

# Board of Governors

## Minutes

Of the Board of Governors meeting held on Tuesday, 11 May 2021 at 10am via Teams.

---

**Present:**

Ms Jennifer Bernard (Independent Governor) (Chair of the Board)  
Ms Kim Ansell (Independent Governor)  
Ms Sandra Botterell (Independent Governor)  
Ms Shirley Cameron (Independent Governor)  
Mr Mark Cammies (Independent Governor)  
Mr James Edmunds (Academic Board Representative)  
Mr Steve Fowler (Independent Governor)  
Dr Suresh Gamlath (Staff Representative)  
Mr Derek Hicks (Independent Governor)  
Professor Peter John (Vice-Chancellor)  
Ms Ancha Joof (SU President)  
Mr Jonathan Lawrence (Independent Governor)  
Professor Heather Loveday (Professoriate Representative)  
Dr Christopher McLaverty (Independent Governor)  
Ms Kerry O'Callaghan (Independent Governor)  
Ms Helena Peacock (Independent Governor)  
Mr Paul Sahota (Independent Governor)  
Mr Kiran Virdee (Independent Governor)  
Mr Patrick Younge (Independent Governor)

**In attendance:** Professor Amir Alani (Head of the School of Computing and Engineering) (for agenda item 12)  
Mr Adrian Ellison (Associate PVC and Chief Information Officer)  
Professor Joelle Fanghanel (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Academic)  
Mr Patrick Fuller (Chief Financial Officer)  
Mr Neil Henderson (Director of HR and Organisational Development)  
Professor Helen Hester (Professor in the School of Film, Media and Design) (for agenda item 12)  
Ms Marion Lowe (University Secretary and Chief Compliance Officer)  
Ms Coral Mason (Assistant Clerk to the Board)  
Ms Sara Raybould (Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor)  
Dr Kostas Tzortzis (Associate PVC and Director of Strategic Planning)  
Ms Stella Webb (SU President elect)

## **1 Apologies for absence, announcements, and declarations of interest**

- 1.1 No apologies were recorded.
- 1.2 There were no declarations of interest.
- 1.3 The Chair of the Board of Governors welcomed Ms Claire Willets, Director of Property Services, to the meeting. Members were informed that Ms Willets had worked at the University a number of years ago and members welcomed her back to the University in her new role.
- 1.4 Members noted this would be the last meeting of Ms Ancha Joof, SU President. Ms Joof had worked under very unusual circumstances but had managed to lead the SU by supporting staff and students online.
- 1.5 Members welcomed Ms Stella Webb to the meeting. Ms Webb had recently been elected as the SU President for 2021-22 and would officially take up the role in June 2021.

## **2. Minutes of the meetings held on 16 March 2021 (BG 2021 30)**

- 2.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 16 March 2021 were confirmed as a fair and accurate record subject to a minor amendment.

## **3. Matters Arising Report (BG 2021 31)**

### **Meeting of 16 March 2021**

- 3.1 The University Secretary informed members that the items on the matters arising report were covered on the agenda, had been completed or were ongoing.

## **4. Approval of Recommendations from Committees (BG 2021 33)**

### **Governance and Nominations Committee meeting of 25 March 2021**

#### **Board of Governors Membership 2021 (Appendix 1)**

- 4.1 The University Secretary informed members that the first term of office for Ms Sandra Botterell as an Independent Governor would end on 30 June 2021.
- 4.2 Ms Botterell also served as a member of the Workforce Advisory Committee.
- 4.3 The Board of Governors **APPROVED** the appointment of Ms Sandra Botterell for a second term of office from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2024.

## **5 Vice-Chancellor's Briefing (BG 2021 34)**

- 5.1 The Vice-Chancellor updated members on the following:

- Members were informed of the sad passing of Mr Alan Dodd who had served as an Independent Governor at UWL for seven years. Mr Dodd had been the Bursar of Mansfield College until very recently. An obituary of Mr Dodd and of Mr Geoff Fuller, who had also served as an Independent Governor at UWL, were on the Mansfield website as Mr Fuller was a graduate of Mansfield College.
- Members were informed of the untimely death of a UWL law graduate in Pakistan.
- Online and hybrid learning would be considered later in the meeting, but a review of national and international survey outcomes indicated that whilst some student groups liked and benefitted from online learning, many students, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, had struggled with a wide variety of issues including inappropriate study space, lack of equipment and difficulties with adapting to independent learning. The surveys indicated that online learning had not been evenly distributed and without an holistic approach to online learning there would be a negative impact on disadvantaged sections of society. Moving forward, UWL would need to consider how blended learning could be adapted to ensure it benefitted all UWL students. In addition, flexible learning should be considered alongside the physical and mental health of staff and students.
- An IFS report confirmed gaining a university degree added a significant boost to future earnings. Reviewing the data further highlighted a number of concerns with fewer students from disadvantaged backgrounds attending Russell Group institutions. Over half of HE students who attended independent schools attended a Russell group institution compared to only 10% students from the lowest quintiles.
- Further data indicated that ethnicity determined course choices, noting students from wealthier backgrounds tend to study on courses that lead to higher salary returns.
- The data also showed that BAME should not be used as a single category as earnings were lower for black graduates than white graduates but earnings for Asian graduates was higher than both.
- 2021 would be the last year of the NSS in its current format with the government stating that too many institutions outcomes were a result of manipulation of students and data, although an independent report showed that the NSS was one of the most fair and robust indicators of the undergraduate student experience. The Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor confirmed nationally NSS results would fall this year as a result of students moving to online provision. The fall would depend on the quality of provision provided by HEI's. As a result of considering module evaluation surveys, it was clear results would fall at UWL mainly because of their general dissatisfaction with the consequences of the pandemic. The Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor indicated that student responses could overall be neutral which was considered a negative response in the NSS. Members were informed that UWL had anecdotal feedback from the SU and online surveys which suggested overall students were satisfied with the online provision provided but, when possible, would prefer face-to-face teaching.
- Students would be returning to campus on Monday, 17 May 2021 under social distancing rules. From September 2021 returning students would be issued with a face-to-face teaching timetable with a review at eight weeks. For those

students who were reluctant to return to face to face teaching they would have to option to continue with online learning. If a fourth wave occurred later in the year, the timetable would revert to online or blended learning again.

- The government's abolition of London Weighting would continue despite a campaign by London Higher to overturn the decision.
- **Some references in this section have been redacted.**
- The report published by the Commission on Race and Ethnic Disparities found no existence of institutional racism. Although the report had been very controversial, the Equalities Minister, Kemi Badenoch, welcomed the report and confirmed an inter-ministerial group would consider the recommendations.
- UWL applications for September 2021 recruitment were high but acceptances were low. Nationally students were delaying accepting places while uncertainty remained in the sector. UWL had two areas of concern, hospitality and LCM courses, where both sectors having been decimated by the lockdowns.
- There had been a fall in EU applications as EU students were now required to pay international student fees. Applications from international students at undergraduate and postgraduate levels were strong.
- Recruitment to the Drama School London (DSL) remained small but strong.
- **Some references in this section have been redacted.**
- Enterprise income was expected to be close to £40m as a result of new partnerships and the growth of long standing partnership activity.
- The Claude Littner Business School had won the Accountancy College of the Year Award for the Public Sector at the PQ Magazine Awards.
- **Some references in this section have been redacted.**
- Graduation had now been moved to online ceremonies as it would be impossible to provide a quality, socially distanced experience for students who wished to graduate face-to-face. Face-to-face ceremonies were now being planned for November 2021 at Twickenham Stadium.
- The Prime Minister had appointed the MP Neil O'Brien, Senior Treasury Adviser, to oversee the government's levelling up agenda. Mr O'Brien had been vocal on his thoughts about the HE sector, commenting that universities were overpopulated, there were too many courses that failed to provide work opportunities, they were often overpriced and if courses were to be provided online then they should be cheaper to compete with private providers.
- Members noted that the Queen's speech to the Houses of Parliament would place emphasis on lifelong learning and the possibility of lifetime loans to support learning opportunities. The speech would also mention greater opportunities for the 50% of 18-year-olds who did not go to university and how they could be supported. Members noted that UWL's expansion of apprenticeship provision was an ideal way for people of all ages to access new opportunities.

5.2 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the Vice-Chancellor's update.

## 6. Update on Project 4ARM (BG 2021 34)

6.1 **Some references in this section have been redacted.**

6.10 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the update.

## **7. Property Update (BG 2021 35)**

7.1 The Director of Property Services confirmed the lease renewals on Fountain House were close to being finalised.

7.2 Gunnersbury Park Sports Centre was now open and Governors would be invited to visit the site.

**Action: University Secretary**

7.3 The Director of Property Services confirmed student accommodation was still a watching brief. At the moment, due to the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, space was being reviewed but there were no plans to progress the acquisition of more student accommodation. Members were informed the APVC & Executive Dean of the College of Nursing, Midwifery and Healthcare had been reviewing current demands and action would be taken if demand rose significantly.

7.4 Members were assured that the diverse accommodation provision was sufficient.

7.5 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the current issues relating to the current Estate Strategy.

### **Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme (Appendix 1)**

7.6 The Deputy Vice-Chancellor updated members on progress on the Project which was externally funded at a cost of just over £5m. The first tranche of funding had been received and would be used to pay the contractors, Ameresco, at the appropriate time.

7.7 Work was in progress to excavate seven bore holes for the installation of the ground source heat pump on the St Mary's Road campus.

7.8 Members were informed the Project Board met on a fortnightly basis to ensure the project was on track and to address any problems as they arose. The Project Board were also aware of the supply chain and aimed to ensure sustainability across all aspects of the project.

7.9 The previous Interim Director of Property Services had agreed to work part-time on the project until completion.

7.10 The University ensured all interested parties were informed of the nature and scope of the project and were provided with information as the project progressed. Interested parties included, Ealing and Hounslow Councils, Staff, Students and the local community.

7.11 The project had also opened the opportunity for students in the School of Computing and Engineering to use for case studies for their academic work.

7.12 The Independent Governor sitting on the project Board confirmed the relationship with the contractors, Ameresco, was good and the supply chain was working well with no delays in materials to date.

7.13 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the update.

## **8. Project Reset – the University post Covid-19 (Oral)**

### **9. Anchoring the University (BG 2021 36)**

8.1 The Vice-Chancellor informed members that the two agenda items would be rolled into one as they were so closely linked.

8.2 As the sector emerged from the third lockdown, UWL would enter a phase of realignment to ensure long-term sustainability. Plans for alignment would be based on a number of assumptions: an end to social distancing, continuation of a successful vaccination programme in suppressing Covid-19 and an end to lockdowns.

8.3 **Some references in this section have been redacted.**

8.4 Over the past five years, the University has outperformed all its competitors as a result of the energy of its staff, by understanding the student cohort and placing their needs at the forefront of the University strategy. The relationship between staff and students was unique as was the relationship between the University and the Students' Union. Whilst the focus of the curriculum changed, the University would remain mindful of its unique selling points and maintain its drive to ensure all students were provided with the required skills to maximise their opportunities in the job market.

8.5 The University would continue to listen to the student voice and ensure students had access to facilities that maximised their learning experience. Student study and social space would be maintained as many UWL students did not have the appropriate study space at home and needed to interact with their peers.

8.6 As a result of the pandemic the pressures on UWL students had increased particularly around childcare, caring responsibilities, financial problems, health issues and disabilities, but UWL would continue to offer 'wraparound' care to all of its students. The relationship with the Students' Union remained critical in channelling services for students.

8.7 Face-to-face teaching would remain a priority which provided cultural capital in allowing students to learn together and feed off people's ideas and experiences.

8.8 The University would remain focused in providing placements for students to ensure they received work experience in their field of study and, although students had missed out on practical aspects of study, the variety of simulation facilities across the University would be fully utilised to address this where placements were limited.

8.9 Members noted there may be some staff resistance to returning to campus working, but it was agreed that staff concerns should not take precedence over the needs of the students.

- 8.10 The pandemic highlighted the need to ensure all students had access to equipment that allowed them to access online learning. Students welcomed the opportunity to utilise online learning, both synchronous and asynchronous, but staff should ensure that when face to face learning was initiated students do not use online material as a substitute.
- 8.11 At the start of the new academic year returning students would receive an eight-week face to face teaching timetable with UWL Flex as back up. The timetable would be flexible and would be reviewed at eight weeks to ensure it was meeting the needs of the students. The timetable would also be prepared with the possibility of another lockdown later in the year.
- 8.12 Across the sector a hybrid approach to working would be applied to staff but members agreed that UWL staff would return to work on campus full-time, subject to government advice, by September 2021. Key staff who provided essential face to face services for students should not be treated differently to back of office staff and the University would not approve a two-tiered workforce. The University proposed a fixed policy for all staff to adhere to and members of VCE would be meeting with Heads of Schools and Service Departments to ensure staff were aware of the policy. Members requested a paper be presented to the Workforce Advisory Committee on 3 June 2021 providing details on the staff return to work policy. It was noted that although staff were contracted to return to working on campus, it should be considered in the light of changing working practices and, whilst the University knows what works for student's, it would also need to ensure it understood what worked for its staff.

**Action: Director of HR**

- 8.13 Members agreed that as the staff model was changing and looking to the future, some staff may need to consider retraining or the University may wish to re-evaluate its staff profile to ensure it was meeting the needs of the students and the long-term future of the University.
- 8.14 As a result of the proposed changes to the curriculum, the University would review its partnership activity and emphasise the growth in STEM subjects to its partners. The University would also look at ways to blend STEM and creative arts subjects together which would provide a wider breadth of knowledge to students.
- 8.14 The Board of Governors **NOTED**
- a) Agenda item 8, Project reset – the University post covid-19, and
  - b) Agenda item 9, Anchoring the University.

## **10. CUC Higher Education Code of Governance – recommendations for Implementation (BG 2021 37)**

- 10.1 The University Secretary informed members that the item had been covered at a Governor's Seminar earlier in the month but, if members still had any queries relating to the implementation of the Code, these would be addressed outside of the meeting.

10.2 The Board of Governors **APPROVED:**

- a) The proposed recommendations arising from the mapping of current practices against the Code, and
- b) The proposed changes to the statement of Primary Responsibilities.

**11. Tackling harassment and sexual misconduct (Oral)**

11.1 The University Secretary reminded members that the action plan to combat harassment on campus had been presented at the last meeting of the Board of Governors on 16 March 2021 but, in the light of the publication by the OfS of its statement of expectations to prevent harassment and sexual misconduct, a more comprehensive action plan would be presented to the Student Liaison Committee on 13 May 2021 and to the Board of Governors on 6 July 2021.

**Action: University Secretary**

11.2 The plan would also cover work with partnership institutions.

11.3 A small Working Group had been convened to review reporting pathways and would be reported to the Student Liaison Committee on 13 May 2021.

11.4 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the update.

**12. The University Research Excellence Framework (REF) submission and the University Research Strategy (BG 2021 38/Presentation)**

12.1 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) opened the presentation by providing an overview of the REF submission and how the work on the submission had informed the University Research Strategy.

12.2 The University had doubled the number of staff entered into the REF from 41 in 2014 to 81 in 2021. There were seven units of assessment submitted including three from new areas, Engineering, Social Work and Social Policy and Sport and Exercise Sciences, Leisure and Tourism. Members noted that Biomedical Sciences had also been included.

12.3 **Some references in this section have been redacted.**

12.4 **Some references in this section have been redacted.**

12.5 **Some references in this section have been redacted.**

12.6 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) welcomed Professor Amir Alani to the meeting who provided information on his research as one of the impact case studies.

12.7 Professor Alani shared the scope of his research activity in The Faringdon Centre in using non-destructive testing methods when looking at the integrity of structures which included tunnels, bridges, roads and railway foundations. The research also monitored the root systems of trees. The research had led to a wide range of collaborative networks across the world with links being forged with industrial and civic partners.



- 12.8 As a result of the research a new antenna system dedicated to assessing trees had been developed and would be fabricated and marketed shortly.
- 12.9 The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Academic) welcomed Professor Helen Hester who provided information on her research as one of the impact case studies.
- 12.10 Professor Hester's research was in two parts; Gender and Technology and Public Policy and both areas had led to national and international recognition of her work. Professor Hester's work had informed the Labour Party manifesto in 2019 and with regional governments in Spain.
- 12.11 Members were referred to the REF brochure which provided information on research activity in UWL's academic schools and the national and international collaborations that had been formed.
- 12.12 The Board of Governors **NOTED** and thanked Professor Joelle Fanghanel, Professor Amir Alani and Professor Helen Hester for sharing their research and the research profile of the University.

### **Academic Matters**

#### **13. Apprenticeship Board (BG 2021 39)**

##### **Meeting of 24 March 2021**

- 13.1 The Chair of the Apprenticeship Board informed members that the Head of the London College of Music Examinations (LCME) had presented to the meeting.
- 13.2 The meeting also reviewed the Governments Skills for Jobs White Paper and its implications for UWL.
- 13.3 **Some references in this section have been redacted.**
- 13.4 Members noted the Minutes and items of business discussed.

#### **14. Academic Board (BG 2021 40)**

##### **Meeting of 31 March 2021**

- 14.1 The meeting discussed possible policy changes as a result of the Augar Review recommendations being implemented.
- 14.2 A discussion took place on the action to tackle harassment.
- 14.3 The meeting reviewed the University's Degree Outcomes Statement which intended to provide protection of the value of honours degree qualifications in the sector.
- 14.4 Members noted the Minutes and items of business discussed.

#### **15. Chairs Briefing on Committee Activity (BG 2021 41)**

### **Finance Committee meeting of 26 April 2021 (Appendix 1)**

- 15.1 The Chair of the Finance Committee confirmed the positive financial outturn.
- 15.2 The meeting discussed the University investment policy and the changing investment profile.
- 15.3 Members noted the Minutes and items of business discussed.

### **Governance and Nominations Committee meeting of 25 March 2021 (Appendix 2)**

- 15.4 Members noted the Minutes and items of business discussed.

### **Governance and Nominations Committee meeting of 22 April 2021 (Appendix 3)**

- 15.5 Members noted the Minutes and items of business discussed.

### **Workforce Advisory Committee meeting of 19 November 2020 (Appendix 5)**

- 15.6 Members noted the Minutes and items of business discussed.

## **16. Any Other Business**

- 16.1 Members were informed that the next meeting of the Board of Governors would be a blended attendance meeting, but it was hoped as many Governors would attend in person. The meeting would be held in Weston hall to ensure social distancing rules. Guidance would be provided nearer the time of the meeting.

**Action: University Secretary**

## **17. Date of next meeting**

- 17.1 The next virtual meeting of the Board of Governors will take place on Tuesday, 6 July 2021. Details to be confirmed.

**Signed by Ms Jennifer Bernard**  
**Chair of the Board of Governors**

Date

**Author:** Ms Marion Lowe  
**Title:** University Secretary and Chief Compliance Officer  
**Date:** May 2021