

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes

Of the Board of Governors meeting held on Tuesday, 13 October 20120 via Teams

- Present:**
- Ms Jennifer Bernard (Independent Governor, Chair of the Board of Governors)
 - Mr Dermot Blastland (Independent Governor)
 - Ms Sandra Botterell (Independent Governor)
 - Ms Shirley Cameron (Independent Governor)
 - Mr Mark Cammies (Independent Governor)
 - Mr Steve Fowler (Independent Governor)
 - Mr Geoff Fuller (Independent Governor)
 - Dr Suresh Gamlath (Staff Representative)
 - Mr Derek Hicks (Co-opted 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:**
- Mr Adrian Ellison (Associate Pro Vice-Chancellor and Chief Information Officer)
 - Professor Joelle Fanghanel (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Academic)
 - Mr Patrick Fuller (Chief Financial Officer)
 - Ms Marion Lowe (University Secretary)
 - Mr Tye McMahon (SU Chief Executive) (for agenda item 5)
 - Ms Coral Mason (Assistant Clerk to the Board)
 - Ms Sara Raybould (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Experience)
 - Ms Jayne Rowley (CEO, HECSU) (for agenda item 4)
 - Dr Kostas Tzortzis (Director of Strategic Planning)
 - Professor Anthony Woodman (Deputy Vice-Chancellor)

1 Apologies for absence, announcements and declarations of interest

1.1 There were no declarations of interest.

Introduction by the Chair

1.2 The Chair of the Board opened the meeting focusing on the positive achievements in an unusual and difficult year. Of note were the positive league table placements and the resulting publicity and the award of University of the Year for Student Experience by the Times/Sunday Times.

1.3 The Board were pleased to note that they would receive a presentation by Ms Jane Rowley, CEO of HECSU, later in the meeting which would provide an insight into the changing work environment for graduates.

2 Membership of the Board of Governors 2020-21 (BG 2021 01)

2.1 The University Secretary informed members that Mr Kris Murali had stood down as an Independent Governor due to work commitments but wished to maintain his association with the University. Members extended their thanks to Mr Murali for all his work as an Independent Governor and confirmed their support for Mr Murali to remain a member of the Finance Committee as a co-opted member.

2.2 The Chair of the Board of Governors, the Vice-Chancellor and the University Secretary met with Mr Kiran Virdee who had been a co-opted member of the Finance Committee from 1 November 2017. Mr Virdee had indicated a willingness to join the Board of Governors as an Independent Governor and members agreed that Mr Virdee would be a welcome addition to the Board of Governors.

2.3 The Chair of the Board of Governors had met with three Independent Governors, Mr Steve Fowler, Ms Kerry O'Callaghan and Ms Helena Peacock to discuss the renewal of their terms of office.

2.4 The Chair of the Finance Committee had met with Mr Bob Atkins, a co-opted member of the Finance Committee to discuss the renewal of his term of office.

2.5 The Board of Governors **APPROVED:**

- a) The appointment Mr Kris Murali as a Co-opted Member on the Finance Committee from 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2023.
- b) The appointment Mr Kiran Virdee as an Independent Governor and member of the Finance Committee from 1 October 2020 to 30 September 2023.
- c) The re-appointment of Mr Steve Fowler, Ms Kerry O'Callaghan and Ms Helena Peacock for a further term.
- d) The re-appoint Mr Bob Atkins as a Co-opted member on the Finance Committee for a further term.

3. Review of Achievement 2023 (Presentation)

3.1 Some references in this section have been redacted.

- 3.4 The Vice-Chancellor updated members on monitoring of Covid-19 on campus. To date, 21 cases of Covid-19 had been identified in the student cohort, 10 cases in Paragon House, one case in The Cube, seven commuting students and three students in private, rented accommodation. The students came from a variety of schools. Hounslow Public Health had been notified and a track and trace response had been instigated. There were a number of students self-isolating in flats in Paragon House and the students were being monitored. The University Secretary confirmed a dedicated member of staff in Student Services had been dedicated to provide welfare support. The University would ensure they had enough provisions and the SU had set up a buddy service so they were not feeling isolated.
- 3.5 One member of staff had confirmed they had contracted Covid-19 and another member of staff was isolating as a result of track and trace. All staff remained positive and were pleased with the level of information and support they had received from the University.
- 3.6 The Chair of the Board of Governors confirmed she had toured SMR and Paragon House and had been pleased with the positive message the changes were conveying. The University Secretary confirmed the University had appointed student ambassadors to act as promoters of the Covid-19 secure measures to ensure students followed the guidance.
- 3.7 The Vice-Chancellor confirmed students continued to receive online and face-to-face support for their studies and for pastoral support. Monitoring of attendance indicated that between 60-70% of students were in attendance on campus and approximately 50 classrooms were in use. There had been a steady increase in the number of students attending.
- 3.8 The Vice-Chancellor reflected on his presentation made to the Board of Governors in February 2020, the sector risks and uncertainties that had emerged as a result of Covid-19 and the completion of priorities set for 2019-20.
- 3.9 The sector was faced with adapting to a 'new normal' and some of the changes taking place now would probably be permanent. The University sector would survive but would look very different. Financial uncertainty would remain a high risk and there would be calls from students for the re-imburement of fees if the mode of delivery did not provide the students with a rich learning environment.
- 3.10 In addition, recurring risks including Brexit, pensions, mental health and changing government policy were heightened.
- 3.11 The government had announced the abolition of the NSS in its current form which they believed had undermined academic excellence and failed to support student aspirations. It would be replaced with an NSS that focused on continuation, employability and salary levels which would benefit Russell Group institutions.

- 3.12 The University Strategic Plan which set out the University mission, vision and values remained current even in the changing climate. The priority would remain focusing on the University core business, the student experience. The University would need to confirm its USP and focus more on career opportunities which would include personalising student learning.
- 3.13 The University would need to focus on using its 'anchor' status in Ealing and Hounslow. Members noted that the relationship with Ealing Council was not as strong as the University relationship with Hounslow Council and the Vice-Chancellor agreed that work would continue on strengthening the relationship.
- 3.14 The University had already met some of the strategic objectives set out in Achievement 2023 noting that the TEF would probably no longer be operating.
- 3.15 Members were referred to the incremental growth in student numbers and noted the biggest growth had been in transnational education, franchise, external delivery and apprenticeships. There had been a big increase in student numbers in 2019-20 as a result of the enrolment of GSM students.
- 3.16 Student numbers for 2020-21 were better than expected and over 1000 students had been recruited through clearing. 4855 students had accepted places and 4068 students had enrolled. The budget had been based on 3725 students enrolling.
- 3.17 Discrepancies with overseas numbers related to the fact that many students were experiencing travel difficulties.
- 3.18 The University had been shortlisted for the following THE Awards:
- Estates Strategy of the Year
 - Inclusivity and Diversity Initiative of the year, and
 - Knowledge Transfer Initiative of the year,

Having previously been awarded the Business School of the year and Outstanding Finance performance of the year last year.

- 3.19 **Some references in this section have been redacted.** Research activities were being co-ordinated in nine research centres. The breadth of research centres reflected the wide range of research activities across the University. The University aspired to be in the top 100 which would then give the University an international ranking.
- 3.20 Partnership activity continued to grow even during the Covid-19 crisis and there were nine new partners coming online. Of note was the partnership with Ruskin College, Oxford where the University would initially be working with Social Work students. The Vice-Chancellor confirmed that positive league table results had led to the increase in partnership activity.
- 3.21 **Some references in this section have been redacted.**
- 3.22 The School of Biomedical Sciences had opened with 76 students across two subject areas.

- 3.23 The Drama Studio London (DSL) had recruited 158 students, up 50% on 2019-20.
- 3.24 **Some references in this section have been redacted.**
- 3.25 The development of the estate in 2019-20 had resulted in the completion of Rami Ranger House and the Sports Centre. The University had invested in the re-development Gunnersbury Sports Centre which would provide priority access for UWL students. The University continued to enhance its suite of simulation centres with the opening of the simbulance in the College of Nursing, Midwifery and Healthcare.
- 3.26 The University Internal Auditors, KPMG, had issued the University with a substantial assurance rating.
- 3.27 Activity in the Westmont Hub moved online during the Covid-19 crisis, but this did not hinder the work with supporting start-up companies and the University now had a stake in 19 companies. Westmont Hub had over 1000 subscribers and over 200 members.
- 3.28 Registry Services had been restructured as a result of the new CRM system with the data team now under the management of the Director of Strategic Planning. Stage one of the Student Record System (SRS) was now complete.
- 3.29 Members were informed that the University had appointed eight learning developers to help with moving learning material online. Engagement on Blackboard was at 90% and the University had concentrated on engaging students at level three and level four where most support would be needed.
- 3.30 The Vice-Chancellor confirmed, if instructed by government, the University would end the semester early, but online material would be available to students.
- 3.31 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the presentation.

4. JISC Student Services (Presentation)

- 4.1 The Chair of the Board welcomed Ms Jayne Rowley, Executive Director of Student Services at JISC whose presentation provided an overview of the work undertaken by JISC in supporting students through the transition from study to work.
- 4.2 JISC had over one million students registered with them including overseas students who were looking for work in the UK. All Careers Advisory Service organisations were members.
- 4.3 The organisation operated in three ways: engagement, recruitment and verification.
- 4.4 JISC has a digital portfolio of publications to support engagement activities but still produced paper copies of some of its publications.
- 4.5 Data indicated that JISC's engagement audience age varied from 16 to 35+, the majority of people were living in the South East but engagement was all over the

country and occurred at A level to postgraduate levels of study. Career planning tools were available for people to match qualifications to job roles.

- 4.6 Luminate was launched in 2018 and provided information on the labour market. Data indicated that the job market was improving but some sectors like retail and hospitality had been hit the hardest by the recent crisis had not recovered. The graduate labour market had been hit the hardest, but interest in postgraduate study has increased. Indicators show that the Covid-19 crisis would profoundly change the nature of work as many employees have shown they are as productive at home as they are in the office environment.
- 4.7 JISC provided a credentials verification service which was increasingly utilised as there had been an increase in degree fraud. Many organisations confirmed that they did not check the degree credentials of graduates and it was an increasing problem. JISC aimed to provide a 'one stop shop' for organisations wanting to verify qualifications at home and overseas. JISC had been working with a number of overseas organisations to connect data on qualifications. With over 5 million people studying outside of their home countries it was critical that one organisation could provide a comprehensive search for organisations.
- 4.8 JISC were also involved in lobbying for a change in the laws to ban essay mills.
- 4.9 JISC had attempted to respond to the pandemic by providing information to students and customers but this was difficult as the picture was constantly changing. JISC provided weekly updates on the job market, offered webinars and virtual fairs offering advice and guidance.
- 4.10 Feedback received from employers indicated they were having to review how they supported new recruits and how they could induct new staff who would increasingly be online. Organisations were becoming aware of digital poverty as some recruits may not have access to the necessary equipment needed for their job role at home. Students were concerned as approximately 15% of job offers and internships had been rescinded as a result of the pandemic. As a result, more students were looking at postgraduate study. Careers Advisory Services were also reviewing how they supported students through the services they offered and JISC were supporting them through this transitional stage.
- 4.11 JISC supported and promoted the student experience and continued to encourage students to choose education as a route to a better future. All agents were looking at ways to motivate students.
- 4.12 Further opportunities for JISC included moving their services into further education networks, supporting links for international employability, supporting disadvantaged students, supporting mental wellbeing and more social media engagement.
- 4.13 JISC would continue to explore how digital delivery supported students now and in the future.
- 4.14 Members thank Ms Rowley for an informative presentation and suggested another presentation to follow up on some of the issues raised in due course.

Action: University Secretary

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

5. Students' Union strategy update (Presentation)

5.1 Members welcomed the SU Chief Executive to the meeting who would be joined by the SU President to update the Board of Governors on the support provided to students joining UWL, how they would engage students over the next few months and SU collaborative work with UWL.

5.2 The SU supported students over the summer period, engaging students on social media, keeping them up to date on University news and preparing them for returning to campus. Students were particularly receptive to video updates which provided them with views of the new campus layout.

5.3 The SU engaged new students through social media and virtual fresher's fair. Students were introduced to the SU Sabbatical Officers and encouraged to join clubs and societies.

5.4 The SU Chief Executive informed members that students were anxious about returning to campus, for their safety and for their family, some who may be vulnerable.

5.5 The SU continued with their aim to engage with all students, particularly through 'The Big Conversation' where SU staff asked students about their experience of studying at UWL and future aspirations. Initial feedback indicated 35% of students travelled for more than an hour to get to campus, 42% were still living at home and 72% welcomed face to face teaching. 65% of students had received a face to face induction and had met on a one-to-one with SU staff which they also appreciated. Overall new students felt the induction process had been a positive experience.

5.6 The SU Café was now open as was the front desk. In addition to providing services they offered much needed employment for students. The Gym was also open with students being able to book one-hour sessions.

5.7 International students who were isolating had been supported through Zoom sessions, quizzes and activities.

5.8 The move-in weekend had been staggered over a longer period of time to help with social distancing and all students received a welcome box.

5.9 Outdoor social activities were beginning to take place, but the online platforms still provided the focus of socially engaging students.

5.10 The advice service had continued to operate during lockdown and students could book appointments for a telephone or Teams meeting.

5.11 All SU staff, except those shielding, had now returned to work.

5.12 The Chair of the Board of Governors thanked the SU Chief Executive and the SU President for all their work over the summer.

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

6. Closing remarks

6.1 The Chair of the Board of Governors thanked members for joining the meeting and extended thanks to the Vice-Chancellor and the executive team for their work over the summer. UWL was in a very good position to move forward and, where possible, take opportunities where they arose.

6.2 Members agreed that there had been many positive actions carried out over the summer, particularly online learning, and these initiatives should be further developed as they led to wider and deeper engagement with students.

6.3 Members agreed that the government's appeared to be against UWL's part of the sector but that the University should continue to help students overcome disadvantages and try to level the playing field.

6.4 The Chair of the Board of Governors informed members that the role of Deputy Chair of the Board would be vacant on 1 April 2021 and if anyone wished to be considered for the role, they should contact the University Secretary.

6.5 The Vice-Chancellor closed the session by thanking members for attending and confirming that UWL would be prepared to face the next challenge – whatever that may be!

7. Date of next meeting

7.1 The next meeting of the Board of Governors will take place on Tuesday, 24 November 2020 via Teams.

Signed by Ms Jennifer Bernard
Chair of the Board of Governors

Date

Author: Ms Marion Lowe
Title: University Secretary and Chief Compliance Officer
Date: October 2020