



Board of Governors

Minutes of the virtual meeting held on 29th June 2020

19/49 Attendance

49.1 Present

Mr J Bateman OBE	Independent Governor, Chair
Mr C Arntzen	Independent Governor
Dr D Beech	Independent Governor
Mr S Devlin	Co-opted Governor
Mr R Dudley	Staff Governor
Mrs D Gant	Independent Governor
Professor D Green CBE	Vice Chancellor & Chief Executive
Mrs A Hooper	Independent Governor
Mr D Iddon	Independent Governor
Mr N Khan	Independent Governor
Dr D McDougall	Staff Governor
Rev'd Dr A Pettersen	Independent Governor
Dr S Pittaway	Staff Governor
Miss M Price	Student Governor
Mr M Scriven	Staff Governor
Mr I Smith	Independent Governor
Mr H South	Student Governor
Mrs S Speck	Independent Governor

49.2 In Attendance

Mr R Bonham	Director of Finance & Resources
Mrs J Britton	Director of Communications & Participation
Mrs A Cope	Director of Human Resources
Professor S Greer	Deputy Vice Chancellor & Provost
Ms H Johnstone	Head of Governance and Regulatory Affairs (Clerk to the Board)
Ms T Manning	Vice President, Students' Union
Mrs J Newland	Assistant Clerk to the Board
Mr R Renton	Pro Vice Chancellor Students

49.3 Apologies

Mr J Bothamley CBE	Independent Governor
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The Chair welcomed the new Students' Union officers to their first Board meeting: Miss M Price, President, Mr H South, Vice President Education and Ms T Manning, Vice President Student Activities.

19/50 Declarations of Interests

50.1 There were no declarations of interest declared.

19/51 Minutes

51.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 27th April 2020 [BG19/54] were confirmed as an accurate record of the meeting.

51.2 Matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda

51.2.1 Review of the first virtual Board meeting: a survey was carried out by the Clerk to the Board and the outcomes considered by the Nominations & Governance Committee at its recent meeting. The overall response was positive, and enhancements have since been made to MS Teams that have improved the user experience.

19/52 Chair's Business

52.1 *[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]*

52.2 The Chair reminded governors this Board meeting had been split into 2 sessions as meetings are taking place virtually, with today's session focussing on current business and the session on 30th June focussing on the next academic year.

52.3 *[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]*

52.4 The Chair had been delighted to provide a statement on behalf of the Board on Black Lives Matter.

52.5 The CUC will be providing additional information and briefings on the USS (Universities Superannuation Scheme) pension scheme which will assist Chairs and Boards in responding to the consultation on the Scheme which is scheduled to take place in August/September 2020.

19/53 Students' Union business

53.1 Students' Union report [BG19/55]

53.1.1 The President of the Students' Union updated the Board on the work of the Students' Union. Highlights included the work of the Advice Service, support to students on accommodation issues during lockdown and the Students' Union response to the Black Lives Matter campaign. Overall satisfaction with the Students' Union in the 2019 Course Experience Survey (CES) increased again this year to 79%. Sports clubs and societies have continued to support their members with online social, fitness and fundraising events and students have logged over 800 hours volunteering specifically related to Covid-19. In summary, students have shown high levels of resilience during the current situation. The Chair congratulated the Student's Union on their increased satisfaction score in the CES.

53.1.2 The outgoing President Harry Lonsdale communicated with Robin Walker, MP, on issues with private landlords. The Students' Union is awaiting a response from the MP and members agreed it was important to follow this up.

53.1.3 The Board received the report.

53.2 The Students' Union Revised Constitution [BG19/56]

53.2.1 The Board received the Students' Union Revised Constitution for approval. The Clerk to the Board noted the Students' Union is a separate organisation to the University, however under the Education Act 1994 the University's governing body has a number of responsibilities in relation to oversight of the Students' Union including to ensure the Union has a written constitution. The President of the Students' Union gave an overview of the review process undertaken and noted that the overarching aim of the review was to create

a structure that would maximise student engagement and empower students to enact change. Following research into other Students' Unions and consultation on maximising engagement, student-led networks have been set up, including the BAME Students' Network and the Mature Students' Network. The Pro Vice Chancellor Students added there had been a lot of support from students for the model.

53.2.2 The Board approved the Students' Union Revised Constitution.

19/54 Provost's business

54.1 The Provost's report [BG19/57]

54.1.1 The Provost highlighted three key areas from her report:

- the approach to teaching next year: the intention is to deliver face to face teaching as much as possible, supported by high quality online teaching. The University is taking stock of the move to online teaching and undertook a pulse survey of academic staff in May to assess how staff felt about the move. The next phase is to develop the skills and confidence of staff for the coming year and the Provost is part way through a series of 9 School meetings to discuss plans for learning and teaching in the new academic year and to hear concerns and ideas.

- *[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]*

- digital poverty and hardship: the University has been working hard on a range of measures to help students not only with devices but also with the need for privacy and space in which to complete their studies. Members noted work to identify and prioritise those who need support.

54.1.2 *[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]*

54.1.3 Members raised questions in relation to what had been learnt from the arrangements put in place for students taking exams from home. Many students reported feeling very positive about the process and felt it had been less stressful than sitting in an exam room. The pandemic has led to creative discussions on how and why students are assessed.

54.1.4 The Board received the report.

54.2 Degree Outcomes Statement [BG19/58]

54.2.1 The Provost presented the Degree Outcomes Statement for approval. In November 2018 the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assurance (UKSCQA) published a report in response to political concerns that there was an unexplained increase in the proportion of the number of First and Upper Second class awards being made by UK HEIs. HEIs agreed to publish a statement with data and analysis on students' degree outcomes.

54.2.2 Members noted the University has seen a 6.4% increase in the proportion of First class Honours degrees awarded over the last 5 years, and a 4.2% increase in the proportion of First and Upper Second class degrees over the same period. This increase coincides with a move on the part of the University to become more selective in student recruitment, whilst also strengthening its commitment to widening participation in a period of growth. The rise was equivalent to that of the sector and remained below the sector average as a whole. The Chair congratulated the Provost on the improving outcomes.

54.2.3 The Board approved the statement.

54.3 Report of Academic Board [BG19/59]

54.3.1 The Governor observer on Academic Board presented the report of the Academic Board meeting of 22nd April 2020 and noted that the Heads of all Schools gave reports embracing the challenges of online

teaching. REF (Research Excellence Framework) 2021 was put on hold in March due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Since the report was written, a new deadline of March 2021 has been set.

- 54.3.2 A query was raised on what the recent government announcement on additional research funding might mean for the University. There are 2 parts to the scheme, the first for loans based on a decrease in international students that will not apply to the University, and the second part aimed particularly at STEM subjects where the University may be able to benefit in a small way.
- 54.3.3 The Board received the report and asked for their thanks to be passed onto all academic staff for all the work they have done in the face of the pandemic.

19/55 Reports from Committees

55.1 Update from Nominations & Governance Committee

- 55.1.1 The Head of Governance and Regulatory Affairs updated the Board that the Committee reviewed the draft report of the Board Effectiveness Review at its recent meeting and the draft report will come to the September meeting of the Board.

55.2 Report from HR Committee [BG19/60]

- 55.2.1 The Committee received several reports on work undertaken by the HR team to support staff during the pandemic and on the implementation of the Government's Job Retention Scheme. The HR challenges and opportunities created by the pandemic were also discussed. The Committee Chair thanked the HR Director and the HR team for implementing many new arrangements very quickly. A query was raised in relation to the need for new HR software and the HR Director confirmed the University is retendering for a new HR software system. Members also raised a query on how any difficulties around homeworking and caring responsibilities have been dealt with. Any issues are dealt with on an individual basis and with understanding.

- 55.2.2 The Board received the report.

55.3 Report of the Board Business Continuity Group [BG19/61]

- 55.3.1 Members received the report with an update on the work of the Group. The Board approved an extension of the remit of the Group until the end of August 2020 to allow for meetings if needed in July and August as the pandemic situation develops. The Board was reminded the Group has no delegated authority.

55.4 Report from Audit Committee [BG19/62]

- 55.4.1 The Committee Chair presented the report and noted that as a member of the Board Business Continuity Group, he acts as a further conduit of assurance to the Committee. He drew attention to the Annual Procurement Report 2018/19 that highlighted the achievements in costs savings and efficiency across the University and to the Annual Financial Benchmarking Report 2018/19. The Committee received updates on progress on the 2019/20 Internal Audit and participated in discussions on the indicative Internal Audit Plan for 2020/21. The Committee also considered the External Audit Plan for 2019/20. The external auditors highlighted two major areas of note: as a result of University staff working remotely, the auditors need to consider whether there have been any changes to key controls in the University's financial reporting environment. Secondly, assessing going concern will be challenging in the uncertain environment caused by Covid-19.
- 55.4.2 Members noted there are currently no vacancies on the Committee but that one of the Co-opted member's term of office ends next year and will need to be replaced. Members were asked to advise the Clerk if they knew of any potential candidates with accounting or auditing backgrounds.

55.4.3 The Committee received an update to the Covid-19 Risk Register with proposed changes to two risks. The Board approved the amendments to the Register.

55.4.4 The Board received the report.

55.5 Report from Finance & Development Committee [BG19/63]

55.5.1 The Committee Chair presented the report noting the Committee had a robust and thorough discussion on the current financial position for 2019/20 and on the initial budget proposals for 2020/21. With regards to the current position, the loss of income as result of the pandemic had been significantly offset by savings made and it is anticipated the outturn for 2019/20 will show a small surplus and that the covenants will be achieved. The proposed approach to the initial budget for 2020/21 was noted and this is on the agenda for the second session of this meeting on 30th June. The Committee received updates on the completion of Himbleton Road Townhouse, progress on the designs for refurbishment of Berrows House and an update on the purchase of Castle House.

55.5.2 *[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]*

55.5.3 The Board commended the Director of Finance & Resources and the Finance team for their work. The Board received the report.

19/56 Report items

56.1 Annual report on Subsidiary Companies [BG19/64]

56.1.1 The Board received the annual report on the University's subsidiary companies. The Board noted the challenging situation for UW Wolves as a result of the cancellation of the BBL League due to Covid-19. The Company Board has considered an interim budget for 2020/21 that will be reviewed once the BBL agrees an approach to the new season. UW Enterprises Ltd has had no trading activities for a number of years. VCEB recently approved a proposal to explore the use of the company for the employment of students. A further report will be made in due course.

56.2 Annual review of Sustainability Policy [BG19/65]

56.2.1 The Board received the Annual Review of the Sustainability Policy and noted the proposed revisions due to adding a new ISO 50001 energy management system to the existing Environmental Management System. The Pro Vice Chancellor Students added the University has been nominated for International Institution of the Year for Sustainability. The Board approved the changes to the policy.

56.2.2 A query was raised on the longer-term outlook for working from home and sustainability policies. The Vice Chancellor noted examples of sustainability policies such as the proposed infrastructure work around cycling and walking, the new salary sacrifice scheme for electric vehicles and plans to extend flexibility in home working. Members noted the planned provision for car parking as a result of government advice on the use of public transport during the pandemic and hoped the promotion of public transport would return.

19/57 Update on the OfS [BG19/66]

57.1 The Head of Governance and Regulatory Affairs presented an update on matters related to the OfS and noted the recent meeting held between the University and the OfS at the invitation of the OfS, payment of the annual QAA fee and the consultation on the integrity and stability of the English Higher Education sector. The OfS issued a response to the University's Prevent Return advising the University "demonstrates due regard" to the Prevent Duty and is "not at higher risk of non-compliance with the Prevent duty in the future". The Board noted there have been no reportable events during the period from the last report to date (27th April – 29th June 2020) which required reporting to the OfS. Members noted the guidance to

Confirmed

providers about student and consumer protection during the coronavirus pandemic and how changes to the delivery of courses are being communicated to both applicants and students. The University will give as much information as possible to enable students to make as informed a choice as possible.

57.2 *[NOT FOR PUBLICATION]*

57.3 The Board received the report.

19/58 Any Other Business

58.1 There was no other business.

19/59 Date of Next Meeting

Second session of this Board meeting: 30th June 2020

Next Board meeting: 29th September 2020.