

THE MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 30 JUNE 2023

Present: Simon Duffy (Chair)
Sean Anstee
Dr David Birch
Professor Tim Brennan
Professor Darren Dancey
Janet Dawson
Carlo Frondaroli
Mohammad Habeebullah
Andrew Heyn
Stella Ibifunmilola
Letitia Nicole Jones
Professor Malcolm Press
Miles Rothbury
Simon Rutter
Karen Varty

In attendance: Andrew Hewett (Chief Financial Officer)
Professor Karen Moore (Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board)
Martin Conway (Head of Governance and Secretariat)
Sandesh Punhani (SU Education Officer – Designate)
Ethan Romer (SU President – Designate)
Vanessa Spinks (Governance Senior Manager)
Professor Nick Brook (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Research) for minute 2092
Professor Andy Dainty (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education) and Ron Hamilton (Director of Education Services) for minute 2093

2089 APOLOGIES AND WELCOME

Apologies for absence were received from Philippa Anderson, Kate Green, Bridget Lea, and Professor Steve Rothberg (Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor).

The Chair welcomed the new Independent Governors, Nick Read and Jill McCormack, to their first meeting, and the incoming Student Governors, Ethan Romer, and Sandesh Punhani, who were attending as observers.

2090 DECLARATION OF INTERESTS

Board members were invited to declare any possible conflicts of interest on any matters being discussed at the meeting. None were declared.

2091 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BRIEFING

The Vice-Chancellor presented a report on the latest University developments (BG/23/26). The key points of discussion included the following:

2091.1 Industrial Relations and Resources

The Vice-Chancellor provided an update on two linked issues within the report, on industrial relations within the sector and on the resources available to universities.

In April 2023, the University and College Union (UCU) notified the University that it was calling on members to undertake a marking and assessment boycott (MAB) with effect from Thursday, 20 April 2023, until the end of September. A limited number of staff within the University's total academic community were participating. Contingency plans had been effective and the impact on students was expected to be minimal.

The Level 3, 4 and 5 Progression Boards were scheduled for 12 July 2023. As such, it was not currently possible to state definitively how many students would be affected but, based on the current number of marks submitted, it was anticipated the scale of impact would be similar to that for final year students.

Unison was also engaged in strike action, with action by some professional services colleagues taking place through June and July.

In terms of resources, the fee level had been relatively static for home undergraduates since the increase to £9000 p.a. introduced in 2012, and fees were set to remain at £9250 p.a. until 2025. This meant that for many institutions, additional pay awards would not be financially sustainable. Within recent negotiations an independent assessment of affordability had been suggested which may lead to an improved or shared understanding of the financial position. In the meantime, regrettably, a level of industrial unrest was likely to continue.

2091.2 QS World Rankings

This year, ManMet appeared in 590th place, moving it into the top 600 institutions globally for the first time. In recent years, the University had not received an individual ranking, instead appearing in the 801-1000 category.

2091.3 Complete University Guide

The University was ranked in 60th in this year's Complete University Guide league table, a rise of seven places from last year. Highlights from the subject tables include Architecture ranking 10th in the UK and top in the region; Tourism, Transport, Travel & Heritage Studies

ranking 10th in the UK and Sports Science rising an impressive 30 places to 16th.

2091.4 Nursing

The University's excellence in nursing had been recognised with the accolade of Nurse Education Provider of the Year (Post-registration) at the prestigious Student Nursing Times Awards 2023.

2091.5 Students' Union Teaching Awards

The annual Student's Union Teaching Awards took place on 22 May 2023. Among the various awards, Psychology was voted department of the year, BA (Hons) Primary Education with QTS was course of the year, and the teacher of the year was Natural Sciences senior lecturer Beatriz Maciá Ruiz. Dr Stephen Boyd and the Careers Team were also recognised for their work on employability.

2091.6 Other Updates

The Vice-Chancellor also provided information on the School of Education, the public realm works, awards for Graduate Recruitment, the Business School and the SODA building, the national honour for Professor Cathy Parker, the Royal Society of Chemistry Tilden prize awarded to Professor Craig Banks, the Security Officer of the Year Award for Mark Neary, and the announcement that Professor Sharon Handley would retire in September after 35 years of dedicated and committed service to the University.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

2092 RESEARCH STRATEGY

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research, presented for approval the Research Strategy 2023-2030 (BG/23/27), and included information on the University's current position and standing. The Strategy had been endorsed by Academic Board on 7 June 2023 and was recommended for approval by the Board.

2092.1 Aim of the Strategy

The Research Strategy was one of two core University Strategies supporting the Road to 2030. It has been informed by the new Education Strategy and cross references several of the enabling strategies. The aim of the Strategy was to deliver and apply excellent research to advance knowledge and tackle the grand challenges of our time. It identified five drivers aligned with the University's Road to 2030 goals:

- Investment in excellence and critical mass.
- Growth of research and knowledge exchange funding.
- A thriving doctoral research community.

- Enhancing our reputation.
- Supporting and empowering staff.

2092.2 KPIs and Monitoring

The Strategy featured three high-level KPIs, alongside targets for 2026, for: external income (research awards of £30m); citations (a Field Weighted Citation Index of 2) and Business Engagement Income (£15m). The Strategy was not driven by metrics alone, however, but also quality to drive the KPIs.

2092.3 Research Focus

The research focus would be on the University's existing areas of strength, including sport, culture and societal challenges, where the impact was highest and these strengths could contribute to broader agendas. This would require the minimisation of barriers between disciplines and building strong relationships with external partners.

2092.4 Priorities

Early strategic priorities included: the development of a research cultural roadmap; establishment of the Doctoral College; a focus on larger grants; embedding research ambitions within Personal Development Reviews (PDRs); and transparency and equitable use of research metrics.

2092.5 Implementation

Plans for the operationalisation of the Strategy were underway and featured a soft launch over summer 2023 with stronger promotion at the start of the 2023/24 academic year.

In considering the Research Strategy the Board discussed the following:

- The extent to which the Strategy sought to double down on existing strengths, focusing on key areas but also building around them, and forging partnerships to establish collective strength. It was recognised that developing new areas of research strength from scratch would carry risk and require significant investment.
- The extent to which the Strategy included sufficient detail on the specific actions to be taken, and whether it was tailored appropriately to Manchester Met. In responding, the Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor for Research highlighted the transformation of the research environment within a short period, and the characteristics of the Strategy that were unique to this University, particularly in terms of civic collaboration, and societal impact.
- The Board agreed to discuss the implementation of the Strategy, in particular priorities, targets and timelines, at the Board of Governors and UEG Strategy event in October.

RESOLVED

that the Research Strategy 2023-2030 be approved.

2093 UNIVERSITY BUDGET 2023/24

The Chief Financial Officer presented for approval the proposed budget for 2023/24 and Financial Forecasts (BG/23/28) following consideration by the People, Finance and Resources Committee on 7 June 2023.

The Board noted the following:

- The budget presented a cash surplus of £39.2m and the income and expenditure statement showed an underlying accounting surplus of £13.5m.
- A summary of the income and expenditure was provided including the increased research grant funding following the successful Research Excellence Framework outcome and the increase in staff costs following the sector pay award for 2023/24.
- The Teachers' Pension Scheme valuation was currently underway, which could affect contribution rates from April 2024.
- The budget included additional investments in IT, student support, academic staff and research.
- The University was operating in a changing and increasingly competitive environment and efficiency savings continued to be important. However, predicted cash generation allowed the University to maintain healthy cash reserves throughout the forecast period to support future investment plans.
- Capital expenditure of £246m was forecast between 2023/24 and 2027/28 and included all approved capital masterplan expenditure. Other projects that were included in the recently approved masterplan were currently being scoped.
- Pay costs would require careful monitoring over the period, and the student visa restrictions affecting postgraduate taught programmes could impact international student number projections. However, the University's exposure was lower than for other institutions and the Embedded International Study Centre would also establish a pipeline of international recruitment at undergraduate level.

RESOLVED

that the proposed budget for 2023/24 be approved.

2094 DEGREE OUTCOMES STATEMENT 2021/22

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education and Director of Education Services presented the University's draft Degree Outcomes Statement 2021/22 (BG/23/29) for approval prior to publication on the University website.

RESOLVED

that the Degree Outcomes Statement 2021/22 be approved.

2095 STUDENT VOICE

The Students' Union (SU) Officers presented the Student Voice Report from Term 2, 2022/23, and an SU Officers' Update (BG/23/30).

The Student Voice Report provided information on:

- Student Officer Elections
- Union Teaching Awards
- Course Reps
- Academic Societies
- PGR Reps
- BAME Ambassadors
- Advice Centre

The report from the Union officers included information on the Greater Manchester Student Assembly Meeting, the Union Awards, and the incoming student officers.

RESOLVED

that the Student Voice Report be received.

2096 APPOINTMENT OF CHAIR AND DEPUTY CHAIR

Simon Duffy and Sean Anstee left the meeting for this item and the Chair was taken by the Deputy Chair, Janet Dawson.

The Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board of Governors, presented a report on the appointment of the Chair and the Deputy Chair (BG/23/31).

The Board noted that the process for the appointment of Chair and Deputy Chair commenced in April 2023 and nominations closed on 9 May 2023. At the close of nominations:

- One nomination was received for the role of Chair of the Board, for Simon Duffy.
- One nomination was received for the role of Deputy Chair of the Board, for Sean Anstee.

The nominations had been endorsed by the Nominations and Governance Committee on 24 May 2023 and were recommended for approval by the Board.

RESOLVED

1. that Simon Duffy be re-appointed as the Chair of the Board for the duration of his current term office, which expires on 31 December 2024.

2. that Sean Anstee be appointed as the Deputy Chair of the Board of Governors for the duration of his current term of office, which expires on 30 November 2025.

2097 RECOMMENDATIONS FROM BOARD COMMITTEES

The Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board of Governors presented a report (BG/23/31) providing recommendations from recent meetings of the Nominations and Governance Committee and the People, Finance and Resources Committee.

2097.1 Board Membership: Category of Membership

From 1 July 2023, a vacancy would arise on the Board amongst the category of independent members, which provided an opportunity to transfer Sean Anstee's category of membership. Sean had originally joined the Board as a co-opted Governor when there were no independent member vacancies available at the time of his appointment.

2097.2 Board Membership: Student Governors

Ethan Romer had been elected as the President of the Students' Union in succession to Letitia Nicole Jones, and Sandesh Punhani had been elected as the Union's Education Officer in succession to Stella Ebalehita Ibifunmilola. Both would take up office from 1 July 2023.

2097.3 Equality and Diversity Champion

In 2017 the Board established the role of an Equality and Diversity Champion to advocate for the University's work in this area. The role had been vacant since March 2023 and, via Chair's Action, the Nominations and Governance Committee had recommended that Bridget Lea should take up the role as the nominated Equality and Diversity Champion. Bridget would also hold membership of the Nominations and Governance Committee for the duration of her appointment as the Champion.

2097.4 People, Finance and Resources Committee Terms of Reference

An independent Board Effectiveness review was undertaken in 2021 by Advance HE. One of its advisory recommendations was to give greater Board emphasis to people and HR matters and the Board of Governors had agreed to rename the Finance and Resources Committee as the People, Finance and Resources. The Committee was also asked to review its terms of reference and at the June 2023 meeting some minor changes were proposed.

RESOLVED

1. the appointment of Sean Anstee as an independent governor, from 1 July 2023 to 30 November 2025.
2. the appointment of Ethan Romer and Sandesh Punhani to serve on the Board of Governors as Student Governors for a one-year term of office, from 1 July 2023 to 30 June 2024.
3. the appointment of Bridget Lea as the Board's Equality and Diversity Champion, from 1 July 2023 to 31 July 2025.
4. the amendments to the Terms of Reference of the People, Finance and Resources Committee.

2098 UNIVERSITY SEAL AND OFFICIAL SIGNATORIES

The Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board of Governors presented a report (BG/23/32) containing recommendations on the application of the University Seal and the authorisation of Official Signatories.

The Board noted the following:

- The University's governing documents, the Instrument and Articles of Government, outlined arrangements for the application of the University seal as follows: "The application of the seal of the Corporation shall be authenticated by the signature of the Chair of the Board of Governors or of another member authorised generally or specially by the Board of Governors to act for that purpose, together with that of any one of the following: any other member of the Board of Governors; the Clerk; any other person who may be authorised generally or specially by the Board of Governors to act for that purpose."
- In accordance with University's Scheme of Delegation, the Deputy Chair was authorised to sign on behalf of the Chair. During the Covid-19 pandemic, when the Chair was unavailable and documents required signing within a timely period, the Board resolved that any of the Independent Governors were permitted to sign on behalf of the Chair. In addition, it was also resolved that, should the Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board be unavailable, any member of the University Executive Group was permitted to sign on behalf of the Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board.
- These were established as temporary arrangements for the duration of the pandemic, but it was now judged that the arrangement should be made permanent to provide flexibility and ensure documents could continue to be sealed in a timely manner. Any action taken under the process would be reported to the Board at the next opportunity.

RESOLVED

1. that the Deputy Chair or any Independent Governor, be authorised to authenticate the University seal and sign on behalf of the Chair of the Board.
2. that the Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor or Chief Financial Officer, both University Executive Group members, be authorised to authenticate the University seal and sign on behalf of the Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board.

2099 MINUTES OF THE BOARD MEETING HELD ON 24 MARCH 2023

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the Board meeting held on 27 March 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2100 ACTIONS ARISING FROM THE PREVIOUS MEETING

A report (BG/23/33) was submitted setting out actions to be taken following the meeting of the Board held on 24 March 2023 and progress made against those actions.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

2101 ACADEMIC BOARD REPORT

The Vice-Chancellor presented a report (BG/23/34) arising from the meeting of the Academic Board held on 9 June 2023.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

2102 ACTION TAKEN BY THE CHAIR

A report (BG/23/35) 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.

2103 RISK MANAGEMENT

A report (BG/23/36) was submitted by the Chief Operating Officer providing an update on risk management.

RESOLVED

that the report be received

2104 COMMITTEE REPORTS

The following reports were submitted for information:

- Audit and Risk Committee – 19 May 2023 (BG/22/37).
- People, Finance and Resources Committee – 24 March 2023 and 7 June 2023 (BG/23/38).
- Nominations and Governance Committee – 24 May 2023 (BG/23/39).
- Remuneration Committee – 24 May 2023 (BG/23/40).

RESOLVED

that the reports be received.

2105 MEETING DATES FOR 2024 AND DRAFT SCHEDULE OF AGENDA ITEMS 2023/24

The Meeting Dates for 2023/24 (BG/23/41) were submitted for information along with the draft schedule of agenda items.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

2106 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

2106.1 Thanks to Retiring Members

On behalf of the Board of Governors, the Chair expressed his sincere thanks to the Deputy Chair, Janet Dawson, who was standing down from the Board after seven years of service. The Chair also thanked Mohammad Habeebullah, Professor Tim Brennan, and the Student Governors, Letitia Jones and Stella Ibifunmilola, who would also come to the end of their terms before the next meeting.

Signature of Chair _____

Date _____