



**Minutes  
Board of Governors  
09 June 2022**

**The meeting was held in the Waldegrave Room and Online**

**Present:** Mr Paul Barber  
Mr David Brambell  
Ms Victoria Calvino – Student Governor  
Mr Jeff Cottle  
Ms Noreen Doyle  
Dr Fiona Gatty  
Mr Dave Hartnett  
Mr George Jenkin – Staff Governor  
Mr Anthony McClaran – Vice-Chancellor  
Ms Claire McDonnell  
Rt Rev Richard Moth (Chair)  
Ms June Mulroy  
Mrs Deborah Streatfield  
Professor Dominic Tildesley

**In Attendance:** Mrs Elizabeth Bell – Director of Strategic Planning  
Mrs Jo Blunden – Chief Operating Officer (“COO”)  
Mr Andrew Browning – University Secretary (Minutes)  
Mr George Chaplin – Observer – Student Union  
Professor Symeon Dagkas - Provost  
Mr Richard Solomon – Chief Financial Officer (“CFO”)  
Mr Ben Williamson – Financial Controller

**Apologies:** Dr Christine Campbell, Pietro Palladino

21/65	<p><b>WELCOMES</b> The meeting opened with a prayer.  Prayers were said for Professor Anthony Towey, who is gravely ill.</p>		
21/66	<p><b>DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST</b>  There were no declarations of interest.</p>		

21/67	<p><b>EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY CHARTERS</b></p> <p>There was a presentation by Jane Chambers, Head of Secondary and Lifelong Learning, Tally Kandola the Head of Organisation Development, Melina Healy, Learning Development lecturer and Samantha Goober, Head of Equality and Inclusion Projects. The presentation was on the Athena Swan and the Racial Equality Charter both of which the University would be applying for over the next 12 months.</p> <p>After two years preparation the Athena Swan submission is to be submitted in November of this year. The draft will be brought to FRC in September together with the following Board meeting for approval.</p> <p>It was highlighted that a higher proportion of academic promotions were awarded to male employees than female employees. To improve this work was being done on the promotions criteria and there would be a push to encourage more females and other under-represented groups to apply for academic promotion.</p> <p>The Race Equality Charter work began in January 2021 and would be submitted in July 2023. The conversion rate of the recruitment of BAME students was falling and there had been a fall in the number of BAME staff appointed. The University was trailing behind other universities in this regard and work was being done to improve this situation.</p> <p>It was expected that in June 2023 the REC application would be coming to the Board for consideration ahead of its submission.</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor said that he was very grateful for the work that had been done so far. He said that the statistics relating to the recruitment of ethnic minority employees was concerning and further work needed to be done on this. The Provost said that the University needed to catch-up with other areas of the sector.</p> <p>The Board asks whether there were issues with the culture of the University. SG said while there was no active discouragement elements of the University's</p>		

	<p>culture needed to improve and that barriers, such as the timing of meetings and recruitment processes, should be improved.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the presentation.</p>		
21/68	<p><b>MINUTES OF PREVIOUS MEETING</b></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of the Board which took place on 09 June 2022 were approved by the Board.</p>		
21/69	<p><b>MATTERS ARISING</b></p> <p>There were no matters arising.</p>		
21/70	<p><b>VICE-CHANCELLOR'S UPDATE</b> <i>Paper 1 refers</i></p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor highlighted the University's performance in the REF which would be discussed later in the meeting. It was hoped that as well as having a positive effect on QR funding received by the University it would also lead to an improvement in league table performance.</p> <p>The Board were also asked to note the University's performance in the ITT review with it, unlike two-thirds of other Education providers, moving through to the second stage of reaccreditation.</p> <p>A new Chief Information Officer, Kevin Braim, was due to be joining the University next week. The process to appoint the Dean of Business and Law was ongoing with there being a high calibre range of candidates on the long-list.</p> <p>At the Gillis Centre there had been positive discussions with the Catholic Church in Scotland regarding potential courses which could be run from there.</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor had attended the HEPI annual conference. At the conference the Student Experience Survey was launched and the Universities Minister Michele Donelan also spoke. The Minister said little about the sector that she had not already said previously but she did highlight that the OfS would be investigating pockets of low quality within the sector. She highlighted the importance of lifelong learning and encouraging HEIs to enter into partnerships with local FE providers which was</p>		

	<p>something that the University was already looking to do. The main new announcement that came in the area of mental health with the appointment of a new Student Support Champion and that more money would be made available for universities to work with local mental health providers.</p> <p>The Student Experience survey had shown students to be more positive about their experience at University than the previous year which had been dominated by Covid.</p> <p>The University has been nominated for four awards in the Aimhigher London awards for widening participation.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the Vice-Chancellor's Report.</p>		
21/71	<p><b>CHAPLAINCY AT ST MARY'S</b> <i>Paper 2 refers</i></p> <p>The Chaplain presented the report on Chaplaincy at St Mary's.</p> <p>He told the effect of Covid on the first semester had an adverse effect on engagement with students for the first part of the year with events such as Feast Day mass being curtailed.</p> <p>There was a prayer room for students of other faiths and in particular Islamic students.</p> <p>The Board asked about pastoral care of students. He said that he never claimed to be a counsellor but students were always welcome to speak to him. He said that a full-time chaplain may be more beneficial to the University for this.</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor said that through the Chaplaincy that social action had been taken including collection for food banks. The COO highlighted the work that had been done for interfaith week.</p> <p>The Board asked about the visit of the Relics of St Bernadette. The Chaplain said that it was being promoted as a "Day in Lourdes" with engagement with local schools and was expected to be well-attended.</p>		

	The Board <b>noted</b> the report.		
21/72	<p><b>OfS ANALYSIS OF GOOD HONOURS</b>  <i>Paper 3 refers</i>  The Director of Strategic Planning told Board that the OfS had committed to provide an analysis of degree classifications awarded by HEIs over a 10-year period to highlight areas of potential grade inflation.</p> <p>The percentage of good honours at the University awarded in 2019-20 had increased by nearly 10% from the previous year which was primarily due to the “no detriment” provisions which had been introduced in response to the Covid pandemic. Most of the sector had seen a similar increase. The University had seen a fall in the percentage of good honours and first class degrees award in 2020-2021.</p> <p>The Director of Strategic Planning reminded the Board that the University had been asked to account for its increase in percentage of students awarded good honours degrees in 2019 and had responded by explaining that there had been a change in the degree algorithm as well as changes to the teaching on University modules.</p> <p>The Board asked which had more effect on the increase in proportion of good honours awarded, the change of the algorithm or the quality of the teaching? The Director of Strategic Planning said she could not comment on the academic provision but that a good proportion of the change was down to the adoption of the new algorithm in 2016/2017. She said that there had also been a closing of the attainment gap of ethnic minority students. The Provost said that a lot of work had been done on closing the attainment gap and this contributed a great deal to the increase.</p> <p>The Board asked whether there was any evidence that employers would look unfavourably at St Mary’s if they felt that the degrees awarded were of lower value. The Provost said that there was no evidence that employers took this view.</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor said that there was a tension between the concern surrounding the credibility of awards and the need to for HEI’s to close the attainment gap and maintain and improve quality. The OfS has made clear that it wants the levels of</p>		

	<p>good honours to return to the levels they were at pre-pandemic.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the paper.</p>		
21/73	<p><b>STUDENT RECRUITMENT</b> <i>Oral Update</i></p> <p>The Provost told the Board that tomorrow marked the end of the UCAS cycle when it came to students making firm choices as to which offer they wished to accept. He said that currently the University was 45 firm acceptances down on last year and 28 down from 2020. There was still a full day to go and around 500 prospective students had yet to make a decision. Postgraduate acceptances were currently up 244 compared to last year; however, this figure was being treated with caution due to the large increase in the number of international applying to come to the University.</p> <p>The Provost said that after the cycle had closed there would be consideration of what programmes would need to be suspended due to low numbers of firm acceptances.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the student recruitment report.</p>		
21/74	<p><b>SENIOR ACADEMIC RESTRUCTURE</b> <i>Paper 4 refers</i></p> <p>The Provost explained that there was a move to create a structure of Faculties and Schools at the University. He said the restructure was in response to the student recruitment numbers and the need to grow in certain areas and to standardise academic structures throughout the University. It was also intended to respond to the terms of the Heads of Department and Associate Deans coming to an end in July 2023.</p> <p>A new faculty of Business and Law was being created over the summer with the intention of the new Dean being appointed in the autumn.</p> <p>The restructure was intended to ensure that academic management did not operate in silos and as well as having responsibilities in their own</p>		

	<p>faculties Deans would have wider responsibilities across the University for issues such as Equality and Diversity, and Student Experience.</p> <p>The Board asked whether there would be specific heads of Theology and Sport? The Provost said that within the faculties there would be schools including a School of Sport. A faculty of Theology and Education was being created and there would be schools of Theology and Education and it was likely that there would be someone from each of those schools reporting into the Dean.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the paper.</p>		
21/75	<p><b>REF RESULTS</b> <i>Paper 5 refers</i></p> <p>The Provost said that the outcome of the REF was the best ever achieved by the University. The University was the highest rising in the Times Higher climbing 32 places and increased its GPA by a whole percentage point which was the highest of any institution. The University was also the top research institution in GuildHE. It was expected that the improvement in the results from 2014 would have a positive effect in the University's position in the league tables.</p> <p>Looking forward the University would be re-vamping its 2028 strategy for the REF and this would be coming to the Board in the new academic year.</p> <p>The Board congratulated all involved in the process and agreed that the planning for REF 2028 should now and there should be consideration of where investment should be made. The Board also asked if those leading the submissions could potentially come and speak to the Board at future meetings to outline their plans.</p> <p>The Board said that the improvement in the REF would potentially have a positive effect on postgraduate recruitment and even on undergraduate recruitment if the University could use them to market itself as a centre of excellence in areas such as Sports Science and Theology.</p> <p>The Vice-Chancellor said that there would be a more sustained effort for the REF over the whole 7</p>	AB	AY 2022/23

	<p>year period and there was also now a Research Strategy in place. He said that there should be a submission in Education in 2028. The development of a Workload Model which would enable research active staff to have allocated research time would also be a positive step.</p> <p>The Provost said for the next REF Impact would have considerably more weighting. The University also needed to do more work on its environment which would potentially require more resources.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the REF outcome.</p>		
21/76	<p><b>PORTFOLIO REVIEW</b> <i>Paper 6 refers</i></p> <p>The Provost said that the portfolio review had been considered and approved by the Academic Board. 197 module efficiencies had been reported and 5000 teaching hours had been released. The portfolio review was becoming a process which would be conducted annually. This process would also be streamlined.</p> <p>The Board welcomed the portfolio review and that it would be conducted on annual basis.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the paper.</p>		
21/77	<p><b>MANAGEMENT ACCOUNTS</b> <i>Paper 7 refers</i></p> <p>The management accounts to 30 April 2022 were presented by the Financial Controller. He told the Board that operating profits were at £4m in line with the revised budget with a surplus of £0.4m. Year to date income was £0.6m adverse to revised budget with tuition fees being £0.1m adverse to budget and other income being £0.4m adverse to budget. Staff costs were £0.2m favourable to budget and there had been a non-staff cost underspend of £0.4m. The current cash balance stood at £13.4m.</p> <p>The CFO said that he was positive that the University would be able to achieve a small surplus at the end of the financial year barring any unexpected costs being incurred.</p>		



	<p>The University Secretary asked whether the risk point relating to the final payments of tuition fees had now passed. The Financial Controller confirmed that this point had passed and that the expected tuition fee income had been received.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the management accounts.</p>		
21/78	<p><b>BUDGET AND FINANCIAL PROJECTIONS</b> <i>Papers 8 refers</i></p> <p>The Budget and Financial Projections were presented by the CFO. He said that the financial trajectory as approved by the Board in April had been modelled and that if that trajectory was met there could be in the region of £45m capital expenditure over the next five years. £20m of this would come from income with the remaining potentially coming from borrowing in years 4 and 5. To enable this borrowing the University would have to perform as financially modelled.</p> <p>The risks to the budget and forecasts not being met came from inflationary pressures, failure to achieve the necessary income from partnerships and failure to recruit the targeted number of students.</p> <p>There was further gap of £10m over the next five years which would need to be filled. This was expected to be done by the creation of new courses, further development of partnerships, increase in enterprise income and to a lesser extent from savings being made.</p> <p>The CFO said that he was confident that the budget and projections would be met next year. The following four years were predicated on the University achieving growth and this would always be challenging but the University was re-orientating itself so that it would meet that challenge.</p> <p>The Board asked about the significance of inflation. The CFO said that it was significant and this had been taken into account. The CFO said that fortunately a lot of the energy costs were hedged on fixed pricing for 2022/2023 which reduced the impact of inflation but allowances had however been made for future years.</p>		

	<p>The Board voted on whether to approve the budget and financial projections. The vote was as follows:-</p> <p>In favour: 14 votes Against: 0 votes Abstentions; 0</p> <p>The Budget for 2022/2023 and financial projections were therefore approved by the Board.</p>		
21/79	<p><b>STUDENTS UNION REPORT</b> <i>Paper 9</i></p> <p>The Education President told the Board that the Society Awards event had taken place in April. The Summer Ball had also taken place for the first time after 3 years. The LGBTQ+ campaign was running throughout the month of June.</p> <p>The Board <b>noted</b> the Students' Union Report and thanked Victoria Calvino for her service to the Board over the last year.</p>		
21/80	<p><b>CUC GUIDE ON TACKLING HARASSMENT</b> <i>Paper 10 refers</i></p> <p>The University Secretary asked the Board to note CUC Guide on Tackling Harassment. The guide set out the assurances that the Board should be looking for when considering the issue.</p> <p>The COO said that a lot of work was being done in this area by Student Services. Guidance and training was being given to students on this issue and there was also engagement with the local community. The work that was being done on the Statement of Expectations which came to the last Board meeting was important.</p> <p>There was a suggestion for there to be Board champion on this issue and Claire McDonnell volunteered to take this role. She would liaise with the Director of Student Operations on this issue.</p>	CM/AB	09/22
21/81	<p><b>AUDIT COMMITTEE</b> <i>Paper 11 Refers</i></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of the Audit Committee which took place on 12 May were noted by the Board.</p>		

21/82	<p><b>FINANCE AND RESOURCES COMMITTEE</b> <i>Paper 12 Refers</i></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of the Finance and Resources Committee which took place on 26 May were noted by the Board.</p>		
21/83	<p><b>ACADEMIC SCRUTINY COMMITTEE</b> <i>Paper 13 Refers</i></p> <p>The minutes of the meeting of the Academic Scrutiny Committee which took place on 25 May were noted by the Board.</p>		
21/84	<p><b>VALEDICTION</b></p> <p><b><i>Noreen Doyle</i></b></p> <p>Noreen Doyle was thanked by the Board for her services to the University in particular her being a member of the Finance and Resources Committee and the Development Committee.</p>		
21/82	<p><b>Dates of Next Meetings</b> 29 September 2022 03 November 2022 (Mini Away Day) 29 November 2022 19 January 2023 23 March 2023 (Away Day) 20 April 2023 20 June 2023</p>		

**END**