Board of Governors

Minutes

Of the Board of Governors awayday meeting held on Monday, 8 February and Tuesday, 9 February 2021 from 3pm via Teams.

Present:	
	Ms Jennifer Bernard (Independent Governor) (Chair of the Board)
	Mr Dermot Blastland (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)
	Dr Christopher McLaverty (Independent Governor)
	Ms Kerry O'Callaghan (Independent Governor)
	Ms Helena Peacock (Independent Governor)
	Mr Kiran Virdee (Independent Governor)
	Mr Patrick Younge (Independent Governor)
In attendance:	
	Ms Kim Ansell (Co-opted member on the Workforce Advisory Committee)
	Professor Graeme Atherton (Head of AcessHE and Director of NEON) (for agenda item 2 on Monday, 8 February)
	Mr Bill Boler (West London Business (for agenda item 2 on Tuesday, 9 February)
	Ms Andreea-Daniela Coroama (International Student Experience Co-ordinator) (for agenda item 2 on Tuesday, 9 February)
	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)
	Dr Bernadine Idowu (Course Leader, BSc Biomedical Sciences) (for agenda item 4 on Tuesday, 9 February)
	Ms Marion Lowe (University Secretary and Chief Compliance Officer)

Ms Coral Mason (Assistant Clerk to the Board)
Ms Tracy McAuliffe (Director of Student Services) for agenda item 3 on Tuesday, 9 February)
Mr Tye McMahon (SU Chief Executive) (for agenda item 5 on Tuesday, 9 February)
Professor Richard Morgan (Dean of the School of Biomedical Sciences) (for agenda item 4 on Tuesday, 9 February)
Mr Neil Morris (Co-opted member on the Audit and Risk Committee)
Mr Tony Mulvahil (Course Tutor, CLBS) (for agenda item 2 on Tuesday, 9 February)
Mr Dragos Parasca (Student) (for agenda item 2 on Tuesday, 9 February)
Ms Sara Raybould (Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor)
Ms Marzia Ruggeri (Student) (for agenda item 2 on Tuesday, 9 February)
Mr James Southgate (Co-opted member on the Audit and Risk Committee)

Apologies:

Dr Kostas Tzortzis (Associate PVC and Director of Strategic Planning)
Mr Harey Vigneswaran (Alumni) (for agenda item 2 on Tuesday, 9 February)
Ms Angela Warwick (Client Experience Manager) (for agenda item 2 on Tuesday, 9 February)
Professor Anthony Woodman (Deputy Vice-Chancellor)
Professor Heather Loveday (Professoriate Representative)
Mr Paul Sahota (Independent Governor)

1 Apologies for absence, announcements, and declarations of interest

1.1 Apologies were noted above.

1.2 There were no declarations of interest.

1.3 The Chair of the Board opened the session by remembering Mr Geoff Fuller, Independent Governor, and reflected on his contribution to the Board.

1.4 The awayday agenda theme would be focused on social inclusion, what it meant to UWL and its students and how UWL could offer and extend opportunities for all students.

1.5 Staff and students had proven to be resilient through 2020-21 and working online had been effective in keeping UWL staff and students feeling connected whilst accepting that online had been challenging and remained work in progress.

1.6 Early indications suggested the current lockdown would be eased in March 2021 with students returning to campus from 8 March 2021, but the campus had remained open for staff and students who were unable to work or study at home or who did not have the equipment to work online.

1.7 The University had negotiated a financial agreement with Notting Hill Genesis which should be finalised in the next few weeks but all students who had been adversely affected by the closure of Paragon Lets had been found alternative accommodation which was of a high standard.

1.8 The University had received full assurance from its Auditors and work had continued online to ensure the University received full assurance in 2021.

2. Centre for Levelling Up (CELUP): Why it is needed and what it hopes to achieve (Presentation)

2.1 Members welcomed Professor Graeme Atherton to the meeting to share his vision for the new Centre for Levelling Up and how it formed part of his lifetimes work in addressing inequalities, particularly in education.

2.2 Professor Atherton provided details on his background, his work at London Higher and the National Education Opportunities Network (NEON) noting that NEON would work within CELUP from March 2021. NEON would be separated from London Higher and would seek charitable status.

2.3 The levelling up agenda was part of the current government's focus to ensure everyone had the same opportunities regardless of where they lived. It was also an acknowledgement that, as a result of breaking down the northern 'red wall' at the last general election, they would have to ensure they were seen to be addressing inequalities to maintain support in the north.

2.4 Data supported the perception that the north had been disadvantaged, although it was agreed that there were pockets of social and education deprivation in the south and social deprivation cut across all ethnicities. In addition, social groups felt isolated and ignored as society had placed greater value on the 'knowledge economy' over vocational qualifications and the current government had been looking at ways to address these issues.

2.5 The previous Secretary of State for Education, Justine Greening, was part of the drive for social mobility and the three steps advocated by Ms Greening:

1. To create a 'levelling up' plan,
2. Focus on jobs of the future and how to reskill to get them, and
3. Bring people together to work on the goals.

Which were all embedded in UWL's current strategic plan, Achievement 2023.

2.6 CELUP would offer a people centred approach to levelling up with the key being access to education. Whilst geography was a strong component in the current inequalities, CELUP would aim to look at a variety of factors which led to lack of opportunities including pay gaps, class and ethnic disadvantages.

2.7 CELUP would undertake a bottom-up approach by supporting people facing inequalities and those supporting these people. Professor Atherton would start to identify projects in the next month to progress and these would be covered in the

CELUP launch report in May 2021. A foundation report would be published in the autumn.

2.8 Members commented that the image of universities in the media remained very traditional and successful institutions like UWL were often overlooked. Professor Atherton agreed more dialogue with the media was needed to highlight the work undertaken at UWL and how CELUP would enhance and progress the work.

2.9 Members also noted that racial and class inequalities existed side by side and at the moment the political narrative had not commented on racial inequalities.

2.10 Regional elections this year would be an indicator of whether the governments levelling up agenda had currency.

2.11 Society would also need to address the value it placed on jobs and key workers as it appeared more value was placed on high quality degrees over those who carry out work that benefited society.

2.12 The Board of Governors thanked Professor Atherton for the presentation.

A breakout session for members to convene in small groups to discuss topics raised took place for 20 minutes.

3. Fostering Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) (Presentation)

3.1 The presentation by the University Secretary and the Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor provided an opportunity for members of the Board to see the work undertaken at UWL around EDI and how initiatives were progressed.

3.2 The Equality and Diversity Advisory Group (EDAG) met on a regular basis to discuss EDI concerns, noting EDI was embedded into all University policies and processes with the aim of making all people feel a part of a community.

3.3 Although EDAG ensured compliance, the Group was also a discussion forum, and everyone was encouraged to contribute. As part of the discussions, a staff initiative to set up an LGBTQIA+ forum was being progressed. Schools and Departments were encouraged to set up and promote EDI which had included faith and Black Lives Matter related initiatives.

3.4 The University was in the process of preparing for Athena Swan status but whilst the work was in progress all areas of EDI would be considered to ensure equality across all areas.

3.5 EDAG also looked at data on staff and students and any emerging issues which allowed action to intervene early in areas of concern and data analysis provided recruitment data to ensure staff reflected the student population. Learning analytics allowed the University to monitor individuals and initiatives leading to a tailoring of learning activities. The Associate PVC and Director of Strategic Planning reviewed the data on a regular basis to ensure no groups were being disadvantaged.

3.6   Policies were reviewed on a regular basis to ensure EDI was embedded into all processes.

3.7   Staff received training on EDI and unconscious bias formed part of the training.

3.8   The curriculum had been reviewed and the breadth of case studies had increased to ensure students related to them. Students were also encouraged to use real life experiences in their assessments and, in liaison with Library Services, reading lists had been updated and were more inclusive. Discussions with publishers had also been held to encourage more diversity.

3.9   Disabled students were provided with individual support plans which supported their learning needs and online provision had been adapted to ensure inclusivity.

3.10   The Senior Pro Vice-Chancellor informed members that the work undertaken by EDAG was in tandem with the Access and Participation Plan (APP) which identified attainment gaps within student groups and articulated the measures in place to address the gaps. Interventions were measured using KPIs. Covid-19 had impacted on attainment gaps, but these were being closely monitored and alternative ways to support students were being adopted, particularly related to mental health support.

3.11   New areas of concern had arisen, particularly around IT poverty and access to study areas. Peer mentoring had become increasingly important for students who were feeling isolated. Online workshops had been set up around employment issues highlighting skills students may need.

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

4.   Update on Achievement 2023 (Presentation)

4.1   The Vice-Chancellor opened his presentation reflecting on Achievement 2023 by informing members that the sector was going through a lengthy period of uncertainty in which the government was sending confusing and conflicting messages.

4.2   Due to Covid-19, the risks facing the University and the sector had changed and included fee reimbursements and changes in how the Student Loan Company operated, greater financial uncertainty, how to ensure parity of experience with online and face to face teaching, increasing and conflicting bureaucracy, Brexit, international student recruitment, pensions, mental health and public perception of the sector.

4.3   Despite the problems over the last 12 months, ensuring continuity would be the main focus and the 'new normal' would probably not be very different. Students still preferred face to face teaching and, although they appreciated online services, they had indicated a preference for face-to-face teaching with online backup. Members agreed that University life was about community rather than connectivity.

4.4   Data gathered indicated an increase in mental health issues and this would continue to be a cause for concern, but Student Services were working online to support students as much as possible.

4.5 The University strategic aims remained the same. Some of the aims had been achieved already and the goal was to maintain UWL's position in the sector.

4.6 The University mission also remained the same and were more relevant than ever before:

- To inspire students to become innovative professionals,
- Career focused, professionally engaged University of quality, and
- Accessible, affordable, accountable, inclusive, transparent.

4.7 The strategic focus would be on the core business of teaching and learning to provide an holistic experience for students. The learning experience would be tailored to individual student needs wherever possible.

4.8 The Vice-Chancellor confirmed the NSS would be more challenging this year due to online teaching and the changes to the NSS itself.

4.9 The University would aim to close the BAME attainment gap, noting that class and race disadvantages were linked. The University would continue to support students into employment.

4.10 The University would continue to use and highlight its 'anchor status' to foster good relations with the local community. Covid-19 had led to an improved relationship with Ealing Council.

4.11 As a result of strong finances, the University had recruited staff rather than making redundancies. This had led to a stronger REF submission and a wider teaching curriculum.

4.12 Members reviewed the Vice-Chancellor's priorities which were shared responsibilities across the University noting many had already been achieved. Of particular note was the strong financial out-turn and Enterprise income which had been maintained into 2020-21 despite the Covid-19 crisis.

4.13 September 2020 recruitment had exceeded expectations and the University had recruited a further 1174 students in February 2021 with another NHS recruitment cycle in April 2021.

4.14 Recruitment for September 2021 was also looking healthy with applications up by 15%.

4.15 The Vice-Chancellor reflected on the previous year which included outstanding league table and NSS results. Despite mixed messages from the government UWL had held its staff and student community together online after the first lockdown in March 2020.

4.16 Looking forward the Vice-Chancellor wanted to build on UWL's current strengths. Confirmation that online provision had worked well had been confirmed in the External Examiners reports which stated academic standards had been maintained during 2019-20.

4.17   In addition to the completion of the Biomedical Laboratories and the opening of CELUP, the Gunnersbury Sports Centre had opened, the Metropolitan Police Training Centre had opened with 32 recruits, the Drama Studio London had a new Director the decarbonisation project was in progress, there had been an increase in local and regional partnerships, and projected income for 2020-21 was £125m with an 8% surplus. **Some references in this section have been redacted.**

4.18   The REF would be submitted in March 2021 with over 83 entries reviewed at 3* and 4* with case studies completed. UWL had a diverse range of research projects within its research institutes. CELUP would increase the diversification of research at UWL.

4.19   Members reviewed the KPIs for 2020-21 noting many targets were close to being achieved in what was a difficult year.

4.20   The Board of Governors **NOTED** the presentation and the Board meeting closed.

Tuesday, 9 February 2021

1.   Introduction

1.1   The Chair of the Board welcomed members back to the second session of the Board awayday and informed members that the agenda for the day would build on yesterday's presentations and would highlight how the work undertaken was transforming students' lives.

2.   Creating Opportunity: Fresh Minds for Business (Presentation)

2.1   Members welcomed Dr Suresh Gamlath and his panel of staff, students, alumni and employer representatives to the meeting who provided members with information on a not-for-profit initiative in the Clause Littner Business School called 'Fresh Minds for Business' which provided students with an opportunity to provide consultancy services to local and national businesses.

2.2   Fresh Minds for Business was a student-led business consultancy, directed by Tutors, which brought students closer to businesses via the curriculum and in return businesses could assess new, fresh solutions to business problems.

2.3   The project had a client-based website that offered a variety of services by students and supported by staff in the Business School:

- Consultancy programme that provided three-month projects tailored to the needs of the client,
- To provide fresh minds and ideas to existing issues facing a business. Students would provide a research-based solution to ideas,
- The small business programme involved employing students to provide students with work experience and in return offered clients the opportunity to employ young adults who could provide a different perspective on business, and
- Providing new ideas and support for non-business organisations.

2.4 The programme offered students the opportunity to gain credible consultancy and business experience and added to the opportunities provided by the Placements team in Student Services.

2.5 The programme mainly offered help for small businesses but if a large organisation presented an idea then consultancy fees for the service were payable.

2.6 Students were supported by business consultants allocated by the Business School who help them to develop their ideas before presenting to businesses.

2.7 The presentation was supported by students and alumni who had taken part in a consultancy initiative and confirmed the experience had enriched their research and business skills. Students agreed that the projects worked because of the experience and support they received from UWL Tutors who could provide them with their own real-life experiences. Students and alumni agreed they felt they were consultants when working with businesses who took their input seriously. Students confirmed they owned the projects they worked on and they learned how to work within a consultancy framework. Business representatives confirmed the initiative had led to a closer understanding of the University and the students had provided outstanding support to local businesses.

2.8 There were currently 35 students on the Fresh Minds module and there were currently 13 live projects. The Dean of the Business School informed members that there was a waiting list for projects to start. The School did not publicise the project and approaches from businesses were word of mouth.

2.9 Members thanked the Dean and the panel for the informative information, and all agreed that Fresh Minds was a perfect example of business and universities working together for the benefit of all.

2.10 The module was assessed in two parts. Students made a presentation to the Course Tutors followed by a question and answer session, this was an internal piece of work. Once students had completed their project, they would make a presentation with a project outcome and a 5000-word group recommendation report for the client. As part of this paper, students would be required to write an individual report on the project which would include self-reflection.

2.11 The demand for the services by businesses continued to grow and the Dean of the Business School confirmed the project required an increase in project supervisors if the opportunity was to expand.

2.12 The Board of Governors **NOTED** the presentation and thanked the Dean of the Business School and the panel for their input.

3. Employability and Employagility (Presentation)

3.1 The Director of Student Services informed members that lockdown had shown that UWL remained agile and supported students during a time of uncertainty. With the collapse of the placement and graduate job market in some areas, the team in Student Services had been sourcing alternative routes into employment for students.

The service aimed to offer a bespoke service for all students and worked in collaboration with Schools where employability was embedded into the curriculum.

3.2 In addition to offering practical skills, the service aimed to provide social capital, to embed skills that provide confidence building to allow students to understand and value their worth.

3.3 Students were invited to tailored employment fairs which were bespoke for each School and although these are now online, they continued to attract employers and students in large numbers.

3.4 The University had a very successful internship scheme providing graduates with the opportunity to gain valuable work experience.

3.5 Companies could place job advertisements on a University job platform. Students were encouraged to upload video presentations of themselves with Q+A sessions which employers could access.

3.6 The service also provides regular webinar sessions for graduates, students and employers to link into. These had proved to be very popular with over 1400 students logging in.

3.7 Employers were also encouraged to engage with academic staff to inform them of the needs of industry and collaborative work has been undertaken to ensure the curriculum remains current.

3.8 As a result of Covid-19, the placements market had been decimated in many areas and as a result the curriculum in Schools had been adjusted to ensure all employment could be viewed as a placement with the appropriate support for students and employers in place. Placements had also been delayed to the end of the course in the hope that opportunities would be available once lockdown eased.

3.9 The University had been part of a project in 2019 which had set up virtual career fairs and this year over 100 employers had signed up for the fairs.

3.10 In addition to supporting students and recent graduates, support continued for UWL alumni where they could access services on Saturdays.

3.11 Looking forward, the University aimed to provide short placements focusing on the creative industries. Sheltered placements were being considered where a student could gain work experience in a small organisation while being paid by the University.

3.12 The University was also working on a 'reverse mentoring' scheme where disabled students were invited to a work environment and then provide a report to the employer on how they could adjust the environment which would break down barriers for disabled workers.

3.13 The Board of Governors requested an update on employability at a Board meeting in the future.

Action: Director of Student Services

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

        A breakout session for members to convene in small groups to discuss topics raised took place for 30 minutes.

4.   School of Biomedical Sciences: A new school creating new horizons (Presentation)

4.1   Members welcomed Professor Richard Morgan, Dean of the School of Biomedical Sciences and Dr Bernadine Idowu, Course Leader, BSc Biomedical Sciences, to the meeting to provide an overview of the new School of Biomedical Sciences.

4.2   The Dean of the School provided background information on his research fields and how they could develop collaborative opportunities with other Schools.

4.3   Staff and facilities were all new and staff were already working collaboratively on the curriculum and research activities.

4.4   The School would be led by its research which would feed into teaching. Research groups had already been established and a suite of research courses, relevant to industry, were being developed alongside offering research doctorates. The School had nine PhD students registered. It was hoped numbers would grow particularly with the introduction of an MRes.

4.5   Staff had secured over £1m in research funding with more research bids being developed.

4.6   The Course Leader for BSc in Biomedical Sciences and Lead Personal Tutor would guide students through their studies. The vision aimed to open up career pathways to all students and to widen the diversity of the student cohort.

4.7   Module evaluation in the first semester indicated that over 84% of students were satisfied with the courses.

4.8   The School looked to meeting a number of milestones over the next few years which would include the opening of the new laboratories in February 2021, gaining BMS accreditation by September 2021, offering high quality placements in October 2022 and congratulating the first graduates in July 2023.

4.9   The Deputy Vice-Chancellor wished to extend his thanks to Professor Dimitrios Rigas who was instrumental in the early development of the plans to establish a new school.

4.10   Governors requested an update on the presentation in 9-12 months.
                                                                    Action: University Secretary

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

5.   Types of students and Covid challenges and opportunities (Presentation)

5.1   Members welcomed the SU Chief Executive who joined the meeting and who would present alongside the SU President providing an oversight of the SU's work on

social inclusion over the last two years and the challenges faced over the next 12 months.

5.2   The SU had worked hard on ensuring all student voices were represented not just the most active students or largest groups. This meant developing a strategy which gathered feedback from student groupings who were not usually engaged or were time poor and lacked the opportunity to engage with the SU.

5.3   Feedback from students indicated that wanted the SU workforce to reflect the student demographic, that media stories did not provide the full student engagement picture. Students felt they had to seek out the SU using traditional methods of communication and wanted other, flexible ways to communicate, they wanted an SU presence at Brentford and Reading and clubs and societies were not always inclusive.

5.4   As a result of the feedback the SU established a BAME network with the support of external experts to develop an inclusive workplace, campaigns are now more representative of the student community and the SU now had offices at Brentford and Reading. The SU had extended its communication lines which included phone calls, newsletters and social media and clubs and societies were actively supporting new members which had led to a diversification of membership.

5.5   A review of the work indicated a growth in BAME participation and an 11.3% increase in activities from the 22-55 age group.

5.6   Looking ahead the SU were encouraging course representatives to ensure they were seeking views from all students.

5.7   The SU were supporting students going into the workforce, helping them to stay connected to their studies whilst covering other responsibilities, offering support to those students whose job prospects have diminished due to Covid-19 and to maintain an online SU community until students can return to campus activities.

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

6.   Any Other Business

6.1   The Chair of the Board thanked members for attending over the two days and closed the meeting.

7.   Date of next meeting

7.1   The next virtual meeting of the Board of Governors will be held on Tuesday, 16 March 2021. Details to be confirmed.

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

Author: Ms Marion Lowe

Title: University Secretary and Chief Compliance Officer
Date: February 2021