

UNIVERSITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CONFIRMED

Minutes of the meeting held on 18th March 2021 by MS Teams

Present: Mr G Donnelly (Chair), Miss F Aiken, Mr J Batty, Mrs E Bales, Revd Canon C Butland, Mrs J Johnston, Professor J Lee, Mr I Looker, Ms M McConnell, Professor J Mennell, Mr I Purdham, Mrs J Stannard, Ms P Tatlow, Mr M Williams, Mr P Yates.

In attendance: Dr J Brown, University Secretary
Mr D Chesser, Chief Operating Officer
Professor R Trimble, DVC (Academic)
Professor B Webster-Henderson, DVC (Health, Environment & Innovation)

The Chair welcomed Directors to the first scheduled meeting of the Board since the previous November. He noted the significant activity that had been undertaken since that meeting, on a range of important matters.

20:69 Apologies for absence Verbal
There were no apologies.

20:70 Declaration of Interests Verbal
Mrs E Bales in relation to her role as Director of Student Services.

20:71 Minutes of the previous meeting UB20/38
The minutes and confidential minutes of the 23rd February 2021 meeting a & b
were approved as an accurate record.

The following notes were approved as accurate records:

- Strategy Discussion on 21st January 2021 UB20/35c
- Barrow project webinar on 14th October 2020 BW20/06
- Board risk brainstorm on 11th November 2020 BW20/07
- Borderlands Initiative Webinar on 17th December 2020 BW20/09

20:72 Matters Arising UB20/38c
The action log was noted.

20:73 Chair's Business Verbal
The Chair set out the activities he had been engaged with in his role as Chair of the Board since the last meeting:

- Attendance at a CUC briefing on Freedom of Speech, a very important and complex matter that the University needed to be custodians of as far as was possible;
- Attendance at a CUC briefing by the LEP North Chair, where the emphasis was on universities collaborating;
- The signing of the fifth contract for the provision of paramedic training.

The Chair designate had attended a CUC briefing on the USS, of minimal impact on the University as it has no USS members, but an important issue for the sector.

20:74 Vice Chancellor's Report UB20/39
Received A report from the Vice Chancellor a & b

The Vice Chancellor spoke to her report, starting by thanking the Chair for recognising the energy, effort and enthusiasm of the last few months. She noted that this had not been without its toll across the workforce, which was being recognised though, for example, extra time off at Easter. A year into the pandemic the University was coping with the circumstances incredibly well, alongside delivering well against its objectives; current forecast indicated that it was on track to exceed financial targets. She went on to provide an overview of the current situation with recruitment, including to the paramedic apprenticeships, development of the T2030 strategy and confirmed that the sale of Mill Hall had been completed.

Speaking to the rest of her report she added that she had attended the signing ceremony for the Borderland Growth Deal earlier in the day. The agreement was high level with the detail subject to the approval of final business cases by various bodies, however it underlined the investment in the region which would benefit the University indirectly as well as, potentially, directly.

In the discussion that followed it was commented that it was a good, upbeat report. It was noted that the ITT review was a potential threat to the University's provision, with more information requested in due course. It was agreed that the Vice Chancellor would discuss the matter with the Chair of AGC to determine how best to engage the Board. **Action:** Vice Chancellor.

AGREED: • To receive the Vice Chancellor's report

20:75 **Students' Union Matters**

UB20/40

Received A report from the Student Director

The Chair of the Board congratulated the Student Director and her colleagues on their re-election as Sabbatical Officers.

The Student Director thanked the Chair before speaking to her report. She highlighted:

- that the 2020/21 manifesto had been released and was now available on-line;
- the use of the food-bank had increased and was being monitored;
- on-line learning guides had been circulated to staff and students to touch on key issues as conversation starters;
- training was being delivered for representatives which had been successful, with some subsequently opened up for other students.

She finished by detailing activities in place for students and the work being undertaken to review the training for groups and networks.

There being no questions, the Chair thanked the Student Director for her report and congratulated her again on her re-election.

AGREED: • To receive the report.

20:76 **Academic Matters**

UB20/41

Received	a) A report from the DVC (Academic)	a)
	b) A report from the DVC (Health Environment & Innovation)	b)

The Chair introduced the reports noting that they were a reflection of the care and attention that was being applied to a wide range of matters.

A section of this minute has been recorded in a separate confidential set of minutes.

DVC (Academic) report

The DVC(Academic) spoke to his report, starting by briefing the Board on the NSS. It was not known what results would be published or when, however it was envisaged that responses to the optional additional questions relating to the pandemic would be foregrounded.

The approach to blended delivery and how this had changed over the period was set out; feedback from staff and students was that they were happy to be back with some time on campus and that testing was working well. The University now had circa 1000 students with delivery 100% on-line, with an announcement from the government awaited regarding when they would be allowed to return. The DVC(A) reported that these students would be able to complete the year even if they did not return to blended delivery.

The DVC(A) went on to provide an update on Academic Regulations and Assessment Boards, setting out how Semester One Boards had worked effectively with very positive feedback from external examiners. Additional Regulations had been approved by Academic Board in March to respond to the changes to delivery, away from blended learning, that had been required in the year. The principles for academic delivery in 2021/22 were being worked up with the aim of communicating with applicants and continuing students so that they could make informed choices regarding their studies for the coming year.

In other matters, the DVC(A) reported that the review of compliance with consumer law, requested by the OfS and required to be reported to the Board, was nearly concluded, with the report planned to be reported to AGC at the end of March and then on to the Board at its next meeting. The Board was informed that the UKVI had written to the University confirming maintenance of its Student Sponsor Licence. An update was provided on TEF, with a working group being set up to develop the University's submission once the guidance was available.

The DVC(A) was thanked for his wide ranging report. Whether there would be a significant delay in any assessments or decisions to confirm students' awards was asked. The DVC(A) responded that two weeks had been built into the process last year, with a similar time frame expected this year.

DVC (Health Environment & Innovation) report

The DVC(HE&I) spoke to his report, starting by providing an overview of the work of Student Services, including the development of a new case management system with a range of benefits to students and the management of the Service. The peer to peer student support provided by the new Student Wellbeing buddies was reported to be working well.

Marketing and Recruitment priorities were detailed, as set out in the paper. With respect to research it was reported that the submission to the REF had been made, with growth in the numbers submitted since the last assessment in 2014.

With respect to the Institute of Health, the DVC(HE&I) provided an update on the situation with some students having been asked if they would support the NHS through paid placements. Any students who opted to do these placements would not have a delay to their programme. The work undertaken nationally to ensure that the placements did not disadvantage students was noted. The work taking place to support students, including de-brief sessions, was detailed.

A section of this minute has been recorded in a separate confidential set of minutes.

An update was given on the work relating to the pandemic, noting that there had been few recent cases at the University and that asymptomatic testing was in place now at Brampton Road, following a return of students to the campus. The challenge of managing the response to the pandemic was noted as increasing as time went on, with new ways to engage staff and students being launched to maintain engagement with key safety measures.

The Chair thanked the DVCs for their reports, noting that the personalised approach to supporting students that had been in practice was welcomed.

AGREED: • To receive the reports.

20:77 Management Accounts

UB20/42

Received The Period 5 Management Accounts 2020-21

The COO spoke to the paper, which had been discussed at FRC. After five months of the financial year recruitment was positive, with income ahead of budget, and staff and non-staff expenditure was below budget. The financial position was therefore strong year to date. The COO went on to report that the finalisation of period 7 accounts was underway, with a continued positive position to report.

AGREED: • To receive the Management Accounts for period 5.

20:78 2020/21 Financial Forecast Update

UB20/43

Received The current forecast for the year.

The COO introduced the paper, which set out the outcome of the second formal forecast of the year. The position with the income contingency; assumptions with respect to aspects of recruitment; the position with staffing spend continuing to be well managed; and non-staffing expenditure well below budget due to the ongoing restrictions, were all set out. The additional income from the OfS for student hardship was noted as showing as income, with the expenditure included within the non-staff expenditure. In summary the COO reported that there was fair confidence that the forecast would be delivered for the year. The cash position was also positive and ahead of forecast.

It was noted that all of the OfS hardship funding had been allocated.

The Chair of FRC commented that the results were excellent. A question was asked regarding when the next pay award decision would be made; the COO responded that UCEA was in the process of gathering information from the sector regarding its appetite in relation to the pay award for the 2021/22 year.

In response to how confident he was that the forecast would be delivered, the COO responded that he was confident and noted that the forecast had been reviewed by BDO as part of their work for Barclays in relation to the request for an RCF to support the Borderlands project.

AGREED: • To receive the financial forecast update.

20:79 Borderlands Update

UB20/44

Received An update on the Borderlands project

The COO introduced the paper, noting that underpinning it was detailed work undertaken at FRC and ARC, with links to the papers considered at these committees provided. He reported that work was ongoing with the various parties to get the FBC finalised, with monthly meetings being held with MHCLG to keep them informed of progress.

A section of this minute has been recorded in a separate confidential set of minutes.

The Chair thanked the Chairs for their input and the serious considerations at the respective Committee meetings. Bearing in mind that FRC had considered the affordability and ARC had considered the risks, the Board was being asked if it approved the recommendation to proceed with the development of the FBC on the basis that the University's contribution to the project was funded through cash generation, with other back-up options continued to be pursued to aid liquidity. The Chair asked if anyone did not agree. Once those not on camera had been asked to make their position clear, it was confirmed that there was no dissent and the recommendation was agreed.

The Chair confirmed that there would be a single topic Board meeting on the project when the FBC was ready for approval, in the meantime, there remained time for discussion. Any questions or points for discussion were to be sent to the University Secretary, copied to the Vice Chancellor and Chair. All key information was to be placed in a single folder on the Board SharePoint site, for ease of access.

AGREED: • To receive the update;
 • To proceed with the development of the FBC on the basis that the University's contribution to the project was funded through cash generation, with other back-up options continued to be pursued to aid liquidity.

20:77 Estates Strategy Update

UB20/45

Received An update on estates matters.

The COO highlighted the key matters within the paper:

- The planning application for the SE corner in Lancaster had been resubmitted;
- The sale of Mill Hall had been completed;
- That FRC had approved the disposal of the lease liability of Stanwix House and Cottage and the settling of the outstanding dilapidations claim;

- Progress with respect to the financial model for the potential Energy Centre in Lancaster; and
- That acceptance of the donation of a piece of ancient woodland near Ambleside was being progressed.

AGREED: • To note the report.

20:78 Honorary Awards UB20/46

Received The nominations for Honorary Doctorate, Honorary Fellowship and Alumnus of the Year.

The Vice Chancellor introduced the paper, setting out the nomination and approval process for the awards. The due diligence at the various stages was noted.

A section of this minute has been recorded in a separate confidential set of minutes.

The Board Director on Honorary Awards Committee commented that the Committee had considered a good selection of nominations with connections to Cumbria and people displaying the University's values.

In response to a question on when the awards were made public the Vice Chancellor set out that following the Board meeting they would be written to. If the individual accepted the award they were conferred at a relevant graduation ceremony, and were made public the day before the ceremony.

AGREED: • This minute has been recorded in a separate confidential set of minutes.

20:79 Inclusivity Statement UB20/47

Received The draft University Inclusivity Statement.

This minute has been recorded in a separate confidential set of minutes.

20:80 Risk Register UB20/48

Received An update on the current assessment of institutional risk.

The Chair introduced the item noting that the summary of the institutional risk register was a considerable improvement on that provided previously.

The University Secretary set out the position with the risk register, as set out in the paper, with the format having been revised and further work being undertaken on the risks themselves.

AGREED: • To note the update.

20:81 Office for Students UB20/49

Received An update on communications from the OfS

AGREED: • The update was noted.

20:82 AOP 2020/21 UB20/50

Received An update on delivery of the AOP for 2020/21

The Vice Chancellor introduced the paper noting that considerable progress had been made, with the majority of the objectives on track for completion in-year. It was noted that a summary would be provided to the Board at year end.

AGREED: • To receive the report.

20:83 Academic Board Reporting

UB20/39a
Verbal

Received The minutes of the meeting of Academic Board held on 14th December 2020 and a verbal update on the meeting held on 8th March 2021.

The Vice Chancellor reported that much of what had been covered at the March meeting of Academic Board had been summarised within the DVC reports. The flow of matters from Academic Board to AGC was noted.

AGREED: • To receive the minutes and update.

20:84 University Board Committees

Received	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Funding Task and Finish Group<ul style="list-style-type: none">Notes - 26 August 2020Notes – 1 February 2021Notes – 11 February 2021	FTFG20/04
		FTFG20/05
		FTFG20/06
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Finance and Resources Committee<ul style="list-style-type: none">Minutes and confidential minutes - 3 November 2020Minutes and confidential minutes - 11 January 2021Minutes and Confidential minutes – 2 March 2021	FRC20/19a&b
		FRC20/22a&b
		FRC20/31a&b
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Audit & Risk Committee<ul style="list-style-type: none">Minutes - 5 November 2020Minutes – 9 February 2021Minutes – 9 March 2021	ARC20/27a
		ARC20/27b
		ARC20/40a&b
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">Academic Governance Committee<ul style="list-style-type: none">Minutes - 21 October 2020Minutes - 13 January 2021	AGC20/14a
		AGC20/25a
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">People, Performance & Culture Committee<ul style="list-style-type: none">Minutes - 23 February 2021	PPCC20/17

Funding Task and Finish Group

It was confirmed that, with respect to funding for the Citadels project, the work of the Task and Finish Group had been completed.

Finance and Resources Committee

It was noted that the majority of the items discussed at the Committee had been substantive agenda items at the Board meeting. The Chair of the Committee reported that the Committee had recently had a deep dive into the Institute of Business, Industry and Leadership. The Committee were now more assured that the Institute had a good plan for delivery of its targets, with it having been interesting to hear the operational challenges that the Institute faced. The Committee was supportive of all that was being done to create a successful Institute.

Audit & Risk Committee

As the Chair of the Committee had connectivity issues at this point in the meeting, a member of the Committee reported that the most recent meeting had focused on the risks related to the Borderlands project and a review of the risk register, as reported earlier in the meeting.

Academic Governance Committee

The Chair of the Committee provided an overview of the key matters discussed at its recent meetings, including assurance over quality and updates on student outcomes. Presentations had been received on the NSS results and activities to enhance the student experience from two of the institutes.

People, Performance & Culture Committee

Key matters considered at the recent meeting of the Committee were outlined by the Chair, including a presentation on the imaginative work being undertaken in support of staff well-being, building on the results from the staff survey. There had also been discussion of the Equality and Diversity Annual Report and the Inclusivity Statement.

AGREED: • To receive the minutes and updates.

20:85 Dates of Future Meetings

Verbal

Extra meeting(s) for approvals – date(s) to be determined
20 May 2021
15 July 2021

The Chair closed the meeting noting that the updates provided had been very encouraging, with thanks to the Vice Chancellor and her team. He went on to thank the University Board Committee Chairs, noting the importance of the work that was undertaken in committees, and to thank the Directors for attending.

The Vice Chancellor added that the University was doing well, and that everyone played a role in enabling this to happen; she hoped that Directors felt proud of what the University was achieving.