

THE MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 22 JANUARY 2021 VIA MICROSOFT TEAMS

Present:

- Mr Simon Duffy (Chair)
- Ms Evelyn Asante-Mensah
- Mr Sean Anstee
- Dr David Birch
- Professor Tim Brennan
- Ms Rowena Burns
- Mx Bran Catron
- Dr Darren Dancey
- Mrs Janet Dawson
- Mr Carlo Frondaroli
- Mr Mohammad Habeebullah
- Professor Donna Lee
- Mr Mike Perls
- Professor Malcolm Press
- Mr Miles Rothbury
- Mr Mark St John Qualter
- Ms Evelyn Sweeney
- Ms Karen Varty

In attendance:

- Ms Pam Aspden (Head of Governance and Secretariat)
- Mr Tom Calver (Executive Communications Adviser to the Vice-Chancellor) for minutes 1923 and 1924
- Professor Steve Decent (Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor)
- Ms Victoria Holbrook (Assistant Director, Governance, Advance HE), Observer
- Ms Michelle Halliwell (Deputy Head of Governance and Secretariat)
- Mr Andrew Hewett (Director of Finance)
- Professor Karen Moore (Chief Operating Officer)
- Ms Helen Barton (Director of Strategic Planning) for minute 1924
- Professor Jenny Watling (Pro-Vice-Chancellor International) for minute 1925

1921 WELCOME

The Chair welcomed Ms Victoria Holbrook, Assistant Director, Governance, Advance HE as an observer to the meeting as part of a review of Board effectiveness.

1922 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Board members were invited to declare possible conflicts of interest on any matters being discussed at today's meeting. Dr David Birch declared an interest in agenda item 10, Board Membership (minute 1930).

1923 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BRIEFING

The Vice-Chancellor presented an update on University developments (BG/21/01), the policy landscape and the potential implications of recent Government announcements for the University and the sector.

1923.1 University Updates

University updates included:

- Covid arrangements and the deferred spring term student return, including the continuation of online learning for the majority of programmes and consideration of alternative assessment arrangements.
- Capital investment including the commencement of work on the Science and Engineering building and an update on the refurbishment of the John Dalton Tower.
- The opening of the University's office in Wuhan by Dame Caroline Wilson, the British Ambassador to China
- An update on fundraising in support of the new Joint Institute for Education in Hubei.
- Staff successes, including the award of OBE to Professor Joy Duxbury and success for Writing School lecturer, Monique Roffey, in winning the 2020 Costa Novel Award.
- Support to business including delivery of the Small Business Leadership Programme for eligible businesses in the North West and free training offered by the Manchester Fuel Cell Innovation Centre.

1923.2 Policy Landscape

Key drivers in the higher education policy landscape included:

- Sustainability of the sector.
- Value for money and the delivery of quality.
- The role of the Office for Students (OfS) and regulation.
- The size and shape of the sector
- Regional inequalities, levelling up and the importance of place.
- Admissions and the ongoing conversation about improvements to the UCAS system.
- Cultural issues and freedom of speech.
- The importance of research funding.

There was discussion on the impact of Covid-19 on the sector and it was noted that the University's priorities mirrored the external drivers. Proactive engagement with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) and local agencies on the skills and employability agendas was considered to be a priority.

1923.3 Policy Announcements and Consultations

The Vice-Chancellor outlined the following recent policy announcements and consultations:

- 1923.3.1 Augar Review**
Whilst the outcomes of the Augar Review remained on hold, consultations were commencing on:
- Minimum entry requirements.
 - Tuition Fees.
 - Student Loan Company funding for Foundation Year students.
- 1923.3.2 Review of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF)**
Subject Level TEF would be discontinued and there would be consultation on the frequency and measures in institutional TEF.
- 1923.3.3 Adjustments to the Teaching Grant**
Government funding for high cost subjects had been redirected to high volume, high cost subjects, e.g. Medicine, resulting in loss of income for some Creative Arts subjects. London weighting of the teaching grant had also been removed but this was not expected to impact the University significantly.
- 1923.3.4 Admissions**
A consultation on Post Qualification Admissions would be launched.
- 1923.3.5 Skills for Jobs White Paper and University Funding**
The focus of the Skills for Jobs White Paper, with its emphasis on the further education sector, had the potential to impact on skills based provision in the university sector.

The main focus of the recent announcements was an increased role for employers in identifying areas for funding/prioritisation. Governors noted that the above agendas and consultations were set against a backdrop of considerable pressure on the higher education sector created by the pandemic, pressure on salaries, increased pension costs and the loss of the Erasmus scheme.

Despite the current challenges, the Board was assured that the University was continuing to focus on its strategic priorities and moving the University forward, whilst keeping the student educational experience and outcomes at the heart of all its endeavours.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

1924 UNIVERSITY STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK: ROAD TO 2030

1924.1 The Current Strategy and its Successes

In reflecting on the University's progress against its current Strategy, the Vice-Chancellor noted that:

- The University's current Strategy continued to be successful and in line with Government and sector agendas.
- The key priorities were: student retention and progression; continuing to build on progress in research, education and internationalisation; further development of business engagement; and remaining progressive and market-focused.
- The current University Strategy had enabled the University to reposition itself and achievements included:
 - 'Triple Crown' Accreditation of the Business School.
 - Success in the Queen's Anniversary Prize.
 - University of the year for Student Retention in the Times Good University Guide and improvements in the three main university league tables.
 - Strong financial position.
 - Improved sustainability, with external recognition.
 - A vibrant estates programme.
 - High calibre new staff hires and the ability to attract outstanding talent.
 - Increasing popularity with students and applicants.

1924.2 Current and Future Drivers

The University needed to be able to respond to the significant agendas of Covid-19, Brexit and net zero carbon emissions against a background of low investment appetite, regional and national inequalities and challenging global geopolitics. It was incumbent on universities to influence Government policy by demonstrating the benefits of investment in the sector.

1924.3 Proposed Approach to developing the Next Stage of the University's Strategic Framework

The Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Director of Strategic Planning presented a proposed approach to developing the next stage of the University's Strategic Framework (BG/21/02). Work on the Strategy refresh had been paused in spring 2020 due to Covid-19. Changes in the external environment had been taken into account in the current proposals and Governors were invited to be involved in the development of the new Strategy.

The Board supported the aim of refreshing rather than replacing the current Strategy and noted the importance of: completing a portfolio review; ensuring wide-ranging student engagement; and completing regular Equality Impact Assessments during the development process.

There was a discussion on the appropriateness of a ten year next phase of the Strategy given the pressures on staff and the rapidly changing external environment. It was noted that, whilst a ten year Strategy to 2030 would be developed, the strategic framework would be for five years and would build upon existing key areas of focus, which were:

- Graduate employability.
- Value for Money.
- The role of digital and digital education.
- International partnerships.
- High quality education.
- Research
- Sustainability

1924.4 Conclusion

The approach to the development of the next phase of the University Strategy: The Road to 2030, was supported; further consideration would be given to ensuring the appropriate engagement of Governors in the development process.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

1925 INTERNATIONALISATION STRATEGY UPDATE 2019/20

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor International presented an update (BG/21/03) on progress with the Internationalisation Strategy 2019/20. Significant growth in international activity had been achieved during the last four years and the following key achievements were noted:

- 72% increase in on-campus enrolments.
- 33% increase in off-campus students.
- Doubled fee income.
- Established Joint Education Institute with Hubei University.
- More than 100 active partnership agreements in 30 countries.
- 45% increase in student mobility.
- 2.7-fold increase in alumni ambassadors

1925.1 Future Focus

There was discussion on the future focus of the Internationalisation Strategy linked with the Road to 2030 Strategy refresh and it was confirmed that the key focus on international student recruitment, international partnerships, student and staff mobility and international alumni would be retained. In addition, opportunities as well as challenges were presented by:

- The growth in digital technology.

- The impact of Covid-19.
- The need to achieve balance across key markets.
- Brexit.

There was a discussion on the impact of the loss of the Erasmus scheme, which would be compensated for in part by the new Turing Scheme. It was noted that ongoing commitment would be required between the University and existing European partners to ensure the continued flow of students to the UK. Staff and student mobility would be prioritised when travel restrictions were eased.

1925.2 International Market Balance

The Board asked about the University's approach to achieving balance across its international partnerships. This was considered to be particularly important in light of recent reports on events in China, and it was noted that working internationally always required the University to strive to ensure that its core values in supporting freedom of speech and human rights were upheld. However, as a charitable organisation, the University also had a duty to bring enlightenment and provide an avenue for people to derive benefits from educational opportunities and exposure to other cultures. The University engaged with a variety of countries, with no single country dominating, which was welcomed as a strength. In a geopolitical context, recent announcements on human rights in China and the zero carbon agendas were seen as areas of opportunity for the University to work internationally on education and research for the greater good.

1925.3 Conclusion

It was concluded that:

- Governors would welcome stronger focus on actions and achievements in the next Internationalisation Strategy Update to the Board.
- It was important to continue to prioritise opportunities for student/staff mobility and research across all international partnerships.
- It would be beneficial to obtain expert advice on the University's key international markets to ensure full understanding of the risks and challenges.

The Board welcomed the progress that had been made and agreed that internationalisation remained a priority for the University. It was noted that success in international performance was dependent upon reputation, league table performance and benefit to the UK and the international communities it served.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

1926 OFFICE FOR STUDENTS ANNUAL FINANCE RETURN 2020 – FINANCIAL FORECASTS AND COMMENTARY

The Director of Finance presented the Annual Finance Return 2020 - Financial Forecasts and Commentary (BG/21/04) for approval prior to submission to the Office for Students (OfS). The Board noted that the forecasts included an increased budget for the Student Journey Transformation Programme (SJTP), which had been extended due to the pandemic. It was also noted that the University was operating in a changing and increasingly competitive environment but that cash generation continued to exceed Financial Strategy targets, allowing the University to maintain healthy cash reserves throughout the forecast period.

RESOLVED

that the Annual Financial Return 2020 – Financial Forecasts and Commentary be approved for submission to the Office for Students as part of the Annual Finance Return under the general ongoing Condition of Registration (F3) requirements.

1927 REAPPOINTMENT OF CHANCELLOR

The Chief Operating Officer presented a recommendation from the Nominations and Governance Committee (BG/21/05) to reappoint Lord Mandelson as Chancellor for a further period of three years.

RESOLVED

that the reappointment of Lord Mandelson as Chancellor for a further three year term, from 1 April 2021 to 31 March 2024, be approved.

1928 BOARD EFFECTIVENESS

The Chief Operating Officer presented a report (BG/21/06) on Board effectiveness.

1928.1 Board Effectiveness Review 2021

The Board noted the appointment by the Nominations and Governance Committee of Advance HE to conduct a Board Effectiveness Review. Board and Committee meetings would be observed and Governors would have opportunities to engage with the process via a questionnaire and meetings with the reviewers. The timeliness of the review was welcomed, given the challenges posed by the external environment and the recommencement of work on the Strategy refresh.

1928.2 Annual Review of Board Effectiveness 2020

The Board received a summary of the results of the 2020 Board

Effectiveness online survey. Overall, the results were positive and it was noted that the scope for improvement which had been identified in the skills and diversity of the Board's membership had been addressed by the Nominations and Governance Committee in its shaping of the current Independent Governor recruitment process and selection criteria.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

1929 CUC HE CODE OF GOVERNANCE AND STATEMENT OF PRIMARY RESPONSIBILITIES

The Chief Operating Officer presented a report on the new CUC Code of Governance and Statement of Primary Responsibilities (BG/21/07). The adoption of the new Code had been approved by the Nominations and Governance Committee on 27 November 2020. It was noted that the University was largely compliant with the new Code and was working to ensure full compliance. As part of this, the Governors' Statement of Primary Responsibilities had been updated.

RESOLVED

that the updated Statement of Primary Responsibilities and corresponding changes to the Scheme of Delegation be approved.

1930 BOARD MEMBERSHIP

Dr David Birch withdrew from the meeting for this item.

The Chief Operating Office presented an update on Board membership (BG/21/08) including a recommendation from the Nominations and Governance Committee that Dr David Birch be reappointed to the Board for a further three-year term of office.

RESOLVED

that the reappointment of Dr David Birch for a further three-year term of office from 12 February 2021 to 11 February 2024 be approved.

1931 MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 27 NOVEMBER 2020

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the Board meeting held on 27 November 2020 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

1932 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

A report (BG/21/09) was submitted setting out actions to be taken following the meeting of the Board held on 27 November 2020 and progress made with regard to those actions.

1932.1 Annual Performance Report: Overview of Key Performance Indicators 2019/20: 2020 Entry Tariff Data (minute 1902)

The Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor presented an interim update on 2020 Entry Tariff Data. The Board noted the update and suggested it would be useful to see a distribution graph in future reports on entry tariff data.'

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

1933 ACTION TAKEN BY THE CHAIR

A report (BG/21/10) was submitted outlining actions that the Chair had taken on behalf of the Board in accordance with Article 6.2 of the Articles of Government.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

1934 NOMINATIONS AND GOVERNANCE COMMITTEE REPORT

A report (BG/21/11) was submitted providing an update on matters discussed by the Nominations and Governance Committee at its meeting on 27 November 2020.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

1935 SCHEDULE OF AGENDA ITEMS

The Schedule of Agenda Items for 2020/21 (BG/21/12) was submitted for information.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

Signature of Chair _____

Date _____