

Board of Governors Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 February 2017

Present:

Andrew Scarborough (Chair)
David Baker
Liam Bligh
Sue Dutton
Sylvia Hughes
Frank Jordan

Lee Machado
Nick Petford
Martin Pettifor
John Skelton
Danjie Zhong

Apologies:

Sara Goodwin, Jeff Halliwell, Richard Horsley, Mark Mulcahey, Nick Pitts-Tucker, Nick Robertson

In attendance:

Mark Hall (Director of Finance), Kathryn Kendon (Deputy Director of Student and Academic Services) for items 35 and 36, Miriam Lakin (Clerk), Deborah Mattock (Director of HR, Marketing and International Relations), Terry Neville (Chief Operating Officer), Helen Scott (Dean of Education and Humanities) for item 34, Ann Shelton Mayes (Executive Dean of Student Experience), Anna Swales (Head of Student Services) for item 35.

30/17 Welcome, Apologies and Quorum

30.1 The Chair welcomed those present and confirmed that the Board was not quorate as independent members did not form the majority of the quorum. Decisions would therefore be ratified after the meeting.

31/17 Declarations of Interest

31.1 No declarations of interest were received in addition to those held on file by the Clerk's Office.

32/17 Minutes of Previous Meetings

32.1 Subject to its inaccuracy, the Board approved the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2017 as a true record.

33/17 Matters Arising

33.1 The Board received Paper A on actions arising from previous meetings.

34/17 Faculty of Education and Humanities

34.1 The Board received a presentation from the Dean of Education and

Humanities covering the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats for the Faculty. Additional supporting information was tabled (*Clerk's Note: Filed as Paper O*).

- 34.2 Members asked about staff development in the area of research, and in particular the development of the professoriate. It was reported that the Associate Professor and Professor scheme worked effectively, and that a good number of applications had been received in the current year. In addition training was offered to those who could become PhD supervisors.
- 34.3 Members noted the achievement of housing the 'Searchlight' archive and asked about the potential to develop this and other archives. It was reported that building a reputation around work on the 'Searchlight' archive may bring further opportunities.
- 34.4 The achievement of the Faculty in developing Subject Leaders and ensuring that they were engaged in their own development as leaders and managers was noted.
- 34.5 Members noted the challenges for graduate recruitment in humanities subjects and asked if anything further could be done to help humanities graduates into graduate-level employment. It was reported that a successful placement scheme in History could be used by other courses. It was also noted that the official categorisations of graduate employment were not always helpful when reporting, and that humanities graduates were employable in a wide variety of fields.

35/17 Student Welfare and Support Services

- 35.1 The Board received Paper B, a report on the delivery of student welfare and support services at the University.
- 35.2 The Board noted the range of welfare and support services which were not academically related, and took assurance from the report that the welfare and wellbeing of students were secured.
- 35.3 In particular changes in the landscape were noted. These included changes in funding such as the Disabled Students' Allowance, and an increase in the numbers of students presenting with mental health issues, possibly driven in part by an increasing social awareness of such issues.
- 35.4 It was reported that a full review was being carried to assess how to maintain effective services whilst responding to increasing demand. It was noted that these considerations were common in the sector at

present.

- 35.5 It was reported that the ability to record information and therefore to track students seeking help, and track the effectiveness of the service was a key area for the development of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system. Members stated that it would be helpful to have both tracking of case management and interventions.
- 35.6 It was confirmed that a multi-faith chaplaincy would be provided at the Waterside site and would be on the ground floor of one of the student residences. This would provide two prayer rooms, enhanced washing facilities, and a kitchen.
- 35.7 Members asked about support with accommodation for those students who were renting in the private sector. It was reported that the Students' Union was involved in this area, ran its own letting agent, maintained lists of trusted landlords, and was able to give advice and support. It was suggested that future reports could cover this area of work.
- 35.8 It was noted that the Personal Academic Tutor system could be strengthened, and confirmed that it was being reviewed with a view to making it more effective.
- 35.9 Members asked what changes would be necessary as a result of the move to Waterside. It was reported that as well as a building, the Learning Commons would be an ethos and approach, and therefore the provision of staff who could support students in a more holistic way was being considered. There was also consideration of ensuring a good service between Waterside and Bassett Lowke where some student services would be located.
- 35.10 It was confirmed that there was also discussion of the provision of support to students studying the University's qualifications via partner institutions, and what level of support should be provided to them. The development of more online resources would assist with this, as well as being attractive to current and prospective students.
- 35.11 Members asked about the provision of support out of hours. It was reported that Residential Life teams are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week and are trained to recognise and respond to a variety of situations, and to refer to appropriate services such as the NHS.
- 35.12 It was confirmed that student welfare and support services were clear

in the University's prospectus, and that colleagues from those teams were involved in Applicant Days and Discovery Days.

- 35.13 Members stated that it would be helpful to be able to benchmark the use and success of student welfare and support services against similar institutions. It was reported that whilst there was no formal benchmarking data, there was some informal sharing of data amongst networks of professionals involved in the provision of student support services. It was also noted that it would be difficult to produce a reliable benchmark since there was no requirement to record this data, and it would not be attractive to institutions to release it. However, the increase in public interest and press stories around student welfare and wellbeing meant that the ability to demonstrate effectiveness of the services and to support this with data would be valuable.
- 35.14 The Board noted the hard work that staff across the University put into student welfare and support, and the good results achieved. The Board gave its full support to these efforts, and thanked the Deputy Director of Student Services for the report.

36/17 Annual Provider Review and Responsibility of the Governing Body

- 36.1 The Board received Paper C which set out the process for providing assurance to the Board about enhancing the student experience and securing academic standards.
- 36.2 Subject to its inquoracy, the Board approved the process as set out in the paper.
- 36.3 The Board discussed how it could improve its understanding of the academic organisation and delivery of the University. It was noted that as responses to the Annual Provider Review were in discussion in the sector as a whole, other universities were beginning to develop approaches and systems. These included more frequent engagement between Boards and the Senate, for example through regular away days, formal committee structures, and informal events. It was noted that a list of events had recently been circulated to governors and that they could use academic events as a means of improving their understanding.
- 36.4 It was noted that in order to create a better understanding of the student experience and academic standards, the Board had agreed to form a small working group.
- 36.5 HEFCE's 'Annual Provider Review preliminary assessment' dated 20

February 2017 was tabled and noted by the Board. (*Clerk's Note: Filed as Paper P*). It was noted that the letter raised no concerns about quality and standards and there were therefore no barriers to the University being considered as part of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF).

37/17 Minutes of Senate

- 37.1 The Board received and noted Paper D, the minutes of the Senate meeting held on 16 November 2016.
- 37.2 The Board discussed how decisions that would affect the educational character and mission of the University were reported to and discussed by the Board. It was noted that where programme deletions and suspensions were approved by Senate and reported in the Senate minutes, these were within the current academic model. Consideration of opening a new academic field, or closing an existing field would be discussed more robustly and this would be clear in the Senate minutes. It was further noted that opportunities for the Board to increase its understanding of the academic operation of the University as discussed in the previous point would ensure that the Board was fully aware of academic changes and developments.

38/17 Draft Budget Strategy and Student Applications

- 38.1 The Board received and noted Paper E, the draft budget strategy for 2017-18, and Paper J which set out student applications and decisions to 13 February 2017.
- 38.2 It was reported that the Secretary of State had not yet written to HEFCE about the focus of its funding for the coming year, and therefore the draft budget was not being prepared on the usual timetable, and would be likely to be ready for consideration by the Board in July.
- 38.3 Members asked about the projections for research in the budget. It was reported that these were based on the University's current research plan and targets, and that there would be a contingency provision for non-delivery. It was noted that a request for contribution figures had been received, and that the Finance Team were therefore working on a proxy for staff time.
- 38.4 The Board discussed investment in activity during clearing. It was reported that several teams across the University worked together to produce an efficient operation, and that this was reviewed to ensure that any mistakes were addressed for the next year.
- 38.5 It was noted that clearing effectively began much earlier in the year

than previously. A full review of applicants holding conditional offers had been undertaken, and some offers had been made unconditional as a result.

- 38.6 The Board noted that the effects on the future of the University of too much compromise on entry qualifications were well understood by both the Board and the Executive. It was reported that for this reason, applications had been reviewed on a case by case basis, and informed by awareness of student retention and outcomes. The Board fully supported this approach.

Minutes 38.7 and 38.8 are contained in the confidential section of these minutes.

- 38.9 Members asked about the loss of market share indicated in Paper J. It was reported that some fluctuation of market share was expected and was standard, and that at present the number was not a cause for serious concern.
- 38.10 Members asked how the apprenticeship levy, which was expected to be around £300k for the University, could be turned into an opportunity. It was reported that an investment in support for the development of apprenticeships had been agreed, and a team leader supported by administrative staff had been appointed. An application for the University to become an apprenticeship provider had been submitted the previous week and the results were awaited. Work had begun on how to convert some of the University's existing activity into apprenticeships.
- 38.11 Members asked about the projected income from fundraising for Waterside. It was reported that £1.3m of Heritage Lottery Funding had been won, and that further amount which had originally been projected had been removed from the figures.

39/17 Appointment of External Auditors

- 39.1 The Board received Paper F and noted the reasons for the recommendations it made. Subject to its inquoracy, the Board agreed that the external audit for 2016-17 should be put out to tender. Subject to its inquoracy, the Board authorised the Director of Finance to negotiate a final settlement with PWC for 2015-16.
- 39.2 HEFCE's 'Annual Provider Review preliminary assessment' (Paper P) was noted in this context, as paragraphs 9 and 10 contained reference to the external audit. The Director of Finance reported that he would prepare a response to HEFCE as requested.

Action: Director of Finance

40/17 Management Accounts

- 40.1 The Board received and noted Paper G, the management accounts at 31 January 2017.
- 40.2 It was noted that the quality of the commentary had wavered in parts of the report and the Director of Finance stated that he was aware of and would address this.

41/17 Students' Union Accounts to January 2017

- 41.1 The Board received and noted Paper H, the University of Northampton Students' Union accounts to January 2017.

42/17 Procurement Proposal – Refurbishment in Simon Senlis Halls

- 42.1 The Board received Paper I, a proposal for refurbishment in Simon Senlis Halls.
- 42.2 Members asked whether, due to the scale of the contract, it was appropriate to have a single bidder. The Director of Finance confirmed that a competitive tender had already been undertaken. Using a provider which had previously tendered ensured that a competitive rate was received from a contractor with which a good working relationship had been developed. It was confirmed that this was within the University's procurement guidelines.
- 42.3 Subject to its inquiracy, the Board approved the proposal as set out in the paper.

43/17 Report from the Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer

- 43.1 The Board received and noted a report from the Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer.
- 43.2 It was reported that the reference to a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) in the report related to a relatively niche market. However, it was noted that MOOCs and blended learning could be an interesting topic for a future Board agenda.
- 43.3 The Board noted that it was pleased that the Waterside campus had been rated exceptional by the Considerate Constructors Scheme.

Minute 43.4 is contained in the confidential section of these minutes.

44/17 Report from Project Assurance Committee

- 44.1 The Board received and noted Paper L, the minutes of the Project Assurance Committee meeting held on 14 February 2017.

Minutes 44.2 – 44.5 are contained in the confidential section of these minutes

45/17 Terms of Reference for Remuneration Committee

45.1 The Board received and, subject to its inquiry, approved Paper M, an update to the terms of reference of the Remuneration Committee.

46/17 Ratification of Signatures under Seal

46.1 Subject to its inquiry, the Board ratified the signature of documents under seal as set out in Paper N.

46.2 It was confirmed that the deed of assignment of intellectual property signed on 14/12/16 related to Competency Test Centre run by the School of Health and Social Care.

47/17 Any Other Business

47.1 Vice Chancellors' Pay and Perks

It was reported that the annual UCU report on Vice Chancellors' pay and perks was due to be released later in the week.

47.2 Students' Union Elections

Students' Union elections had been opened, and the results would be reported to the next Board meeting.

47.3 Waterside Street

The Waterside Street display for prospective students had opened in the library foyer and had received much interest at a recent open day. It was hoped to organise a visit for governors before the next Board meeting.

47.4 Assistant Clerk to the Board

As he was leaving the University on 24 February to take up a new position, the Board thanked David Prynne for his services over the past three years and wished him well for the future.

48/17 Confirmation of Availability of Papers

The following papers were confirmed as confidential to the meeting:

Confidential section of the minutes of the meeting held on 25 January 2017

Paper E – Draft Budget Strategy 2017/18

Paper F – Appointment of External Auditors

Paper H – Students' Union Accounts to January 2017

Paper J – Student Applications


Paper L – Project Assurance Committee Minutes 14 February 2017

49/17 Date of Next Meeting

Wednesday 22 March at 10.30am in the Senate Board Room, Senate Building. Followed by lunch at the Sunley Conference Centre.

Clerk's Note: Decisions taken at the meeting were ratified on 24 February 2017.


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Approved by Chair


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Date