

UNIVERSITY BOARD OF DIRECTORS

CONFIRMED

Minutes of the meeting held on 21st April 2020

Present: Mr G Donnelly (Chair), Miss F Aiken, Mr J Batty, Mrs E Bales, Ms K Brookes, Mr C Bush, Revd Canon C Butland, Professor L Challis, Professor J Lee, Ms J Johnson, Mr I Looker, Professor J Mennell, Mrs J Stannard, Mr M Williams, Mr P Yates

In attendance: Dr J Brown, University Secretary
Mr D Chesser, Chief Operating Officer / Deputy Vice Chancellor
Professor B Webster-Henderson, PVC (Health) for items 19:100 and 19:101
Professor R Trimble, DVC (Academic) for items 19:100 and 19:101

19:92 Apologies for absence Verbal
There were no apologies.

19:93 Declaration of Interests Verbal
Declarations of interest were received from Mrs E Bales regarding the Student Support item and Mrs J Stannard regarding matters relating to Health students.

19:94 Minutes of the previous meeting UB19/59
The minutes and confidential minutes of the meeting held on 17 March 2020 were approved as an accurate record.
a)
b)

19:95 Matters Arising UB19/59c
The action log was noted. The University Secretary confirmed that she would be writing to Directors in relation to their University e-mail account shortly.

19:96 Chair's Business Verbal
This minute has been recorded in a separate confidential set of minutes.

19:97 Vice Chancellor's Report Verbal

Received: A verbal report from the Vice Chancellor

The Vice Chancellor started by setting out the key objectives that were being worked to, including focusing on student and staff health and well-being, the student experience and student outcomes. Business critical activities were being maintained, however the timing of implementation of some projects had been reviewed with the result that a number have been paused. Dealing with the here and now was being balanced with long-term sustainability and success, recognising the highly relevant portfolio of the University to the current and future needs of the region. The ability to flex resources down, and be ready to flex them back up again as required, at both the macro and micro level, was being worked on.

The top-level underlying principles being worked to were outlined, with the intention to keep staff at the core of these to enable the University to build the business back up at the appropriate time. Communications to staff had been clear that the University's intention was to protect jobs and that there would be shared pain as part of this.

The Vice Chancellor reported that UUK had made some recommendations to government, however it could be some time before the extent of any support for the sector was known in any detail. In the mean-time the University was seeking to engage with existing schemes where it could, for example in furloughing staff where appropriate. She noted that where funding could be sought to support growth this would be considered, but that care would be taken regarding taking out loans that would cause longer terms challenges for the institution.

In conclusion, the Vice Chancellor set out her intention to maintain the institutional values, integrity and reputation in the way that the situation was managed though this period and beyond, underpinned by principle and evidenced based decision making.

AGREED: To receive the report

19:98 2019/20 Financial Position

UB19/60

Received: A report on the University's financial position for 2019/20

The COO/DVC introduced the paper, starting by outlining the financial situation for 2019/20 as reported to the March meeting of University Board. He went on to set out how, at the point at which the Covid-19 pandemic impacted, not all of the income included in the forecasts had been earned, and that as a result of the pandemic some income would be lost. In light of this a review of the 2019/20 financial position had been undertaken and the financial forecast for the year revised. It was noted that, as the University has continued to teach students on-line rather than as planned, the tuition fees would be received from the SLC as anticipated.

The areas where income had been or was anticipated to be lost were detailed, including some enterprise income, some aspects of teaching income, and from commercial activity, such as the student residences, parking and sport activities. He noted that students not in residences were not being charged their last fee instalment and those remaining would be charged 20% less than normal, due to the challenging situation.

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

AGREED: To receive the updated financial forecast for 2019/20

19:99 Planning for 2020/21

UB19/61

Received: A report on planning for 2020/21

The Vice Chancellor introduced the item setting out how the approach to planning for 2020/21, as set out in the paper, looked to manage the unknowns in relation to the impact of the pandemic.

The Vice Chancellor emphasised that, although the move to on-line delivery had been managed well in the crisis situation, the University was at the stage of coping with on-line delivery rather than being an expert. More work was needed to evolve and enhance delivery as the requirement for such ways of working, both for academic and professional service staff, continue. She reported that morale amongst

staff was seen to be high, with a lot of good will towards the University and its students, but that many were exhausted.

With respect to planning for 2020/21, the Vice Chancellor confirmed that the approach was to keep the same objectives and values as previously envisaged. The University would be working to the assumption that it needed to manage without any support from government; if any financial support was forthcoming it would bolster the University's position rather than be required for its sustainability.

The draft AOP proposed in the paper looked to balance the here and now with a strategic focus, along with making the most of the opportunities that present themselves and that the University can make for itself. Planning would cover aspects that have come about due to the pandemic and the things that were already known, for example the need to lower the cost of the staffing base. The different drivers would be made clear to staff.

The Vice Chancellor set out that work was underway on a draft budget for 2020/21; as more becomes known regarding the impact of the pandemic the draft would be amended. The process was outlined, as set out in the paper, noting the different focuses across the Institutes.

The COO/DVC confirmed the complexity of setting a budget at the current time and detailed the key principles and assumptions being used in the drafting of the document, the main one being that there would be a recruitment round in September, albeit that at least some delivery would be on-line.

An additional strand in the planning process was noted to be in relation to what has been learnt and what this means for future ways of working

In the discussion that followed, observations were made / questions asked as set out below:

- The approach was supported, including not relying on government funding; the clarity for staff between actions required as a result of the pandemic and those that would have been required in any case; the emphasis on flexibility; and ways to reduce staff costs other than redundancies being considered.
- The need to be in a state of readiness to increase delivery when opportunities arose was emphasised.
- The approach to reducing staff costs in the sector was discussed.
- The capacity to lead and support the significant work required over the coming six months was asked about; the Vice Chancellor agreed that there was a lot to be done, but that she was confident in the team. The principles and values to work within had been agreed, and the team was able to deliver within these.
- The level of staff absence and incidence of shielding / self-isolation was asked about; the Vice Chancellor confirmed that to date absences had been low, around 5% across the University.
- The impact of options for lowering staff costs on the lowest paid was noted, with a request that options to support lower graded staff be considered; the Vice Chancellor responded that modelling had been undertaken across a range of options. The local Trades Union representatives had been supportive and showed willingness to work with the University.

- Opportunities, such as an enhanced post-graduate offer, were noted.
- Ways to benefits from the move back into the physical world, such as only having first year students on campus for a period so that they can make peer group bonds, were suggested.
- The need to look at areas that potentially require investment if on-line delivery continues, such as student support services, was noted.
- The cohesive approach to staffing was welcomed, with a comment that where hours were reduced there needed to be careful management to ensure that workloads also reduced; the Vice Chancellor confirmed that this and the comments above would be taken on board.
- It was asked that worst case scenarios were planned for when the financial projections for 2020/21 were drafted, with flexibility built in, as some sectors e.g. banking, had indicated that it may take five years to return to pre-Covid-19 position. The Vice Chancellor noted the request and that it was expected that Clearing would be challenging.
- The benefits in working with others in sector and with Colleges was suggested as being helpful in gaining broader support from government.
- A question was asked as to whether there were any additional benefits in the changed environment for either party in the relationship with Lancaster University; the Vice Chancellor confirmed that a number of strands were being worked on with Lancaster University, with the potential for other parties to also be drawn together to address common goals.
- Whether the University had Organisational Development in place to properly identify staff that were thriving in the new circumstances and those that are not; the Vice Chancellor agreed to take this matter away for further consideration. **Action:** Vice Chancellor.

The Chair thanked the executive for the paper and it was agreed that an additional Board meeting would be held in June to review the draft budget and the AOP for 2020/21. It was noted that this may require changes to the timing of the May FRC meeting. **Action:** University Secretary to arrange.

- AGREED:**
- To receive the paper
 - To hold an additional Board meeting in June to review the draft budget and AOP for 2020/21

19:100 Academic Response, regulations and student support

UB19/62

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| Received: | a) An update on the academic response to the pandemic | a) |
| | b) An update on Student Support arrangements | b) |
| | c) An overview of how the University's response aligns with OfS guidance on maintaining quality and standards | c) |

Academic response to the pandemic

The DVC(Academic) spoke to his paper, starting by detailing the accelerated move to on-line delivery and assessment. The scale of the task that had led to delivery of modules on-line from 23 March 2020 was noted along with the emphasis that this did not mean that on-line delivery was optimal, especially in these first few weeks where the University was in responsive mode with respect to the change. The

Centre for Academic Practice Enhancement (CAPE) had provided a lot of guidance to staff, which had been well received.

The DVC(Academic) talked through the package of enabling actions that had been delivered to support the move on-line, with a group involving the Directors of Institutes and key Professional Services, chaired by the DVC(Academic), overseeing the work. Activity had included communicating with and gaining approval of all of the University's external examiners, communicating with PSRBs, making changes to field-trips, performances etc. All students had been communicated with throughout the changes, with FAQs available, and they had been notified of the changes to their assessments before Easter. The creation of the Emergency Academic Regulations (included within the paper) which were approved by Academic Board, had the key aim of allowing students to complete the 2019/20 academic year without academic disadvantage, whilst maintaining quality and standards. Changes to extensions and extenuating circumstances had been made and students were being encouraged to make use of them rather than dis-engage.

It was noted that the London campus had an intake starting the following week, with a fully on-line induction.

Looking forward to the 2020/21 academic year the DVC(Academic) noted that planning had started with the expectation that delivery will need to be on-line, potentially in full but at least in-part, with consideration being given as to how best to build physical elements back in.

The Chair thanked the DVC(Academic) for a very thorough paper, and for the scale of work undertaken in a swift manner.

In the discussion that followed questions were asked and points noted:

- Whether there remained a route for people to get a distinction in masters programmes; the DVC(Academic) reported that classifications were still valid, with the mark profile looking at the best outcome that the student could have achieved.
- Whether there had been any immediate feedback from staff or students; it was reported that a range of feedback had been received at Academic Board the previous week, with some students feeling anxious, whilst others were positive. It was noted that the expectation is that anxiety will reduce as the situation becomes more normal. The DVC(Academic) reported that the University monitors student engagement and is arranging a chat room where students can meet senior members of Institute staff in addition to talking to their personal tutors.
- What was in place to enable the University to learn from the experience; the DVC(Academic) confirmed that the experience would be built on, with the challenge for 2020/21 being to ensure that all staff were able to deliver programmes on-line to a higher minimum level than had been required in the initial response.
- How placement issues were being taken into account, with the professional bodies as well as in practice; the DVC(Academic) confirmed that arrangements were in place for current final year students on programmes with placements to complete their studies in the majority of cases, however that this would need further thought if students were not able to go into placements for a full academic year. The main contact points with professional bodies had been made by the relevant programme leaders with

respect to changes to delivery and assessment, with the approvals being given and most keen to support the University.

- The monitoring of personal tutor engagement with students was asked about; the DVC(Academic) confirmed that, due to the importance of the personal tutor role, it was one of the matters that the Directors of Institutes were updating him on as part of the weekly meetings that he chaired.
- The ability to teach and assess practical skills on-line was noted as being possible; the point was acknowledged by the DVC(Academic) who stated that this was an area that was likely to require investment.
- It was noted that the Emergency Regulations looked to be robust and should be useful for the University if needed for any reason in the future.
- The involvement of students in the creation of the regulations or the decisions in the future, for example, in relation to the design of blended delivery, was asked about. The DVC(Academic) confirmed that the Emergency Regulations had been discussed with students prior to their approval, and a Sabbatical officer was a member of Academic Board. The Dean for Student Success was working closely with the Students' Union to ensure that student input was being heard.
- The Student Director thanked the DVC(Academic) for the work undertaken. She commented that many students had struggled at first but that any issues raised with the University had been rapidly resolved.
- The support for students with disabilities was asked about; the Staff Director confirmed that the Disability Support Team was working closely with academic staff to ensure that appropriate reasonable adjustments were in place for teaching, learning and assessment for students, recognising that this may be different to what was previously in place. The DVC(Academic) confirmed that the provisions in the emergency regulations covered the possibility of any student not being able to undertake their studies to the best of their abilities, and that conversations were being had to ensure that the Students' Union was fully aware of the arrangements so that they could support students appropriately.

The Chair thanked the DVC(Academic) for the work undertaken to date and that planned with respect to moving assessments on-line.

Student Support arrangements

The PVC(Health) gave an overview of the student support arrangements in place, as set out in the paper. He confirmed that staff in the service were working from home and providing services on-line or via telephone.

He reported that there were circa 150 students in residence on University campuses. Weekly contact was being made with these students and a range of events was being arranged to seek to mitigate social isolation.

Student engagement with the range of student support services had increased prior to Easter, in particular with respect to contact with the mental health and financial support teams. It was noted that a rise is normal at this time of the year, however staff were finding that students were generally more anxious over a range of Covid-19 related matters, and the loss of part-time jobs, for example, had increased financial difficulties for some students.

The PVC(Health) reported that work had started to look at the support that students and staff would require after this stage of the pandemic had passed, for example with respect to post-trauma support.

It was noted that the University was meeting with the Students' Union on a monthly basis to ensure that the two entities were working in an engaged manner.

The Board thanked the team for their work supporting students. The weekly contact being made to students in residences was seen to be important and helpful, as was the ongoing support for students, particularly those going into practice in health disciplines, where there may be a need for post-trauma support into the future.

Assessment of the University's response against OfS guidance

The University Secretary gave an overview of the OfS guidance on quality and standards, as set out in the paper. She went on to detail her independent critique of the University's response to the pandemic against the OfS guidance, having not been involved in the work on the Emergency Academic Regulations or the move to on-line teaching and learning. She noted that inputs to this analysis were the papers that went to the April 15 Academic Board meeting, supplemented by input from the Director of AQD in response to questions that had arisen.

The University Secretary concluded that the University's approach to maintaining quality and standards through the pandemic complies with the OfS guidance

- AGREED:**
- To receive the update on the academic response to the pandemic
 - To receive the update on Student Support arrangements
 - To note the conclusion that the University's response aligns with OfS guidance on maintaining quality and standards

19:101 National Arrangements for Health Students during the pandemic

UB19/63

Received: A report on the national arrangements in place for health students during the pandemic

The PVC(Health) spoke to his paper, with the Vice Chancellor noting the PVC's national role as Chair of the Council for Deans of Health. In his national role, the PVC(Health) reported having been involved in the discussions to agree the approach for students of nursing, midwifery and allied health professions to be given the opportunity to join the relevant workforce, with remuneration, while remaining as a student. The University had developed a consent process to ensure that individual conversations were held with each student with the option to opt out of going into practice made clear and to ensure that students were aware of the risks involved. He reported that the vast majority of third year nursing students had opted into practice, with the University working with Health Education England so that where students had secured jobs they were placed in these areas. A local arrangement was in place for these students to work a four day week with the fifth day available for support from the University and reflection time. The PVC(Health) went on to detail the arrangements for second year nursing students, who were also able to opt-in to placement in the NHS on a four day a week basis.

Arrangements were noted as being different for the allied health professions, with students being automatically added to an emergency register once their competencies had been met, with the option to opt-out.

It was reported that first year students had been removed from practice / placements stopped around the start of the lock-down period. Regulators have given some flexibility with respect to the redesign of programmes to, for example, bring teaching forward from the second year, however the future bottleneck of students wanting to go on placements was of concern.

The situation for social work students was reported, with the sector awaiting confirmation of the approach from the Regulator.

The Board expressed its thanks and admiration to the students opting-in to the extended placements and to the PVC(Health) for his leadership in this area.

The longer term impact of the pandemic on people, particularly those involved with supporting those with the virus, was noted by a Director. The PVC(Health) responded that the longer term support needs were being looked into by the University, and that students would be able to change their minds and opt-out of their extended placements, a position that NHS colleagues were supportive of. He also noted that the Institute was working with those student who had not opted-in, to ensure they received appropriate respect for what was a professional decision for every individual.

AGREED: To receive the report and pass on the Board's thanks to all involved.

19:102 OfS Regulatory changes and communications

UB19/64

Received: An update on the changes to the OfS regulatory arrangements and a report on communications with the OfS

The University Secretary gave an overview of the changes to the OfS regulatory requirements, emphasising the new requirements, as set out in the paper. The matters reported to the OfS in the form of Reportable Events since November 2019 were outlined, as detailed in the report.

A Director asked how well the OfS had managed the pandemic to date. The University Secretary responded that they had been slow to act, with, for example, the University having drafted the Emergency Academic Regulations and had them about to be approved when the guidance on maintaining quality and standards was issued. The relaxation of some of the regulatory requirements was welcome, but it was noted that universities were frequently reminded of the OfS's role as a regulator.

The position with the 2020 NSS was asked about. The Vice Chancellor responded that the OfS was to review the results before a decision was made.

AGREED: To receive the update and report.

19:103 Academic Board Reporting

AB19/35

Received: The minutes from the Academic Board meeting held on 26 February 2020.

AGREED: To receive the minutes.

19:104 University Board Committees

Received: The minutes from the following Committee Meetings:

- People Performance and Culture Committee 25 February
- Finance & Resources Committee 3 March 2020
- Audit & Risk Committee 12 March 2020
- Academic Governance Committee 16 March 2020

PPCC19/18a&b
FRC19/30a&b
ARC19/37a,b&c
AGC19/30

Committee Chairs were asked if they had anything to bring to the Board's attention in relation to the minutes, noting that verbal updates had been provided to the March meeting of the Board. No further updates were considered to be required.

AGREED: To receive the minutes

19:105 Chair's conclusion

Verbal

The Chair thanked the Board for their contributions in the first fully-virtual Board meeting at the University.

He noted that it had been agreed that there would be an additional meeting of the Board in June, which may mean that the timing of the May FRC meeting would be amended.

The Chair finished by reminding Directors that Nominations Committee was meeting on 5 May with succession planning for the Chair of the Board and the Vice Chair on the agenda. Any Director interested in either role was asked to send their expression of interest to the University Secretary by 30 April 2020.

19:106 Records Management

Board Directors to delete local copies of papers from tablet devices

19:107 Dates of Future Meetings

Tuesday 19 May 2020, Ambleside
Thursday 9 July 2020, Carlisle