

University of Central Lancashire
Unreserved Minutes of the Board Meeting Held on 19th May 2022 commencing at 2.00pm at the Belsfield Hotel, Bowness-on-Windermere.

Present :

Jim Edney (Chair)

Fiona Armstrong	Sue Ion
Graham Baldwin	Ruth Lowry
Zuleikha Chikh	Anne McCarthy
Nicky Danino	Lorraine Norris
Ridwanah Gurjee	David Taylor
Bill McQueen	

In attendance:

Ebrahim Adia (pro Vice Chancellor - Academic Leadership -from UB1032 only)
George Charles (Chief Finance Officer)
Ruth Connor (Deputy Chief Executive)
StJohn Crean (Pro Vice Chancellor - Research & Enterprise - from UB1032 only, via video-conference)
Ian Fisher (University Secretary and General Counsel and Clerk to the Board)
Andrew Ireland (Pro Vice Chancellor - Students & Teaching - from UB1032 only)
Ken Lee (Chief People Officer)
Peter McMellon (assisting the Clerk to the Board)
Fiona Winters (Deputy Clerk to the Board/Head of Governance)

UB1022. Welcome and Apologies

It was noted that, with the Board Chair (Mr Taylor) unable to attend the meeting other than via video-conference, the Board Deputy Chair (Mr Edney) would chair the meeting on this occasion.

The Chair welcomed all present to the meeting.

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr Hext and Mrs Lloyd. The Chair reported that comments received would be passed on to appropriate Vice Chancellor Group (VCG) member(s) and/or fed into the Board's discussions.

UB1023. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interests other than those recorded under UB1028 below.

UB1024. Chair's Announcements

There were no Chair's announcements.

UB1025. Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting held on 24th March 2022

Resolved: That the Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting held on 24th March 2022 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

UB1026. Matters Arising

It was noted that various matters from the previous meeting would be addressed further under the substantive items on the agenda.

UB1027. Vice-Chancellor's Update

Professor Baldwin presented his report. A copy of the report is set out in the Minute Book.

Professor Baldwin advised that, as usual, there had been further developments on some matters since distribution of his report. He also confirmed that, on this occasion, Student Recruitment matters were included in his report.

(i) Ukraine

A response to the Charles McCormack Group's twinning proposal (UCLan with Uzhhorod National University) is awaited. In anticipation of progress along the lines which UCLan would wish to take, an element of the salary cost savings from staff strike action will be used to support UCLan's commitment during and after the current war in the Ukraine. UCLan's actions will continue to be consistent with the UK Government's guidance on this matter.

(ii) Inflationary Pressures

The University is far from immune to the general challenges of rising costs, and this will be picked up in the session on the University's financial planning and strategic priorities (Day 2 of the residential event) as well as at the next meeting of the Resources Committee.

(iii) Text Redacted - Reserved Minute

(iv) Text Redacted - Reserved Minute

(v) Text Redacted - Reserved Minute

(vi) Text Redacted - Reserved Minute

(vii) Text Redacted - Reserved Minute

(viii) Text Redacted - Reserved Minute

(ix) Text Redacted - Reserved Minute

(x) Research and Knowledge Exchange

UCLan's excellent results from Research Excellence Framework 2021 (REF2021) will be covered in detail later in the agenda (UB1032 below).

(xi) External Affairs – Levelling Up : Creating Public Value in a ‘World Risk Society’

The event at the Queen Elizabeth II Centre, Westminster (co-hosted by Applied Policy Science Unit and Westlakes Research Limited), with Dr Ion delivering the keynote Fyfe Lecture, had been successful and had provided the University with very positive media coverage.

The Board then discussed various aspects of the Vice Chancellor’s Update.

Dr Armstrong commented on the ‘gold standard approval’ success (with The Guardian University Guide 2022 ranking journalism at UCLan as number one in England). Professor Baldwin undertook to convey the Board’s congratulations to the School.

Reserved Minute – Text Redacted

Finally, in noting the Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) section of the Update, Dr Ion suggested that the Board’s commitment to the promotion of SHE could be demonstrated through further updates and presentations. It was noted that SHE would continue to be prominent under the new Strategic Plan development and that the annual review of the SHE Policy was presented to the Board. However, it was agreed that a presentation to the Resources Committee would assist the Board in staying abreast of key SHE considerations.

Resolved: That the Vice-Chancellor’s Update Report be received.

UB1028. Pensions Update

Interests were declared in respect of this item as follows:

- Mr Edney, Mr Fisher and Mrs Lowry – Members of the Local Government Pension Fund with no financial interest relating to the University’s membership of the fund.
- Mrs Connor, Mr Charles, Mr Lee, Ms Winters and Mr McMellon – Members of the Local Government Pension Fund as employees of the University.

Mr Lee reported that, with now 121 new members, the new Defined Contribution pension scheme had already exceeded the tentative target for the first year. In fact, with a take up rate of 95%, the new scheme compared favourably with the 89% rate of take up by eligible employees under the LGPS. He suggested that employees were being attracted by both the flexibility and the simplicity of the new scheme. There was some interest in transferring (from the LGPS to the new scheme) and this was being carefully managed.

In response to the Chair’s question, Mr Lee confirmed that, with the next Triennial Valuation due in Autumn 2022, ongoing and harmonious relations with the local LGPS continued to be maintained.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

UB1029. Gender Pay Gap

Mr Lee presented the gender pay gap analysis for 2022. A copy of the report is set out in the Minute Book.

Mr Lee reminded the Board about the University's publishing obligation. In commenting on the 2022 analysis, he drew attention to the very positive messages in the analysis around lower pay levels. He advised that around 400 employees were currently at those levels and therefore positively affected by the Foundation Living Wage allowance.

In noting Mr Lee's comments on the continuing challenges around female employee progression to senior positions, the Board agreed that the University's figures compared reasonably well with both the HE sector and with the national picture.

The Board then discussed progress in the different curriculum areas covered in the analysis.

Mrs McCarthy agreed that the challenges facing the University (with regard to numbers of the females in the more senior positions) were commonplace. She suggested that only through the application of some fairly radical 'talent strategy' approaches would any significant change be achieved.

Resolved: That the report be noted.

UB1030. Extension of Auditors Contracts

(i) Internal Auditors

Mr Fisher reported that, following consideration at its meeting on 29th April 2022, the Audit Committee had resolved to recommend extension of the appointment of RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP for an additional term of two years (1st August 2022 to 31st July 2024). He advised that the proposed re-appointment was also supported by the Vice Chancellor and that RSM UK had confirmed that they would be satisfied with continuation of the existing contract terms if re-appointed.

Resolved: That

- (i) the appointment of RSM UK Risk Assurance Services LLP as the University's internal auditors be extended for an additional term of two years commencing on 1st August 2022 until 31st July 2024, and
- (ii) the University Secretary and General Counsel, in consultation with the Chair of the Audit Committee, be authorised to agree to any necessary or appropriate contractual changes.

(ii) Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

Resolved: That

- (i) the appointment of KPMG LLP as the University's external auditors be extended for an additional two years commencing on 1st August 2022 until 31st July 2024, and
- (ii) the Chief Finance Officer, in consultation with the Chair of the Audit Committee and the University Secretary be authorised to agree to any necessary or appropriate contractual changes.

UB1031. Committee and Working Group Chairs' Updates

(i) Audit Committee

Reserved Minute – Text Redacted

The Committee had also noted how RSM UK intended developing the Internal Audit Plan for 2022-23. This would include close liaison with the Vice Chancellor's Group in the production of a short-list of subjects/areas for consideration by the Committee at its next meeting.

The University's approach to Revenue Risk recognition had also been reviewed.

Finally, Mrs Lowry advised that the Committee hoped to consider the extent to which the University might benefit from introduction of an 'audit and assurance policy' and 'fraud risk assessment' practices operated in other sectors.

(ii) Environmental Working Group

In Mrs Lloyd's absence, Mrs Connor reported on the matters covered at the Environmental Working Group meeting on 9th May 2022. These included the following:

(a) Sustainability

- Sub-Strategy 6 – Future Proofing our University

The Group welcomed the development of the Sub-Strategy, with the corresponding targets and reporting mechanisms. It was felt that some Board-level discussion regarding the integration and performance management of this Sub-Strategy would be appropriate.

- People and Planet Green League Table

There has been extensive work undertaken to increase visibility of key information required for People & Planet's analysis. The Group is optimistic that the University should see a significant improvement from its current ranking of 53rd, following the next round of analysis in July 2022.

- Sustainability Team

The Group was pleased to hear of the progress in recruiting for the two crucial roles of Head of Sustainability and Energy, Carbon and Utilities Manager. The University's plans to balance these specialist skills with a collaborative way of working was particularly reassuring.

- Academic Updates

There is much great academic work relating to sustainability being carried out across the University. The Group looks forward to receiving analysis of the relevant research from the eagerly awaited REF outcomes at a future meeting.

(b) Carbon Footprint

- Decarbonisation Plan

Following the completion of Hydrock's Phase 1 analysis, attention has now turned to Phase 2, which is a major piece of work. The main outcome expected from this is the development of 3D modelling, which should provide a much clearer way forward by the end of summer 2022.

- Benchmark Emissions Figures and Targets

The Group received the baseline figures which have been collected since 1990 and are submitted to HESA, along with the University's corresponding targets.

The University's policy (to move towards greener electricity) together with efficient new buildings have contributed to UCLan's steady reduction in emissions. However, the impact of behavioural change is often underestimated and the Group was therefore interested to hear that potential infrastructure changes are being investigated, such as bike hubs and a salary sacrifice scheme for electric cars.

- Metrics

The Group received a very useful breakdown of the various sources contributing to the University's baseline carbon footprint. Once a more accurate basis of measurement can be obtained (than that currently provided by North West Purchasing Consortium) a breakdown of key contracts should be carried out.

(c) Running Costs and Savings

- Building Condition and Space Utilisation Surveys

The Group noted the progress being made in both of these areas, and the improved information to assist in the management of the Estate which will result.

- Hybrid Working Group

The Group was impressed by the range of available information that is being considered to inform future guidance on working arrangements. It was recognised, however, that care must be taken to ensure that any new approach remains inclusive and mindful of diversity issues, particularly in anticipation of further energy price rises in the autumn.

(d) Carbon Literacy Project

The Group was pleased to hear that the first cohort of colleagues have received and enjoyed their training. The Group now looks forward to further developments, including a Leadership Module, which may be of interest to Board Members.

In discussing the Environmental Working Group's report, the Chair suggested that a great deal of impressive work is being undertaken.

Mrs McCarthy commented that such considerations as the cost (to the University) of maintaining an 'empty desk' were quite sobering.

Resolved: That the Chairs' Updates be noted.

(Professor Crean, Professor Adia and Professor Ireland joined the meeting at this point)

UB1032. Research Excellence Framework Results Update

It was noted that, because of faults in the hotel's audio-visual services, it would not be possible to proceed with the planned on-line presentation by Professor Crean (Pro Vice Chancellor - Research and Enterprise).

Professor Baldwin suggested that an alternative form of presentation was called for and he undertook to present in place of Professor Crean, pointing out that it remained a disappointment - not least for Professor Crean - that the prepared presentation could not be given.

Professor Baldwin then outlined the Research Excellence Framework (REF) process. He emphasised the great importance of the evaluation (carried out every seven years) to UCLan and not least because the implications which the REF outcomes have for future research funding support. He explained that there are currently 34 subject-based 'units of assessment' (against which UCLan had made 19 submissions) and that the results showed an 'overall profile' broken down into 'outputs' (60%), 'impact evidence' (25%) and 'research environment' (15%). The quality of each submission is denoted by 'starred' ratings (4 star = 'Quality that is world-leading in terms of originality, significance and rigour'; 3 star = 'Quality that is internationally excellent in terms of originality, significance and rigour, but which falls short of the highest standards of excellence; 2 star = 'Quality that is recognised internationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour; 1 star = 'Quality that is recognised nationally in terms of originality, significance and rigour).

UCLan's 19 areas submission covered five new areas and, in total, was the largest submission of any institution in Lancashire. UCLan's submission reflected an immense amount of research work and, with 18% rated as '4 star' and 48% as '3 star' / '2 star' (66% combined), this confirmed a significant improvement on the 45% combined outcome in 2014. The REF 2021 results as used in the Times Higher Education League Table indicate that UCLan has risen by ten places under 'Grade Point Average' (from 93rd to 83rd position out of 157 institutions), with a particularly outstanding performance under 'Research Power ranking' (up to 62nd position). The performance of other institutions (including the University of Cumbria) was noted.

For each one of UCLan's 19 submissions, at least one unit was 4 star. Professor Baldwin then went through each Unit of Assessment indicating where performances had been notably impressive.

Professor Baldwin averred that the REF 2021 results undoubtedly confirmed UCLan's status as a significant research institution. He confirmed that the results will feature prominently in all appropriate publicity, with prominence given to UCLan's ranking among the 'Post 1992' HE institutions.

Finally, Professor Baldwin confirmed that the REF 2021 results represented significant improvement since 2014 in an extremely competitive environment, with the 'world class' successes being especially gratifying. In due course, proposals will be presented to the Board on how the success can be built upon and invested in.

Mr Taylor suggested that, in contrast to the rather subjective measures used in many other 'league tables', the empirical approach applied in the REF exercise added gravity to

UCLan's excellent performance as reported by Professor Baldwin. It would undoubtedly be a challenge to maintain this momentum, but there would clearly be merit to investment in research and he looked forward to further discussion at a future Board meeting.

Mr Taylor added that, with the National Cyber Force development (at BAe Samlesbury), it would benefit the University to adopt as proactive a strategy as possible for that area. Professor Baldwin confirmed that the VCG was, indeed, aiming for rapid and significant involvement, with a full cyber proposal now ready.

Professor Baldwin confirmed that the University's REF 2021 submissions had been confined to its UK campuses. However, there may be international dimensions under future submissions.

Dr Ion agreed that the REF 2021 results represented excellent news for UCLan. It would not be surprising if other institutions now sought to 'poach' the University's top performers. Professor Baldwin agreed with Dr Ion's caution, but pointed out that, in some cases, the top performers were in any event due to retire.

Dr Ion also undertook to discuss Royal Society Newton scholarship opportunities with Professor Baldwin.

In response to the Chair's point about publicity and promotional opportunities, Professor Baldwin confirmed that as much as possible will now be made of UCLan's research prowess and that the Marketing Team was responding accordingly. He added that the high quality standard and breadth of research will also underpin teaching at UCLan and that this will make the University additionally attractive to future students.

Ms Chikh endorsed the latter point and urged that the REF 2021 achievement should be embedded and capitalised upon.

Finally, on behalf of the Board, the Chair thanked Professor Baldwin for his report and congratulated Professor Crean and his team and all other staff who had contributed to the impressive success of the REF 2021 submission.

Resolved: That the REF 2021 report be noted.

UB1033. Estates Update

Mrs Connor provided a verbal report on key estates matters including the following:

- (i) Estates Structure - this is due to go live early in June 2022, with both hard and soft focuses;
- (ii) Reserved Minute - Text Redacted;
- (iii) Sports Masterplan - a consultation event is scheduled for 21 June 2022;
- (iv) School of Veterinary Medicine - pre-planning application is being prepared with the main planning application to be ready by end of June 2022. There will be significant public engagement in the process;
- (v) New Town Mill, Burnley - progress on developments;

- (vi) Space Management and Utilisation – Space models are being applied. An internal conference (VCG and senior managers) is planned for June 2022.

In noting the wide range of planned and ongoing developments, Dr Ion reminded University Management about the alarming rate at which costs (including for basic building materials) are rising.

Reserved Minute – Text Redacted.

Mrs Lowry also advised on the communications which she had had with Mr Charles and Professor Baldwin on the University's Gazprom contract. The University obviously continues to comply with Government guidance (and there is no involvement with sanctioned providers) and new developments affecting Gazprom ownership are being monitored.

It was noted that energy costs and supply arrangements will be covered under the Financial Planning and Strategic Priorities session on the second day of the residential event.

Reserved Minute – Text Redacted.

Mr Taylor also indicated his intention to discuss the Sports Masterplan with Mrs Connor, and to have further discussions with Dr Ion, Professor Baldwin and Mrs Connor on the Westlakes development proposals.

Resolved: That the Estates Update be noted.

UB1034. Any Other Business

(i) Tuition Fees Policy – Minor Amendment

Mr Fisher outlined a recommended minor amendment to the 2022-23 Tuition Fees Policy.

In response to Mrs McCarthy's question on why the amendment was necessary at this point, Mr Charles advised that the proposed additional sentence would accommodate the University's new partnership arrangement (including student placement opportunities) with My Dentist (dental care provider).

Resolved: That the amendment to the 2022-23 Tuition Fees Policy be approved.

(ii) Cost of Living Impact on Students

Mrs McCarthy drew attention to the negative impact on the student experience and on student welfare in general which the ongoing and increasing cost of living challenges will be presenting.

Professor Baldwin confirmed that such concerns were recognised and had, in fact, been recently drawn to the attention of the Permanent Secretary for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. Students appeared now to consider general cost of living to be even more of a challenge than tuition fee charges.

Professor Ireland advised on how the new Head of Timetabling was expected to introduce arrangements which would serve to reduce student travel (to/from campus) requirements.

He also outlined the new distribution process for the Student Hardship Fund which will operate from September 2022.

Professor Baldwin advised that, whereas assistance for students during the Covid pandemic had been provided, various considerations and sensitivities would tend to limit any similar arrangements at the present time. However, the University's excellent student welfare and student services provisions will continue to ensure that the University is as supportive as possible during the current economic challenges.

UB1035. Date and Time of Next Meeting

Resolved: That the next meeting be on Thursday, 30th June 2022 (following the Foundation Trustee meeting commencing at 10.00am) in the Adelphi Building Conference Room.

Mr Edney reported that, following distribution of Board Meeting dates for 2022-23, the meeting commencement times will be confirmed (as either 10.00am or 5.00pm) in due course once the majority preference of Board members has been established.

Mr Taylor's suggestion that a future Board Meeting should be scheduled to take place at the Westlakes Campus was also approved.

**I M Fisher
Clerk to the Board**