

THE MANCHESTER METROPOLITAN UNIVERSITY

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 9 FEBRUARY 2024

Present: Simon Duffy (Chair)
Philippa Anderson
Sean Anstee
Dr David Birch
Professor Darren Dancey
Carlo Frondaroli
Andy Forbes
Andrew Heyn
Professor Hannah Holmes
Professor Julie Scott Jones
Bridget Lea
Jill McCormack
Professor Malcolm Press
Sandesh Punhani
Ethan Romer
Miles Rothbury
Simon Rutter
Ian Smyth
Karen Varty

In attendance: Andrew Hewett (Chief Financial Officer)
Professor Karen Moore (Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board)
Professor Steve Rothberg (Provost and Deputy Vice-Chancellor)
Professor Andy Dainty (Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education), Dr Jillian Griffiths (Head of SODA), Dr Kryss Macleod (Principal Lecturer), Dr Jennifer McGahan (Senior Lecturer), and Dr Lisa Simmons (Faculty Director of Education), for minute 2136
David Harmes (Deputy CIO), and Dave Camlin (Interim Assistant Director (IT)), for minute 2137
Caroline Hilton (Director of Legal and Governance), for minute 2138
Professor Jenny Watling, Pro-Vice-Chancellor (International), for minute 2134.3
Martin Conway (Head of Governance and Secretariat)

2132 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND WELCOME

Apologies for absence were received from Saeed Atcha, Kate Green and Nick Read. Ian Smyth was welcomed to his first meeting as an independent governor.

2133 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.

2134 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S BRIEFING

The Vice-Chancellor presented a report on the latest University developments (BG/24/41). Professor Jenny Watling (Pro-Vice-Chancellor International) joined the meeting for the item on international students. The key points of discussion included the following:

2134.1 Teaching Excellence Framework

The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the Gold award that the University received in the Teaching Excellence Framework. The award, which would last four years, represented a fantastic outcome and was important external recognition of the progress that the University had made. The Board expressed thanks to Professor Andy Dainty for his leadership in this area, and recognised the contribution made by Students' Union Officers in providing supportive testimony that had been considered within the assessment.

2134.2 Financial Sustainability in the Sector

The Vice-Chancellor updated the Board on recent media reporting on financial challenges within the sector, including announcements of voluntary severance schemes in some institutions and ongoing concerns about the cumulative impact of a flat student fee alongside inflation and impediments to international recruitment. The agenda for this meeting provided an opportunity for the Board to explore these issues in greater depth, and to consider the University's position.

2134.3 International Students

The Vice-Chancellor and Pro-Vice-Chancellor International updated the Board on the impact of recent government interventions around immigration, and on a recent Sunday Times (ST) report in relation to the way in which universities recruited international students to foundation year programmes, and concerns over agent behaviours. Universities UK (UUK) had published [an article in response](#) to allegations made in the original article, and specifically addressing the misperception that entry standards were lower for international students and that these students displaced home recruitment. However, the ST article had been published at an unfortunate time during a period of media and government focus on migration, and the sector would need to ensure standards were maintained and at the same time that any evidence of poor agent behaviour was followed up and addressed. UUK would continue to make the case for the benefits of international student recruitment, including referencing the economic contribution, the soft power it secures, and making the point that the majority of international students return to their home country post study, while also ensuring that the due diligence and monitoring of agents was sufficiently robust. The University's own practices had been reviewed, and there was a

continued focus to ensure appropriate agent behaviour across our international recruitment.

2134.4 Other items

The Vice-Chancellor also updated the Board on the launch of the 200th anniversary celebrations, National Apprenticeship Week, reputational achievements and recognition for colleagues, the ongoing public realm work around All Saints Park, and the Vice-Chancellor's and senior colleagues' visits and engagements including recent international alumni receptions.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

2135 MAINTAINING OUR FINANCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

The Chief Financial Officer gave a presentation on maintaining the University's financial sustainability (BG/24/02). The main points included:

- Forecasts from the OfS showed how dependent the sector is on growing international tuition fee income into the future although latest information shows that this source of income may now be close to its peak.
- The University was continuing to identify savings of £10-£14m per year and there was short term and long-term challenges which needed to be addressed in achieving them.
- In the short term, reducing student attrition was key, as this represented a significant opportunity for improvement. In addition to this, reviewing module, curriculum and workload efficiencies, and prioritising workload for those delivering high quality research would deliver greater productivity.
- Longer term challenges included increasing the global reputation of the University.
- The University's approach to securing efficiency savings would continue to be strategic, with process improvements driven by systems investment and informed by staff and student personas. Prioritisation would be aligned with the University's strategic objectives and seek to eliminate areas of known weakness.
- The Board would welcome a further presentation on financial sustainability and the challenges facing the sector at the October Strategy session.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

2136 EDUCATION STRATEGY UPDATE

The Pro-Vice-Chancellor Education presented a report (BG/24/03) on progress with the University's Education Strategy. The report analysed progress against the KPIs along with a summary of achievements and initiatives that had supported implementation. The main points included:

- In early 2023 the new Education Strategy was launched, supported by a robust and ambitious implementation plan. This included a switch to a

- semester-based academic year structure across the vast majority of provision, along with the introduction of the Future Me enrichment week.
- The University had been able to demonstrate strong performance across most of its KPIs over this period. This was despite ongoing challenges posed by a fluid regulatory environment and the legacy of the COVID-19 pandemic. Some challenges remained, however, specifically in relation to closing differential awarding gaps and this would continue to be a key focus over the next few years. A focus on further improving Level 5 returners and our Graduate Prospects Scores to achieve at least sector-levels of performance across all of our subject areas, was also a priority.
 - The Board discussion referenced attainment gaps and sought a concerted project-based effort to tackle them rather than interventions each year. An assurance was provided that these gaps were being tracked and follow up action, both in terms of challenging local assessment practices and curriculum design, was being undertaken.
 - In December 2023, the University received the outcome of the Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submission and received an overall Gold award. This reflected the excellent progress made in delivering an outstanding student experience and ongoing progress in relation to graduate outcomes.
 - The presentation was supported by four faculty perspectives provided by Dr Jillian Griffiths (Head of SODA) on NSS improvements in SODA, Dr Kryss Macleod (Principal Lecturer) on optimising course design for student success in the Law School, Dr Jennifer McGahan (Senior Lecturer) on work integrated learning in Psychology, and Dr Lisa Simmons (Faculty Director of Education), on improving graduate outcomes in Science and Engineering.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

2137 NETWORK MODERNISATION BUSINESS CASE

The Deputy CIO, David Harmes, and the Interim Assistant Director (IT), Dave Camlin, presented a business case for network modernisation (BG/24/04), which included a request from IT & Digital (IT&D) to seek approval to establish the Network Modernisation project to remediate significant risks and to facilitate the transformation of the University's IT infrastructure. The main points included:

- This project was a key deliverable under the Technology Transformation initiative of the Infrastructure and Cloud Programme approved by the University's Information Systems Strategy and Prioritisation Board (ISSP) on 6 November 2023. In enabling transformation, it also satisfied the driver for the programme to reduce technical risk.
- This project would allow the University to create a consistent, secure, and reliable foundation for all of the University's digital service offerings, whilst providing manageability, supportability and insights into the user experience. It would provide for the segmentation of access, services and data to allow performance to be optimised, provide more consistency in the level of service being provided and improve our security posture.
- In addition to a significant improvement in the University's ability to guard against cyber threat, the new network would deliver improved

performance, increase flexibility, safely support emerging technologies, improve service availability, meet the needs of research bid standards and improve user satisfaction.

- The business case had been endorsed by the Information Systems and Strategy Prioritisation Group, the University Executive Group and the People, Finance and Resources Committee.
- £1m of the approved FY-23/24 Network Modernisation budget (£2m approved) had ISSP approval to place orders for high priority equipment refresh and to secure contingent resources to start delivery. The total business case outlined a plan to deliver the project over three financial years and requested the six-year agreed budget to be brought forward for spend in years one to three. Significant Opex Uplift estimated at £690k per annum (based on list price costs) was expected from Year three and onwards.
- The Board considered the timing and phasing of defining standards within the project, and the security and patching protocols that would be undertaken as part of the modernisation.

RESOLVED

that the Network Modernisation Business Case be approved.

2138 CONFIDENTIAL MINUTE

Not for publication in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act.

2139 STUDENT VOICE

The Students' Union President and Students' Union Education Officer presented an update on the student voice (BG/24/06). The main points included:

- The Student Voice Report was reviewed by the Education Committee on 24 January 2024 and was due for consideration by the Academic Board on 4 March 2024. The Report focused on the following areas: Course Representatives, Academic Societies and Advice Centre Statistics and themes.
- The Report from the Students' Union Officers provided information on accommodation issues, the international student experience, the harm reduction campaign, and the SU Officer elections where nominations were now open.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

2140 APPOINTMENT OF THE CHANCELLOR

The Chief Operating Officer presented an update on the appointment of the Chancellor (BG/24/07). It was noted that:

- On 31 March 2024, Lord Mandelson would come to the end of his current term of appointment, having served as Chancellor of the University for a period of eight years following his appointment to the role on 1 April 2016. Lord Mandelson was initially appointed for a five-year term by the Board of Governors, and then reappointed for a further three-year term in 2021.
- During his tenure Lord Mandelson had been an outstanding advocate for the University in national and international arenas and he continued to engage with the University closely and promote its achievements in his own networks. Discussions were ongoing with an outstanding candidate to succeed Lord Mandelson and were at an advanced stage. It was anticipated that the new Chancellor would take up the role from 1 January 2025.
- A further short period of re-appointment for the current Chancellor, from 1 April 2024 to 31 December 2024, was therefore recommended in order to manage the succession and provide for Lord Mandelson's continued service over the interim.
- There was a high degree of confidence that Lord Mandelson's advocacy for the University would continue beyond his term as Chancellor.

RESOLVED

that a further period of re-appointment for Lord Mandelson as Chancellor, from 1 April 2024 to 31 December 2024, be approved.

2141 MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON 24 NOVEMBER 2024

RESOLVED

that the minutes of the Board meeting held on 24 November 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

2142 MATTERS ARISING FROM THE MINUTES

A report (BG/24/08) was submitted setting out actions to be taken following the meeting of the Board held on 24 November 2023 and progress made against those actions.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

2143 BOARD MEMBERSHIP

The Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board presented an update on Board membership (BG/24/09).

RESOLVED

that the report be received

2144 ACTION TAKEN BY THE CHAIR

A report (BG/24/10) 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.

2145 ACADEMIC BOARD REPORT, 19 DECEMBER 2023

A report (BG/24/11) was submitted providing an update on business conducted by the Academic Board at its meeting on 19 December 2023.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

2146 COMMITTEE REPORTS

The following reports were submitted for information:

- Audit and Risk Committee – 23 January 2024 (BG/24/12).
- People, Finance and Resources Committee – 24 January 2024 (BG/24/13)

RESOLVED

that the reports be received.

2147 SCHEDULE OF AGENDA ITEMS

The Schedule of Agenda Items for 2023/24 (BG/24/14) was submitted for information.

RESOLVED

that the report be received.

2148 ANY OTHER BUSINESS

2148.1 Graduation Ceremonies

The Vice-Chancellor updated the Board on the plans for the July ceremonies, including the honorary awards scheduled to be conferred and the Commemorative Medals which would be awarded for the first time to a select group of individuals that had made a significant contribution to the University.

2148.2 Head of Governance and Secretariat

The Chair announced that Martin Conway, Head of Governance and Secretariat, would be leaving the University in April to take up a new role in the sector. The Board thanked Martin for his support over his time with the University.

Signature of Chair _____

Date _____