

University of Central Lancashire
Unreserved Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 22nd September 2022 commencing at 10.00am in the Conference Room, Adelphi Building, Preston campus.

Present :

David Taylor (Chair)

Fiona Armstrong (video-con)	Lesley Lloyd (via video-con)
Graham Baldwin	Ruth Lowry
Jon Baldwin	Anne McCarthy
Nicky Danino	Lorraine Norris
Ridwanah Gurjee	Raham Odjegba
Richard Hext (video-con)	Lis Smith

In attendance:

George Charles (Chief Finance Officer)
Ruth Connor (Deputy Chief Executive)
Ian Fisher (University Secretary and General Counsel and Clerk to the Board)
Carolyn Johnson (Executive Officer to the Vice Chancellor)
Ken Lee (Chief People Officer)
Peter McMellon (assisting the Clerk to the Board)
Fiona Winters (Head of Governance/Deputy Clerk to the Board)

UB1055. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed Jon Baldwin, Raham Odjegba and Lis Smith to their first Board meeting.

Apologies for absence had been received from Sue Ion and Mike Tynan. The Chair advised that comments received would be passed on to appropriate Vice Chancellor's Group (VCG) member(s) and/or fed into the Board's discussions.

UB1056. Declaration of Interests

Declarations of interest pertaining to UB1061 below were received from Mr Taylor, Professor Baldwin, Mr Charles and Mr Fisher.

UB1057. Chair's Announcements

There were no Chair's announcements on this occasion.

UB1058. Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting held on 19th May 2022

Resolved: That the Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting held on 30th June 2022 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

UB1059. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising although it was noted that various matters from the previous meeting would be addressed further under the substantive items on the agenda.

UB1060. 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 then commented as follows:

(i) Students' return to campus

The return of students to campus for the start of the new academic year had restored the 'buzz' which traditionally characterised the campus prior to the Covid pandemic. The University had, of course, appropriately marked the passing of Queen Elizabeth II.

(ii) Government

With a new Prime Minister and a new Education Secretary, the Government's treatment of an array of key matters will continue to be closely monitored. Decisions relating to international student recruitment and to the funding of universities are awaited. As regards student tuition fees, it is hoped that we might return to increases in line with inflation.

(iii) Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

(iv) Sunday Times Good University Guide 2023

Despite improvements under six of the eight key metrics, UCLan had only risen by one place in the overall ranking. The Sunday Times had made significant changes to the assessment criteria.

While the analysis of the Guide results is being undertaken, it remains clear that attention to student progression and student satisfaction will continue to be the key to improved performance in general and in terms of ranking in such tables. The Board also discussed 'research intensity' ratings.

The Board noted Professor Baldwin's comments on the impact and experience of other institutions in the sector. As regards reputational impact, it seemed unlikely that UCLan would be particularly affected by the Guide outcome.

Reserved Minute - Text Redacted.

(v) Office for Students (OfS)

The appointment of a new permanent Chief Executive (Susan Lapworth) has been confirmed. The OfS's intention to undertake quality investigations (including assessments into credibility of degrees at three unidentified institutions) has been noted. With a new Government now taking shape, the direction of the OfS will be monitored by the sector.

(vi) Cost of Living Crisis

There is recognition across the sector that students – particularly those from lower socio-economic backgrounds – are in need of help. At UCLan, attention is being given to student accommodation arrangements and to judicious use of the Student Hardship Fund. The University's accommodation options continue to be sufficient, with good levels of occupancy.

The Board discussed the accommodating of students who attend Manchester Metropolitan University.

Mr Odjegba reported on measures introduced at other institutions (including the University of Sussex) such as 'community kitchens'. Dr Gurjee commented on 'community fridge' arrangements.

Mrs Connor advised on initiatives being pursued at UCLan, including recognition of the need to raise student awareness of provisions made. Mrs Connor undertook to discuss other options with Mr Odjegba.

Mrs Norris also suggested that links with the City's voluntary organisations could enhance the general offer of support to students.

Regarding escalating energy costs, it was noted that this would be covered under the Chief Finance Officer's report.

(vii) Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

(viii) IT Capability Review - Text Redacted

(ix) Academic Structures

A 'de-layering' review of the current structure is expected to enhance accountability and improve performance. It is expected that the new structure will be in place during 2023.

(x) Welcome Week and Road Show

The new programme had proved to be both popular and successful.

(xi) Knowledge Exchange

The Knowledge Exchange Framework results are being analysed. Within the sector, UCLan's knowledge exchange status is held in high regard. When the University's achievements in both the REF Power rankings and the 2022 Social Mobility Index are combined, UCLan is shown as the most research-intensive and socially mobile institution in the North of England. Further information from the ongoing analysis will be provided to the Board in due course.

(xii) Times Higher Awards 2022

Alongside the University of Glasgow, UCLan, with shortlisting in a record-equalling five categories, has most nominations for the 2022 Awards.

In discussing other aspects of the Vice-Chancellor's report, the Board noted Dr Smith's views on the consequences for employee feelings and preferences (and thus their

commitment) where management of support services is transferred to external providers. In commenting on Dr Smith's advice, Professor Baldwin and Mrs Connor elaborated on the background to and objectives of the ongoing Strategic Catering Review. It was noted that the Review would address wider considerations and challenges than just financial ones, with the types and qualities of services also within the scope of the Review.

Dr Gurjee drew attention to the importance of the International Travel Bursary scheme in the context of 'student satisfaction'. Professor Baldwin agreed to look further into the position but cautioned that, with energy costs presenting such a challenge to budget-balancing, there were limits as to what the University could offer.

The Chair agreed that international travel represented a beneficial and transformational feature in the student experience, and he suggested that support from UCLan alumni might be a productive way forward.

Mrs Connor reported that UCLan had received £660k from the UK's Turing Fund.

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

UB1061. Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

UB1062. Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

UB1063. Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

UB1064. Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

UB1065. Annual Report of the Clerk to the Board

Mr Fisher presented the Annual Report of the Clerk to the Board. A copy of the Report is set out in the Minute Book.

Mr Fisher referred Board Members to the new Privacy Notice, which had been prepared in the light of the increased demands for personal data of Board Members.

He also drew attention to the contents of the schedule of Board, Foundation Trust and Committee meeting dates and venues. A similar schedule for 2023-24 academic year will also be produced in due course.

Finally, Mr Fisher drew attention to a correction needed to the Urgent Business Committee Terms of Reference document (the Composition section should read '...the Chair *and* the Deputy Chair' instead of '...the Chair *and/or* the Deputy Chair').

In response to Mrs Lowry's question, Mr Fisher confirmed that the agenda for the next meeting of the Governance, Risk and Nominations Committee would include consideration of the memberships of the Board's Committees and the scope for appointment of the new members of the Board to Committees.

In response to Dr Smith's point, the arrangements for ensuring that the Board is able to maintain appropriate oversight of matters directly relating to delivery of the University's core service were outlined. This included the formal links with and reports from the University's Academic Board.

Resolved: That

- (i) the Clerk to the Board's Annual Report and attachments be noted and
- (ii) the Terms of Reference of the Governance, Risk and Nominations Committee be amended to read " ...the Chair and the Deputy Chair".

UB1066. Any Other Business

(i) Senior Management Capacity

Mrs McCarthy again urged, particularly in the light of the significant issues and challenges in the matters covered in the agenda above alone, care be taken so as to ensure that there is no overloading of the University's managers.

The Chair agreed with the point, although he felt that the Vice-Chancellor's Group was now considerably more focused and efficient than in the past.

(ii) Staff Returning to Work on Campus

In response to Mrs Lloyd's question about the consequences of staff reverting to working on campus (as opposed to the 'Work From Home' practice operated during the pandemic closedown period), Professor Baldwin advised that this matter continued to be monitored. However, there was no evidence of any negative consequences, and the presence of staff on campus obviously contributed significantly to the appropriately lively 'buzz' which students and other users would expect.

Professor Baldwin added that the review of the Preston Campus estate was designed to point out how and where more efficient utilisation of available space might be achieved. The results may include decisions to dispose of some of the buildings currently in use.

The Chair drew attention to the very positive and obvious benefits which users of the Preston Campus were now able to derive from the recently completed Masterplan developments.

(iii) Student transport

Mr Odjegba reported that, linked to the cost of living challenges already acknowledged, the transport challenges confronting students had grown and were now very significant. To whatever extent the University could support its students on transport matters, this would be very welcome.

UB1067. Date and Time of Next Meeting

It was noted that the next meeting will be on Thursday, 24th November 2022 as part of the programme for the Board's next residential event at The Belsfield Hotel, Bowness-on-Windermere.

The Chair confirmed that, in addition to the formal meetings, other sessions, some with external input, will also be included in the two-day programme.

**I M Fisher
Clerk to the Board**