



BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the meeting held on 27 April 2016
at 10.15am at Newton Park

<u>Present</u>	Ms J Henderson [Chair] Mr W Archer Ms N Campbell Dr K Doern Ms T Fisk Ms L Fleming Mr M Francis Mr B Galliver	Ms R Heald Lady T Lloyd Professor P Martin Revd E Mason Mr T Osborne Mr D Pester Professor C Slade [Vice-Chancellor]
<u>In attendance</u>	Mr C Ellicott [Clerk] Mr T Foot [Deputy Clerk] Mr N Latham	Professor N Sammells Mr K Wright
<u>Apologies</u>	Professor R Alexander	

15/28 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were none

15/29 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 10 FEBRUARY 2016

The minutes were agreed as correct.

15/30 MATTERS ARISING

15/15: This matter was ongoing and the Board noted the update provided within the papers.

15/19: The Clerk reported that the virtual boardroom product had not been approved and an alternative product was to be demonstrated shortly.

Minutes of the Academic Board had been circulated. It was clarified that the new student member of the Board would be drawn from the postgraduate community.

15/20: The College of Liberal Arts (COLA) organisation chart had been included within the papers for the meeting.

15/22: A paper about the 2015 Student Conference had been presented to Academic Board.

15/23: The Clerk confirmed that arrangements would be made for the Board to receive awareness training in compliance with the Prevent duty. The University had made an initial submission to HEFCE on 1 April and had received some enquiries, to which responses were due by 29 April. The production of the required External Speaker policy would be expedited. The Board noted that HEFCE's response was received somewhat earlier than expected but was reassured that measures were in place to progress. Training for both staff and governors would be rolled out in conjunction with the University's HR department.

15/31 CHAIR'S BUSINESS

The Chair said that Ms Fisk had attended part of the CUC Spring Plenary session for Chairs on behalf of the University, and invited her to share her reflections. The Board heard that the session comprised a panel piece on self-assessment by boards of governors; the possible impact both of the EU Referendum and of the Green Paper; and recent developments in competition and consumer protection legislation and the need to prevent universities from excessive "consumerisation". The panel comprised representatives from Chichester, Bristol, Plymouth and Solent and members spoke of their experience of going through external assessment.

One emerging theme was the struggle with governors' oversight of academic matters. Governors generally were reluctant to interfere but were also conscious of the need to observe duties of oversight and accountability. Ideas discussed included increasing student representation on boards; establishing a forum for governors to meet students and staff; and enabling governors to gain a better understanding of their institution's stakeholders.

There was a general discussion on the role of a governor. The consensus was that it should not become a paid role but there was an awareness that individual governors needed to make their contribution count.

Concerning the EU Referendum, there was widespread comment that universities would suffer as a result of any decision to leave the EU. The Board noted Electoral Commission rules concerning engaging in political activity which had been the subject of recent sector guidance, but universities could nevertheless engage in educational debate and encourage students to use their vote.

15/32 CLERK'S BUSINESS

i. Independent and Co-Opted Members [Paper G883a]

The Nominations Committee was meeting in May and would look at the make-up of the Board and the current skillset. The Committee would consider a skills mapping exercise and would also look at diversity.

ii. Co-Opted Member: President of the Students' Union [Paper G883b]

The Clerk drew attention to the election of Katya 'Kitty' Hilton as the SU President and explained that her term would commence on 1 July. Consequently, the next Board meeting would be Mr Galliver's last in post.

iii. HEFCE Annual Assessment of Institutional Risk [Paper G883c]

The Clerk noted that the 'not at higher risk' assessment was the best that could be achieved. The Board noted paragraphs 6 (a) and (b) of the paper in particular as potential insights into HEFCE's current strategic thinking, and further noted the risks to the sector highlighted in paragraph 3.

15/33 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT [Paper G884]

A list of common abbreviations was circulated to members. The Vice-Chancellor explained the concept of a "widening participation (WP) student" and the various socio-economic factors that contributed to the definition. At the University, approximately 70% of students had at least one WP "marker".

The Institute for Fiscal Studies had issued a paper, one of the conclusions of which was that the earnings of some English domiciled graduates (particularly those who were studying creative arts, those who were male, and those who had a WP "marker") were lower than those that had not studied at a university. One consequence of this paper was that universities within the Million+ group were being targeted by the press. The Vice-Chancellor expressed her view that statistics on earnings should not be seen as the sole or conclusive measure of the value of a university education; the education and experience provided by the University was of considerably broader value. The Vice-Chancellor nevertheless noted concern in the findings of the study and the University would strive to ensure that students increased their earning potential. The Board noted that careers within the arts were in general underpaid and careers in design particularly so, when compared with other sectors. The Destination of Leavers from Higher Education (DHLE) survey results for the University indicated that an increasing number of students were achieving professional or managerial roles. Therefore, whilst students may not go into highly paid work, they may actually be getting the jobs that they desired. The Board also noted that students at the University were unlikely to go into the well-known higher paid sectors such as law and finance due to the subjects offered.

The timing of the DHLE survey also failed to give recognition to the fact that entrepreneurial students would often take more than 6 months to generate significant earnings and of course would not be employees. The Board requested further information from Bath Business School on the topic of entrepreneurship and noted that creative students required some business skills if they were to realise the earning potential of their craft. The Board asked whether business training should run alongside creative subjects and heard that this was one of the key objectives of cross-disciplinary study proposed as part of the new undergraduate framework.

The Board asked whether any members of the creative industries had made enquiries of the University to call for new talent. The Board felt that nevertheless it should encourage the University to create new talent. Further, the Board felt that the University should continue to develop its own narrative to communicate the success of its students and not seek to simply rely upon the DHLE. The Board agreed that the statistic showing students' employment position 6 months after graduating was of little value.

The Vice-Chancellor's recent article on global citizenship and Study Abroad highlighted the impact that such programmes can have on WP students in particular. The internationalisation strategy targeted WP students.

The Report contained a background piece describing the colleges of the University and was intended as a precursor to more direct introductions in the future.

The Board heard that the sector was currently in the middle of a "quality war". HEFCE may have been somewhat premature in issuing a statement on the expansion in the role of governors, given that the Government's White Paper had not yet been published. The mooted Office for Students could take over HEFCE's responsibilities entirely and would be likely to be focused on consumer protection rather than on relationship with providers. The Board noted the recent leaks of discussion points relating to the White Paper included a heavy focus on WP, criticism of the Russell Group, the need to secure value for money from providers and the need for alternative providers to enter the market and take on increasing numbers of WP students.

The nature of the relationship between the University and students was discussed and it was felt that the role was considered by all parties to be more akin to a partnership than a consumer-supplier relationship. Students generally wished to take more of a lead in the direction of their own education and were becoming more engaged than ever before. Further, if students achieved more interesting but lower paid work post-graduation, that was not necessarily a bad thing.

15/34 MEMBERSHIP OF ACADEMIC BOARD [Paper G885]

The Board heard that the constituency of the Academic Board had been tweaked as a consequence of the COLA reorganisation. The proposal was formulated and agreed by the Academic Board. The Board approved the recommendations.

15/35 BUDGET ASSUMPTIONS AND PROPOSALS [Paper G886]

The Board heard that the University was in a financially sound position and was projecting a surplus of around 7.4% of turnover. The budget for next year was being formulated at the present time and initial indications were that the targeted surplus of 5% would be achieved.

The Clerk informed the budget discussion by providing an update on recruitment. The admissions team were in a key period for UCAS recruitment. The statistics showed a 12% increase in firm acceptances compared with last year based upon a similar number of applicants. There had been a concerted effort to make offers earlier and this appeared to have had an impact and the "swing" towards respondents who indicated a firm acceptance was around 2%. The promise of better accommodation and a bed for all new students was also likely to have been a factor.

It was reported that recruitment of trainee teachers continued to be difficult as a consequence of government policy designed to shift training from universities to schools, but nevertheless indications were that numbers would be between 90% and 95% of last year. The short notice sometimes provided by government that recruitment to particular courses would be closed meant that interviews sometimes needed to be arranged at a day's notice. Postgraduate recruitment looked to be increasing but it was too early to comment upon international recruitment.

The Board heard that, notwithstanding the contents of the paper, the HEFCE research and teaching grant had increased and not decreased. The Board considered whether a surplus of 5% remained appropriate as a target and whether 8%, which was more normal in the sector, was more appropriate. It was accepted that the target could exceed the budget to encourage in-year savings.

Returning to the paper, the Board requested that future papers show variances of the type highlighted in paragraph 4.1 in the context of the entire budget. The Board wondered whether income generating events such as weddings would become even more popular if the furniture and décor were improved.

The potential impact of private providers was also considered and it was felt that over the longer term new entrants to the sector could indeed have an impact on the sensitivity analysis. It was agreed that the institutional risk register should include reference to competition from private providers.

15/36 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND STRATEGY 2020 DASHBOARD [Paper G887]

The Paper contained a reminder of the current KPIs and a proposal to amend the international KPI from 25% to 20% and by reference to the entire University population rather than proportion of incoming students in each year. The Vice-Chancellor reported that this change would bring the University into accord with the HE sector. A further change was proposed to the definition of international student so that the key factor was nationality and not fee status. Therefore, all non-UK EU students would in future be classified as international students. The Board noted that EU undergraduate students were liable for tuition fees at a rate of £9,000, whereas non-EU international undergraduate students were liable for fees in the region of £11,000 but this was usually subject to agents' commission.

There was a further proposal that the international figures also include the numbers of students studying at TNE partner institutions. The figures within the paper were prepared on the basis that these proposals were all agreed.

The Board agreed to the proposals made.

The Board discussed the dashboard, which had been developed according to balanced scorecard principles. Lead indicators were being developed and would be introduced as an early warning mechanism. The top row on the dashboard would be populated with absolute numbers. Although acknowledging that it was not a KPI, the Board requested the inclusion of reference to the staff satisfaction survey. The Board heard that this could be discovered by clicking through the "Strategic Foundations" link but it was agreed that this would be made more explicit.

The Board discussed whether a completion rate target of 90% was ambitious enough. At present, international (non-EU) students were not included in the statistics but EU students were. The University needed to reassess what was included in the statistics and what it was that it was seeking to measure. As internationalisation remained an important strategy, it was considered that it was important to include statistics for non-EU students, perhaps on a separate line.

Considering the recommendations within the report, the Board noted the items listed in paragraphs 6.1, 6.2 and 6.3. The Board agreed with the recommendation in paragraph 6.4 and requested that statistics for international (non-EU) completion rates be included.

15/37 INTERNATIONAL ADMISSIONS GROUP [Paper G888]

The Vice-Chancellor reported that the University was not, historically, accustomed to admitting international students. It had taken time for the admissions team to get up to speed. In her judgement, colleagues within the admissions team had misunderstood that it was not their role to make academic judgements, and there was a need to clarify roles in the future decision-making process. The Vice-Chancellor said that, in her view, the University's record of UKVI compliance was remarkable and the number of rejections of applicants (for a visa) was low.

International students attending the University under a visa were not permitted to work more than 20 hours per week. UKVI had previously adopted a relatively light touch in enforcing this rule but had recently strengthened its approach. This had prompted an internal review which had identified a small number of minor lapses in compliance which had been reported to UKVI. New systems had been introduced to prevent recurrence.

The University was implementing a system of monitoring students' attendance. This was onerous but not as complicated as it had seemed at first. Mazars had carried out an audit of University systems since the latest guidance was issued by UKVI. The resultant report did not reveal any surprises and was generally supportive of the structure. Board members expressed the view that, when approaching regulators, it was generally better to give them more information than was necessary.

Mr Archer confirmed that, speaking as chair of the International Strategy Group, the compliance story was a good one. The visa refusal rate was noticeably low compared with other institutions. Risks had been identified around recruitment and TNE but mitigation was effective.

The Board acknowledged that engagement markers, such as attendance, can help universities to support students. The Board noted, however, that privacy issues meant that the University would need to explain the reasons why it was collecting data.

The current TNE partners were discussed. The process for approving both the business partnership and the academic approval was explained. The Board heard that the University was not currently courting any new TNE partners but that if new partners were to be introduced, this would have to be on the basis that they offered the opportunity for a strategic partnership. Academic oversight of international partners for TNE was moving from a model of annual review to more frequent health checks carried out on a periodic basis. The University remained responsible for approving admissions, for teaching quality and for the making of awards. External examiners also provided some quality assurance. The lack of resource at HEFCE increased the likelihood of a shift of responsibility towards governors. It was therefore important for the University to develop its partnership relationships.

The Board queried whether the risks associated with a TNE partnership outweighed the benefits. The Vice-Chancellor reported that there were more advantages than just the income received from partners such as the internationalisation of University staff and the flow through of TNE students into Masters and final honours year programmes. Although TNE was new to the University, it was not new to the sector.

15/38 POLICY AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE

Convener's Update

The Convener asked Mr Latham to summarise the paper on Estates Developments.

Estates Developments [Paper G889]

Mr Latham reported that Green Park House was practically complete and progressing towards legal completion at the end of May. A revaluation had been carried out and early indications were that this may be higher than the purchase price. The Herman Miller building was also moving towards completion. A design brief was in development with a two year construction programme. The University was also in the process of purchasing the Stothert & Pitt sports ground.

15/39 AUDIT COMMITTEE

Convener's Update

As there had been no meeting of the Committee since the last Board meeting, there was nothing to report.

15/40 ITEMS FOR RECEIPT

The following items were received:

- Health & Safety annual report [Paper G890]
- Minutes:

Audit Committee	11 th November 2015
Academic Board	19 th January 2016

15/41 ANY OTHER URGENT BUSINESS

There being no further business, the meeting closed at 12.30pm.

Mr Tristan Foot
Deputy Clerk to the Board of Governors
April 2016

Signed as a record of confirmed minutes by:

Ms Jane Henderson 

Chair

Date 5 July 2016

