issues including:

- UK participation in Horizon Europe
- Anticipated DfE statement on grade inflation
- Freedom of Speech and universities
- Scrutiny of university business partnerships at the state level
- DfE responses to recent consultations
- Clearing
- Re-Accreditation of ITT

He also updated on local activity including:

- Awards recognition for the Productivity Innovation Centre, and for the Tackling the Blues project
- Hosting the Chair and CEO of Health Education England and the CEOs of the new Integrated Care Boards
- Positive student recruitment for 2022/23.

In respect of the recent NSS outcomes, the Vice-Chancellor was pleased to report that the University was in the top 10 universities nationally for its Learning Resources, and that overall satisfaction scores had improved across 8 of the 10 Faculty of Arts & Sciences' academic departments. There had also been excellent performance in areas of Education, and Health, Social Care and Medicine, though regrettably this was mired by a deterioration in Primary ITT – and, most significantly for the University given the size of the cohort, poor performance in Nursing. Improving performance across Nursing is therefore the top priority objective emanating from the NSS.

Discussed: In response to questions, the following information was noted:

- *Nursing student satisfaction*

There have been sector wide issues for courses related to healthcare professions in this round of the NSS, which may be explained by the pressure on healthcare students and departments during and following the pandemic. Indeed, despite EHU's poor performance, the University achieved mid-table rankings for these courses in the North-West.

Since the introduction of loans, rather than bursaries, for nursing programmes, satisfaction levels across the sector have steadily declined. Problems with NHS placements have also had a negative impact on the nursing student experience.

Nursing students commence their course either in September or January, due to the workflow requirements of NHS providers who provide placement opportunities. This is a contractual relationship where the University is expected to fit to the partners' timelines and, unfortunately, there is no latitude to alter this arrangement.

Governors were reminded that a new Dean of the Faculty of Health, Social Care and Medicine, had been appointed at the start of the academic year (October 2021). This gave a very limited window for impact in the 2022 NSS, though the Dean - alongside their new senior team - has a comprehensive action plan to remedy issues in the Faculty.

- *Level 3 qualification reforms*

The University is reviewing its academic portfolio to ensure that it remains aligned with subjects undertaken at Level 3 and continues to equip students with the skills that employers need.

Many commentators believe that the reform of Level 3 qualifications, and notably move away from BTECs, will reduce participation in higher education among disadvantaged groups. The University is working hard to ensure that students from all backgrounds are able to access, participate and succeed in higher education at Edge Hill.

In bringing the item to a close, the Chair welcomed the actions outlined in respect of the NSS and noted that there would be a further discussion in September when a fuller report on the results will be presented.

Resolved: To receive the Vice-Chancellor's Report.

BG.21.156 Student Report

Received: Document BG/107/21

Reported: The Students' Union (SU) representative reported on excellent results in the NSS, in which the SU was placed third highest in the North-West, and 26th nationally. This represented a significant improvement.

The SU's focus remains on developing its strategic plan, which is scheduled for publication in September. The importance of developing students' sense of belonging and feeling part of the community is key to all aspects of the plan. The ongoing aim is to work with the University to improve the student experience at all levels.

Discussed: In response to questions, the following information was noted:

- *Manchester Campus*

The SU's new 'Manchester Campus President' has undertaken a significant amount of work to build his profile with students and gain insights. Early indications are that this role will have a positive impact on the student experience in Manchester.

- *Nursing Action Plan*

As the University's action plan to improve the student experience for Nursing students is in its early stages of development, the SU had not yet been consulted. At an appropriate point, the SU's Health, Social Care and Medicine President will be involved in developing the plan to ensure that students' concerns are heard and fully understood.

The Chair of Governors offered the Board's sincere congratulations to all involved in the SU's impressive improvement in the NSS.

Resolved: To receive the Student Report.

BG.21.157 Board Assurance Framework Report

Received: Document BG/108/21a and BG/108/21b

Reported: The DVC noted that the major development work around the Board Assurance Framework was complete following the Board workshop in March. He reminded members that the Audit Committee will undertake the detailed work on risk management, whereas the Board will receive a shorter summary three times a year which communicates key risks and issues.

The DVC outlined key metrics on the University's performance indicators, highlighting in particular the significant improvement in graduate employment data. He noted that recruitment remained strong, and that student withdrawals were marginally higher across the whole sector. Nevertheless, the Audit Committee has commissioned an internal audit of the University's retention activity (in summer 2023) to ensure that the University's action plan is operating effectively.

Discussed: In response to questions, the following information was noted:

- *NSS results*

Whilst recognising the earlier conversations about the NSS results, the DVC did not believe that the risk rating for student satisfaction should be increased. He noted that there was no sign that this was an institutional problem given the outcome can mainly be attributed to one area in FoHSCM, and scores elsewhere in the University and Faculty had been significantly higher. Students in Social Work, for example, had given a 100% satisfaction rating for their programme.

- *Graduate employability*

The University's graduates are very successful at finding employment following graduation. However, the University does not perform as well in highly skilled employment measures. Supporting students to obtain graduate level employment where appropriate is a principal focus for the new Head of Careers. It should however be noted that many of our graduates take interim work opportunities while they continue to look for employment in their chosen profession. The Careers Service is

launching a programme across the summer to offer support to graduates in this position.

Resolved: To receive the Board Assurance Framework Report.

BG.21.158 Edge Hill University and its Subsidiaries: Operating Budget 2022/23

Received: Document BG/109/21

Reported: The Chair of Governors opened the item by noting that a draft of the proposed 'Edge Hill University and its Subsidiaries Operating Budget: 2022/23' was considered in detail at the Board's last meeting, with the Director of Finance in attendance to present the information and respond to queries. No concerns had been raised about that draft, which the Deputy Vice-Chancellor confirmed was identical to the final version presented.

The Lead Governor: Finance advised that he had met with the DVC and Director of Finance the previous week. These meetings, along with the papers provided, gave him confidence that the budget was properly prepared, prudent, and reasonably forecast.

Resolved: **To approve the Edge Hill University and its Subsidiaries: Operating Budget 2022/23**

SECTION B ITEMS

BG.21.159 OfS Annual Assurance Report

Received: Document BG/110/21

Reported: The PVC (Student Experience) & University Secretary introduced the report which sought to provide the Board with assurance of the University's ongoing compliance with the OfS's Conditions of Registration. She noted that the compliance self-assessment table provided as an appendix to the report is overseen by the OfS Oversight Group, which meets at least three times annually.

She highlighted that the University's Internal Auditors had recently conducted a review of our compliance with the OfS conditions, focusing particularly on those conditions relating to access and participation,

and protecting students' interests. While the review has yet to be formally presented to the Audit Committee, the auditors have confirmed that the review concluded with Substantial Assurance and with no management actions identified, which is an excellent outcome – and testament to the work undertaken to ensure that the University has regard to regulatory expectations in all that we do.

It was confirmed that there were no concerns to bring to the Board's attention.

Discussed: In discussion, the following information was noted:

- *New conditions of registration*

In May 2022, the OfS launched its new conditions relating to academic quality and standards (B1, B2, B4 and B5). The University has undertaken a comprehensive mapping exercise against the new conditions and is confident of its compliance. Nevertheless, as previously reported to the Board, a wide-ranging review of quality and standards processes is in progress to ensure further enhancements are identified and embedded where appropriate.

Resolved: To receive the OfS Annual Assurance Report and confirm confidence in the University's arrangements for ensuring ongoing compliance with the Conditions of Registration.

BG.21.160 Scheme of Delegation 2022/23

Received: Document BG/111/21

Reported: The Clerk introduced the Scheme of Delegation, which sets out the University's major organisational responsibilities and details how they are undertaken by the Board or delegated. It also incorporates sufficient detail to ensure clarity about the demarcation of responsibilities and how the Board receives assurance. She explained that over the past 12-18 months the Scheme has been substantially revised to reflect contemporary requirements. In particular, this covers the new regulatory environment and the Regulator's challenge to the sector to ensure schemes are robust and contemporary.

The proposed Scheme was endorsed by the Audit Committee in June.

Discussed: In response to questions, the following information was noted:

- *Freedom of Speech*

The University's responsibility to protect free speech is fully captured within the revised Scheme. The specific policy will be reviewed following the passing of the Higher Education (Freedom of Speech) Bill given the Board has previously determined that the extant policy (and Code of Practice) would remain fit for purpose until such point as the legal requirements changed.

Resolved: **To approve the Scheme of Delegation 2022/23.**

BG.21.161 SU Operating Budget 2022/23

Received: Document BG/112/21

Reported: The Chief Executive of the Students' Union (CESU) introduced the SU Operating Budget following its approval by the SU's Board of Trustees. He explained that the budget was presented to the Board, for information, to provide assurance of the SU's financial accountability. He noted that the EHSU Trustees had asked the CESU to convey their thanks to the Board and the University for their continued support.

Discussed: In response to questions, the following information was noted:

- *New SU facilities*

The DVC has asked colleagues in the SU to explore and confirm their proposals for the facilities required in the new development included in the Estates Strategy approved by the Board earlier this year. He noted that it may not be possible to accommodate all these requests in the new building, but there was scope to consider the whole estate for the best location for individual facilities.

- *Sequence of capital developments*

The development proposals laid out in the Estates Strategy will be sequenced in terms of need and buildability. The DVC outlined plans to return to the Board with draft proposals for phases 2A (residential) and 2B (public realm and SU building) later this year.

Resolved: To receive the SU Operating Budget 2022/23.

BG.21.162 Any other business

Exempt from publication: Confidential

SECTION C ITEMS

The following items were received for information:

BG.21.163 **Access and Participation Plan (Variation Update)** (*Document BG/113/21*)

BG.21.164 **Audit Committee Summary Report: 20 June 2022** (*Document BG/114/21*).

BG.20.165 **Date and time of next meeting**

The next meeting is scheduled for 19 September 2022.