BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes

Of the Board of Governors meeting held on Monday 30 January and Tuesday, 31 January 2023 at The Lensbury, Broom Road, Teddington, TW11 9NU

Present:	Ms Jennifer Bernard (Chair of the Board of Governors)
	Mr Wladimir Albuja (Student Representative)
	Ms Kim Ansell (Independent Governor)
	Ms Aprileen Alexander (Independent Governor)
	Ms Sandra Botterell (Independent Governor)
	Ms Shirley Cameron (Independent Governor)
	Ms Tina Coates (Independent Governor)
	Mr James Edmunds (Academic Board Representative)
	Mr Steve Fowler (Independent Governor)
	Mr Derek Hicks (Independent Governor)
	Professor Peter John (President and Vice-Chancellor)
	Ms Maisie Kelly (SU President)
	Mr Jonathan Lawrence (Independent Governor)
	Dr Christopher McLaverty (Independent Governor)
	Ms Andrea Miller (independent Governor)
	Ms Kerry O'Callaghan (Independent Governor)
	Ms Helena Peacock (Independent Governor)
	Dr Paul Sahota (Independent Governor)
	Mr Stuart Wright (Independent Governor)
In attendance:	Mr Adrian Ellison (APVC and Chief Information Officer)
	Mr Patrick Fuller (Group Chief Financial Officer)
	Dr Suresh Gamlath (Pro Vice-Chancellor) (Business Development)
	Dr Hiba Khan (Co-opted member of the Workforce Advisory Committee) (Tuesday, 31 January 2023)
	Mr Neil Henderson (Director of Human Resources and Organisational Development)
	Ms Tracy McAuliffe (Director of Student Services) (Tuesday, 31 January 2023)
	Mr Tye McMahon (SU Chief Executive) (Tuesday, 31 January 2023)
	Ms Coral Mason (Assistant Clerk to the Board)
	Ms Sara Raybould (Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Student Experience)
	Ms Lynn Robinson (Interim University Secretary)

	Dr Kostas Tzortzis (APVC and Director of Strategic Planning) Ms Claire Willitts (Director of Property Services) Ms Vanessa Wilson (Chief Executive, University Alliance) (Monday 30, January 2023) Professor Anthony Woodman (Provost and Senior Deputy Vice-Chancellor)
Apologies:	Professor Heather Loveday (Professoriate Representative) Mr Kiran Virdee (Independent Governor)

1. Apologies for absence, announcements and declarations of interest

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

1.2 Apologies were recorded above.

1.3 The Chair opened the session outlining the scheduled sessions.

1.4 The Chair informed members that the University had joined a new mission group, University Alliance, which blended with the University's vision for the future.

2. Sector Landscape (Presentation)

2.1 The Chief Executive of University Alliance (UA) provided a background on the mission group which represented modern professional and technical universities. Shared characteristics include being industry focused, inclusive, delivering teaching excellence, having a local and global reach and having a powerful research base.

2.2 University Alliance had recently carried out a strategy review which identified many parallels with UWL which led to the Chief Executive of UA to contact the Vice-Chancellor and set out the case for joining UA. There were currently 16 members from all regions of the United Kingdom.

2.3 The Officers' Group was made up of member Vice-Chancellor's who were also Directors of UA.

2.4 The new UA strategy had been formulated through the opinions of UA stakeholders. There would be a focus on international links and the collective power of the group would be used to influence and determine government policy in the sector. Each pillar within the strategy held KPIs which had been tested on students, parents and staff to ensure the focus of the strategy was understood by stakeholders. Sector terminology was often seen as a barrier to sector user groups and terminology used would ensure everyone could understand the mission and vision of the group.

2.5 The first pillar aimed to raise the profile of UA to deliver results for students, industry and society. This would include extending the media reach and political engagement.

2.6   The second pillar focused on policy and would include looking at how the healthcare workforce would deliver for the future, taking into account that UA members trained approximately 1/3 of nurses in the UK. This was of particular importance to UWL as it extended its reach in medical sciences.

2.5   UA would also focus on the creative arts, degree apprenticeships and the HE funding model which has not been reviewed at government level for over 20 years.

2.6   The third pillar would focus on finding solutions to support learners, industries and communities and would extend its network reach. UA members would benefit from the collective networking by allowing collective problem solving, peer review, shared opportunities and knowledge exchange. In addition, UA offered a Doctoral Training Alliance which provided collective research support.

2.7   The fourth pillar, Partnerships, would focus on how UA members could support SMEs and look at alternative ways to foster and develop partnerships for the benefit of all UA members.

2.8   The final pillar, People, aimed to develop all staff and be reflective of an inclusive and diverse society. A future leaders programme would be established to nurture emerging talent at all levels.

2.9   The Chief Executive reflected on the current political and policy environment providing the national context and surveys of national parliament voting intentions which indicated a likely Labour Party win at the next general election. Labour's HE policy had not been clarified.

2.10   The key election battles would be around the economy and public services. Growth had not returned to pre-pandemic levels and while the Bank of England had raised concerns about a recession, technically the country was not in recession and unemployment remained low. More concerning was the growing unrest in the public sector, particularly around strikes within the NHS.

2.11   Post-Brexit EU relations remained uncertain and with Spain taking up the presidency, the situation was not likely to improve with heightened concern around the Northern Ireland protocol.

2.12   The landscape for HE remained uncertain as parties vied for power and this was compounded by Ministers offering short term solutions in an attempt to remain in positions of power. In all of this the OfS were perceived to be doing the government's bidding regardless of whether decisions were rational.

2.13   The government's big focus in relation to HE continued to be on freedom of speech with proposed legislation giving the OfS even more powers at a time when HE providers were losing confidence in them. It was clear there would be no additional money provided for HEIs from any new government and, with the freeze on fees, HEIs were increasing looking at ways to raise funds often just to maintain the status quo. UA were working on proposals to review and change the current funding model.

2.14   Although governments changed, government officials remained constant and the Chief Executive had close working relationships with them and would try to influence future party manifestos. Working with senior level industry and business chief executives ensured they were aware of the UA mission and when required could advocate for UA.

2.15   UA members were in contact with their MPs and were encouraging their academics to share their work with media outlets to raise the profile of their institutions.

2.16   UA were aware of the changing needs of students, particularly Generation Z. Studies indicated they had high levels of anxiety, but they did care about their careers. They learnt differently and were more likely to move jobs quickly and HEIs had to adapt to the changing needs of the students of the future. They were more demanding and had embraced digital learning. Members noted UWL students were predominately mature but as the course portfolio changed the age profile of UWL students would probably come down.

2.17   Members thanked the UA Chief Executive and in discussion covered the following points.

2.18   Members queried how the public perceived HE noting that many did not understand the difference between HE and FE. They often seemed to believe that HE was for intellectual people while FE was for practical-minded people. UA wanted to break down this misconception and show that HEIs offered professional but practical opportunities. Members noted the government appeared to want to shift funding from HE to FE as it would be cheaper, but FE clearly needed more investment as the drive to move level three students to FE colleges would accelerate their funding crisis.

2.19   Many people were looking at alternatives to University for their children and were looking at ways to reduce debt whilst offering entrepreneurial skills noting that surveys indicated that 72% of Generation Z wanted to start their own company.

2.20   Businesses wanted a skilled workforce and UA would have to ensure they were aware of future options for students and the skills required for the future and that excellence was not the preserve of Russell Group institutions.

2.21   UWL students would need to develop skills to be able to walk into a job and show that their learning and work placements had provided them with the knowledge to benefit their workplace immediately. Further development for offering professional qualifications as part of their courses should also be progressed.

2.22   The Chief Executive noted that a review of the OfS would be carried out in 2023 . It was felt that their funding model also needed to be a part of the review as over 90% of their income was allocated to the salaries of a substantial staffing base.

2.23   It was becoming increasingly difficult to find placements in the NHS, the Royal College of Nursing had approved simulated learning environments which UWL were able to provide. Placements were a limiting factor when recruiting nursing students but when comparing other countries, placement hours were 1000 compared to

2000 in the UK so simulation centres could offer the additional learning environment in addition to reduced placement hours.

2.24 Members further noted the challenges facing arts and humanities and that many job opportunities in the creative arts were not considered professional roles but provided job satisfaction and many students were able to use the soft skills to move into alternative careers if they so wished.

2.25 The UA Chief Executive closed the presentation saying that the biggest challenge facing the sector was the funding model which needed to be revised.

2.26 The Chair of the Board of Governors closed the evening session by thanking the UA Chief Executive.

Tuesday, 31 January 2023

1. Session opening by the Chair of the Board of Governors

1.1 The Chair of the Board of Governors provided members with an overview of the day's sessions opening with the initial thoughts from the Vice-Chancellor on the new University strategy, Impact 2028.

2. Update on the appointment of the Chair of the Board of Governors (Oral)

2.1 The Independent Governor leading the project team on the appointment of the new Chair of the Board of Governors updated members on the search to date.

2.2 There were 10 applicants following the first round of advertising. Phase two of advertising would be through the use of a search company, Nurole, in order to increase the diversity of candidates.

2.3 Informal interviews would be held on 4 April 2023 where shortlisted applicants would have the opportunity to meet with Governors, the SU Executive, members of VCE, the current Chair of the Board and the Vice-Chancellor.

2.4 Formal interviews would be held on 28 April 2023.

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

3. Strategic Plan Update (Presentation)

3.1 The Vice-Chancellor opened the session stating that the plan was the most difficult to prepare to date because the aims and objectives of the previous plans were largely still applicable and so there was bound to be repetition. UWL had matured and travelled so far and Impact 2028 aimed to place the foundations and pillars of stability for further incremental growth in place. External factors would impede, including government instability and political prejudices, but this would only motivate staff and students to succeed even more. The changes that had taken place over the past 10 plus years had been dramatic and one of the questions was whether the plan should push for further change or to stabilise what had already taken place.

3.2   Advice from the Board indicated there should be fewer KPIs but the ones that remained would be more impactful. The UWL foundations remained the same but the strategic pillars would form the basis of Impact 2028. There would be overlap within the pillars as they provided the under-pinning connecting the University's strategic priorities and goals with its mission and vision. The pillars would remain fluid to ensure the University remained flexible and nimble in its approach to challenges and opportunities.

3.3   The University would be adjusting the focus of its course portfolio away from the creative arts towards STEM-based subjects. This did not mean the University would be closing its creative courses, but they would be enhanced and fused with STEM based subjects. Government funding had been reduced in the creative arts and it was inevitable that student numbers would reduce and this was happening already.

3.4   The Vice-Chancellor provided an outline of the University progress over the last five years, the challenges and opportunities that had taken place. These included extending the asset base to include Drama Studio London, Paragon House, Ruskin College, Oxford and most recently, Century and Cavendish House. This had allowed a growth in student numbers to 19,000 and the current estate allowed for further growth. **Some references in this section have been redacted.**

3.5   The University had extended its global reach and international recruitment had grown beyond expectations. The St Mary's Road campus was the only University in London with a ground source heat pump as part of its sustainability drive. The University had moved into the top 100 as a result of the REF exercise and Enterprise income had topped £60m.

3.6   All of the above had been achieved without losing sight of the core mission of the University which was based on social inclusion and providing opportunities for all. The recent bronze Athena Swan award confirmed the University continued to be a leading institution offering equality.

3.7   Past challenges included the evacuation of Paragon House accommodation and working with alternative providers at short notice to provide accommodation for a large number of students. The acquisition of Ruskin College, Oxford required additional work with Ofsted who had visited the College in 2022 and gave a 'requires improvement' rating due to gaps in the safeguarding provision.

3.8   The most pressing challenge was to ensure the University appointed a new Chair of the Board. It would be critical to ensure the appointed person understood and embraced the mission of the University and would join its journey.

3.9   UWL aligned closely with UA as it was a professional, technical University. The membership of a new mission group would provide UWL with a voice at government level and this would support its future trajectory.

3.10   The Vice-Chancellor outlined key pointers for the future direction of the institution which included:

- Maintaining its position as the best modern university in London and overall the 8th best HEI in London,

- A review of the creative arts curriculum to ensure the content was current,
- Ensuring the unit of resource was affordable. The average fee for UWL students was £7,500 but, due to inflation and fees being frozen, the University would need to ensure current support measures remained affordable,
- The University hosted students from 126 different nationalities and it was desirable to appoint staff who reflected the diversity of the student population,
- Maintaining and further reducing attainment gaps,
- Establishing a School of Medicine which would be interdisciplinary. Initial recruitment would be at Postgraduate level and for international students due to governments reluctance to fund home medical students,
- Diversifying and rebalancing the course portfolio to move towards STEM subjects but to also consider courses for the future, particularly AI,
- Extending the global reach of the University with a possible hub in Singapore,
- Enlarging the home footprint with a possible learning hub in Feltham,
- Embedding sustainability in all areas, and
- Maintaining focus on being the levelling up institution.

3.11 Members queried the benefits and implications of joining UA and the Vice-Chancellor informed members that the previous mission group, Million+, had lacked a voice at government level and was not as dynamic as UA. UA were forceful lobbyists and had direct lines to government. Members were assured that if UW'Ls core values were at odds with the direction UA was moving in then UWL could leave at any point but it was beneficial to be part of a collective voice.

3.12 The new plan aimed to impact the communities where UWL campuses were based, students and their families, the economy, the region and its culture, access, participation and employability, international development and sustainability and the climate.

3.13 The Vice-Chancellor set out the super targets:

- To have a world ranking in the top 700,
- To remain in the top 50 universities in the country,
- To be rated in the top 70 for research in the country,
- To open a School of Medicine,
- To be a gold institution for sustainability and climate change, and
- To be the leading institution for social inclusion, access and levelling-up.

3.14 The targets were very different from previous KPIs and were dependent on consistently achieving 10% surpluses. The sector struggled with fees remaining frozen and so enterprise activities would become critical for success. Research activity would initially be very expensive as more research focused staff would need to be employed alongside staff with knowledge of submitting successful research bids. Students would also benefit from increased research activity as current research would inform the teaching curriculum.

3.15 The Mission and Vision had been amended slightly to reflect the success of the previous strategic plans. These changes impacted on the values and commitments:

- Excellence

- Innovation
- Courage
- Integrity
- Inclusivity
- Social responsibility, and
- Gratitude

Which reflected how the University supported students through their journey.

3.16 The Vice-Chancellor concluded the presentation by focusing on the seven pillars which underpinned the plan noting that they connected the University's strategic priorities and goals with its mission and vision. They interconnected, therefore, some of the themes were duplicated:

- Health, Society, Biomedical – this would pull together new and established themes but it provided an opportunity to pull together activities that were currently being carried out in silos across the university.

- Technology, AI, Analytics, Engineering – a focus on engineering and technology and the future digital world but also linking with social biology.

- Sustainability, Climate, Food Security – sustainability would be embedded into the curriculum to prepare students as climate and sustainability leaders of the future. In addition, the University aimed to be carbon neutral by 2030.

- Design, Digital, Creative – This would pull together two areas through the development of virtual creativity in gaming and virtual reality.

- Social Justice, Inclusion, Levelling-up – To extend the footprint of the University into educational cold spots. This could be initialiated through working with councils who could provide educational hubs for the University to operate in areas where there was low participation. The Feltham initiative was currently in the early stages of negotiations and if plans progressed the University's social reach could be extended in an impactful way.

- Social, Human, People and Economy – To continue to develop and expand working across areas that impacted on the country as a whole for the greater good of society, an example of this was the Institute of Policing.

- Enterprise and Venture-making – continued expansion of the work in enterprise, offering entrepreneurial opportunities for students.

3.17 Members were reminded that the pillars encompassed common areas across all schools. Teaching and learning activities that were or could develop in a cross-disciplinary way would open up new course pathways leading to closer collaborative work across all subject disciplines.

3.18 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the presentation.

4.   Discussion on the Strategic Pillars (Presentation)

4.1   The Vice-Chancellor opened a discussion around the Strategic Pillars and whether they were aligned to the future of UWL. Members queried whether there should be fewer pillars, possibly removing pillars six and seven or turning them into cross-cutting themes.

4.2   The Pillars were a way to remember and reinforce the cross-cultural developments within the University, but members queried how the aspirations could be met and, as there was so much information contained within each pillar, it would be difficult to retain what each pillar contained. Members were informed that the pillars were not organisational structures but were the areas of interest that were operating or could become operational within the University.

4.3   VCE and SMG would take overall responsibility and operationalise the pillars.

4.4   Members suggested the titles of the pillars be reviewed and renamed to ensure simplicity, so everyone had an understanding of their purpose. Members were informed that the pillars described the operations within the University, that for administrative purposes, study was broken down into Schools but if you opted to attend a course at UWL you would develop skills that would allow you to slot into a number of the schools and your school of study would not restrict your learning opportunities.

4.5   The strategic plan had been based on the tools needed to allow students and UWL to succeed. Financial planning provided one of the foundations that would allow the student support system to succeed.

4.6   Members queried the drive for research taking into account the expense and queried the value that research would bring to the University noting that UWL could not compete with Russell Group HEIs.. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that research-led teaching ensured the curriculum remained current and would also be in areas that would support UWL's values and vision. . Any growth in research activity would be supported by a business case.

4.7   Members agreed that the students of the future would be looking at affordable ways of studying with many opting for cheaper online modes of study but, whilst online study could be of benefit, it often led to poorer outcomes and high non-completion rates.

4.8   Members requested the Vice-Chancellor include more on the student experience and support and also employability within the plan as these were a central part of the University's offer and it was felt that they were lower-profile than in the previous plan.

Action: Vice-Chancellor

4.9   The Board of Governors **NOTED** the presentation.

5.   Feedback from breakout groups (Discussion)

5.1 The Chair of the Board of Governors invited members to breakout into groups to discuss the strategic plan pillars. Members agreed that the foundations should be firm to support the pillars and then UWL would be able to deliver.

5.2 Members suggested the plan should underline the agility and fluidity of the University and should also enhance the areas that highlighted UWL's uniqueness. This should include greater emphasis on the student experience, it should not be taken for granted.

5.3 A better understanding of how the proposed medical school would operate would be helpful. The school aimed to pull together what was already taking place at UWL, but it would be centralised which would allow greater focus.

5.4 Members suggested sustainability and inclusion were part of the University foundations and were different from the other pillars.

5.5 Members suggested further discussion around 'gratitude' in the mission, vision and values and that this should be more clearly articulated.

5.6 Members agreed that there were too many pillars and pillar six, Social, Human, People and Economy and pillar seven, Enterprise and Venture-making should be removed or turned into foundations or themes to make the remaining five stronger.

5.7 A discussion took place around the University's unique selling points. It was difficult to articulate what these were because many in the sector were doing the same things but UWL seemed to be more successful in achieving its USPs. The unique selling points were different for each of the University's audiences. Members agreed that the University should continue to be the 'Career University'. The University was also recalibrating its course portfolio to ensure it was supportive of the careers for the future. The student needs were also changing and the University would adapt its learning provision to meet these.

5.8 The Vice-Chancellor referred members to the goals and objectives which were examples and would be further developed. These were the areas that were measured externally by regulators and students.

5.9 The first goal encompassed maintenance and goal two covered aspirational aims. Members agreed that there should be a small number of goals which would make the overall plan more impactful and allow greater concentration of resources.

5.10 Members suggested a specific goal around research and what it meant to be a research student within the 'Career University'.

5.11 Members requested a further review of the pillars, concentrating on the foundation first to ensure the pillars would be fully supported. The links and connections between the pillars should be made more obvious.

Action: Vice-Chancellor

5.12 Members agreed that the plan should ensure that it spoke to all audiences.

5.13 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the discussion.

6. **Safeguarding (Presentation)**

6.1 The Director of Student Services informed members that, with the acquisition of Ruskin College, safeguarding now fell under the remit of two regulators, the OfS for HE and Ofsted for FE and Apprenticeships. The recent visit by Ofsted highlighted areas for improvement around safeguarding at Ruskin College and UWL.

6.2 The safeguarding responsibilities at Ruskin College and UWL were similar but their context was different and this has led to a review and updating of the safeguarding policies for both institutions. The policies were required to take into account a number of legal requirements including The Education Act 2022 and the Counter-Terrorism and Security Act 2015, together with changes to statutory regulations in September 2022 from the Department of Education "Keeping children safe in education.

6.3 The current cause for concern policy will be changed to a 'guidance document' which would be used in conjunction with the new safeguarding policy as this already would include vulnerable adults. The Director of Student Services informed members that it was often difficult to define who was a vulnerable adult, but the University has a duty of care to support all staff and students where a vulnerability was identified.

6.4 The Director of Student Services is the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) for both UWL and Ruskin College but there are Deputy DSL's at both sites. Ruskin College Deputy lead for safeguarding is the Interim Campus Manager and UWL has two Deputy leads plus five Welfare Officers. There is also a lead safeguarding Governor for UWL and one for Ruskin College, together with a named Senior Management Lead. The policy set out their roles and responsibilities.

6.5 All staff were required to undertake online safeguarding training with those staff directly responsible required to undertake additional specialist training. The Director of Student Services must undertake training every two years at level three. In addition, a single central record for UWL and for Ruskin was being established setting out who had been trained and when their training required updating. All staff at Ruskin College were also DBS checked. In addition, to support the online training, a bespoke training package would be formulated for Personal Tutors, Apprenticeship Tutors and Ruskin College Tutors.

6.6 The Director of Student Services is the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL), for Drama Studio London but not for other UWL partners. Links have been established with the relevant local authorities for both safeguarding and Prevent.

6.7 A discussion took place on the meaning of 'vulnerable adults'. The Director of Student Services provided an overview of who could be termed a vulnerable adult noting that UWL had been supporting vulnerable students regardless of the safeguarding requirements.

6.8 A video will be produced for staff and students on safeguarding and there would be regular website updates.

6.9   A campus poster campaign would also be set up so students were aware to whom to report concerns to. An online reporting tool "Report and Support" will be the main reporting tool for students.

6.10   UWL statistics showed that in 2022 the welfare team dealt with 590 welfare cases. In the first semester for 2022-23 there had been 488 cases. The highest reason for approaching the welfare team related to mental health concerns.

6.11   Members were informed of the distinction between safeguarding and causes for concern.

6.12   Members noted that when an external booking for space on the campus was confirmed, if attendance included children under-18 then the onus was on the organisation to ensure safeguarding was in place. The terms and conditions clearly stated their responsibility.

6.13   Placements were covered via a tripartite agreement when students signed a contract of employment. If an employer had a cause for concern then guidelines required them to contact the University. If a student had a concern they should approach the employers' HR Department. If this was not satisfactory then they could contact the University.

6.14   Governors also fell within the safeguarding policy and if they had concerns they could contact the University Secretary or the Director of Student Services. In recognition of the changed guidance, all governors, including co-opted governors, would complete UWL's online safeguarding and prevent training, updating as required.

6.15   The Board of Governors **NOTED** the presentation.

7.   Calendar of meetings 2023-24 (BG 2223 15)

7.1   Members **NOTED** the calendar of meetings for 2023-24.

8.   Comments from the Chair of the Board of Governors

8.1   The Chair of the Board of Governors closed the meeting extending thanks to the Director of Student Services and the Vice-Chancellor for the presentations.

9.   Date of Next Meeting

9.1   The next meeting of the Board of Governors would take place on Tuesday, 14 March 2023 at 10am in the Directorate Boardroom.

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

Author: Ms Lynn Robinson
Title: Interim University Secretary
Date: February 2023