



University Board Meeting (By MS Teams video conference)
Minutes of a meeting held on 2 October 2020

Members Present

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| Prof Richard Conder (Chair) | Chair of the University Board |
| Paula Alliston | Professional & Support Staff Member |
| Jim Andrews | Chief Operating Officer (COO) |
| Nick Beal | Independent Board Member |
| John Beswick | Independent Board Member |
| Alistair Brien | Independent Board Member (to item 5.1) |
| Prof Carol Clark | Senate Member of the Board |
| Annette D'Abreo | Independent Board Member |
| Karima Fahmy | Independent Board Member |
| Dr Lois Farquharson | Academic Staff Board Member |
| Karl Hoods | Independent Board Member (Item 4.1 onwards) |
| Stuart Jones | Independent Board Member |
| David Kane | Independent Board Member |
| Jean Lang (Deputy Chair) | Independent Board Member |
| Naomie Lebe | President, Students' Union at Bournemouth University |
| Sara Luder | Independent Board Member |
| Prof Tim McIntyre-Bhatty | Deputy Vice-Chancellor (DVC) |
| Tola Oloyede | Independent Board Member |
| Des Pullen | Independent Board Member |
| Prof John Vinney | Vice-Chancellor (VC) |
| Deborah Ward | Independent Board Member |

In attendance

Tim Armstrong (PwC) (Item 1); Karen Best (PwC) (Item 1); Jacqui Brasted (JB HE Consulting, Observing); Geoff Rayment (Committee Clerk), David Reeve (Interim Director of Finance (IDoF)), Deborah Wakely (Clerk to the Board)

1. CPD Briefing: The View from the Lenders (PwC)

20/001 The Chair welcomed Mr Armstrong and Ms Best of PwC who gave a presentation on current perspectives in higher education financing. [Redacted]

2. Welcome, Apologies and Declarations of Interest (Chair)

20/002 The Chair welcomed Prof Clark, newly appointed Senate member to the Board, and Dr Brasted, who was observing the meeting to inform the Board's independent review of effectiveness. Apologies were noted

from Mr Furniss.

20/003 There were no new declarations of interest. Mr Jones declared his existing declaration as an employee of Savills as they had provided professional advice in respect of Bournemouth House (Item 5.2). It was confirmed, however, that the University had a pre-existing relationship with Savills as advisors and that Mr Jones had no involvement in provision of that advice or the commissioning of it.

3. Minutes of the Board Meeting held on 17th July 2020 (Chair)

20/004 The minutes of the previous meeting were **approved** as an accurate record.

3.1. Matters arising and actions register (Chair)

20/005 The actions register was **noted**, with all actions being either completed or covered under other agenda items, below, with the exception of Action 165 (to circulate a note with further information on fundraising). The COO would action that for a future meeting when other priorities permitted.

4. STRATEGIC MATTERS

4.1. VC's Update and BU 2025 Overview (VC)

20/006 The Board **noted** the update report, including further analysis of the National Student Survey (NSS) results as previously requested by the Board. The VC then gave a presentation on BU2025 progress and next steps, commencing with some contextual information on ministerial changes and political perspectives. Minister of State for Universities, Michelle Donelan, had undertaken a virtual visit to BU on 1st October when she had met students and graduates. Universities and associated funding were now entirely within the remit of the Department for Education. The Secretary of State for Education continued to champion technical education. A major review of the NSS had been announced and KEF and REF submission dates had been announced. A response to the Augar report and HE funding strategy were still awaited.

20/007 Turning to the Covid-19 pandemic the VC set out how the Sector had responded by moving to on-line/blended learning delivery. At BU the response had been led by the Major Incident Group and there had been a focus on health and wellbeing, communications with stakeholders and the introduction of the No Detriment policy.

20/008 On student recruitment, undergraduate numbers had now exceeded the pre-Covid forecasts and postgraduate numbers were close to pre-Covid budget figures, but with international student numbers being down – although it was noted that there was still further recruitment expected in January.

20/009 Achieving financial sustainability remained a priority and costs and cash-flow forecasts continued to be monitored. A financial strategy was due to be presented to the next meeting of the Board, to be monitored through the updated KPIs.

20/010 The VC explained that people remained the first priority, with a focus on health and safety, support and wellbeing. Collaborative efforts and agility had enabled remote working, research and wellbeing support to continue and work was ongoing on Athena Swan and Race Equality Charter submissions. Good progress had been made on REF 2021 with its theme of inclusivity, and the number of staff FTE submitting had increased by 77% to 516.

20/011 Turning to the 'inspiring learning' strategic objectives, the VC explained that progress had been made against the sector in the overall NSS scores and there was more to be done (noting also the planned OfS review). The pandemic restrictions meant extra-curricular activities and placements were challenging. Continuation and completion could also be impacted and would be kept under close review over the coming year.

20/012 Progress had been made on the University's physical environment, with the Bournemouth Gateway Building due to come into use in October and further improvements to the Chapel Gate site planned for next Summer. IT work had focused on remote working and on-line learning.

20/013 The VC presented an overview of graduate outcomes data which showed that 91% were in work or further study and BU was 4% ahead of the Sector in terms of the percentage of graduates in highly skilled roles. LEO longitudinal data was also provided which gave similar information by subject classification.

20/014 The VC provided further analysis of the NSS results which were 2.5% below sector average for the overall satisfaction score, compared to 5% last year and BU was now 1.4% below benchmark. There was some volatility in the results by subject area, with Nursing Science and Computer Animation both having lower scores. Looking ahead, action would be taken to improve scores and student experience in line with NSS corporate plan – the target was still 90% across BU. The University had also maintained its position in the Global THE rankings and was placed in the THE's top 100 Young Universities.

20/015 On 'Advancing Knowledge' objectives, research bidding activity had increased compared to the same time last year and the average income per bid had also increased, with 64% being aligned to strategic investment areas. The focus for 2020/21 would include the KEF submission and the new Climate and Ecological Crisis Action Plan (CECAP).

20/116 The IDoF presented an update on the current budget position. [Redacted]

20/117 The Chair asked what contingency was in place should the planned disposal of buildings be delayed. The IDoF explained that this would be challenging, but that this would be among the sensitivities factored into the going concern review. The banking facilities, once confirmed, would provide some comfort but it would still be very tight with a need for continued close monitoring of costs.

20/118 Members asked for further information on the impact of Covid on campus. The COO explained that a minority of teaching activity was currently taking place on campus. The Library and certain other key facilities remained open and available. The campus was slowly becoming busier but most engagement was still taking place on-line. In terms of case numbers, 14 students had been diagnosed with Covid, but these cases were not related and did not constitute an 'outbreak'. Communications had been sent to students reminding them of their responsibilities and daily conversations were taking place with external stakeholders such as Public Health England and the local police.

20/119 Members asked about Brexit and the DVC said that it did not appear to be having any impact yet in terms of bidding for EU research funding, although the window of opportunity was closing. A UKRI Panel was discussing possible alternative schemes which they may run post-Brexit but uncertainty was mounting.

20/120 Members discussed whether opportunities were emerging from the response to the pandemic which might be built into BU2025, such as a shift from physical to digital assets. The VC agreed that the campus based delivery model had been enhanced, allowing, for example, international students to remain in their home countries for semester one, and pedagogy was evolving to meet the challenges of the pandemic. It was also noted, however, that the new approaches may see an increase in cyber security and data protection risks.

20/121 Members asked what actions had been taken to achieve the positive student recruitment outcomes and whether any new best practice had been identified moving forward. The COO explained that agility and responsiveness had been key, together with good course design and a focus on employability. Focus had also shifted to more local markets and digital marketing in response to the pandemic.

20/122 Members asked how teaching hours compared to pre-Covid levels and whether all students had on-line access. The DVC explained that seminars were largely being delivered 'live' on-line, supported by recorded materials. He thought that there were more hours being delivered overall rather than less. This level of basic IT access was considered a minimum requirement for students, but facilities on campus were

available if needed and there was a hardship fund to support any students who needed help obtaining equipment. The situation was being monitored and formed part of the ongoing operational conversation.

20/123 The Board **noted** the VC's update.

4.2. Review of the BU 2025 KPI Framework (VC/DVC)

20/124 The VC presented key points from this report which proposed a number of revisions to the KPI framework following the planned review. The revised set was more concise and provided for a re-focused oversight, taking account of the Board's feedback. Some indicators, such as critical mass, had been moved to a secondary level where they would continue to provide useful data for consideration at management, rather than Board level. Indicator arrows had been added to show changes in performance, with contextual information provided in the narrative comments. Additional financial metrics had been added, bringing the KPI report in line with the financial dashboard considered by the Finance & Resources Committee (FRC). The indicators remained challenging, for example in the area of research performance.

20/125 Members welcomed the amendments and commented that the report was easier to follow and highlighted the important issues. The financial indicators were welcomed, as was moving the critical mass indicators to a lower level, although it was suggested that these might continue to be reported to FRC due to its remit around HR.

Action: Continue to report the Critical Mass indicators to FRC.

Action by: COO/DVC

20/126 The Board **approved** the revised KPIs.

4.3. 'Blue Skies' Session on Risks (DVC)

20/127 The DVC introduced this session which sought to give the Board an opportunity to consider whether all risks were appropriately captured and discuss risks associated with the delivery of the University's objectives. All Members had been invited to provide, prior to the meeting and without referring to the current risk register, their thoughts on the top three risks to the University, looking forward 5 years or possibly more.

20/128 Collating the responses from Members, the three risks highlighted by most members were a) financial sustainability, b) business continuity, and c) Government policy. The key risks identified would be considered in the context of the risk register together with the full spectrum of risks raised by Members. Wellbeing had been raised by 2 respondents but was not in the current register and did need to be added. The updated risk register would be further refined and presented to the Audit, Risk & Governance Committee (ARG) and then the Board.

5. OPERATIONAL MATTERS

5.1. Additional Banking Facilities (IDoF) – STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

20/129 The IDoF updated the Board on progress with agreeing bank facilities. [Redacted]

5.2. Disposal of Bournemouth House (COO)

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

20/137 The COO introduced this report which sought the Board's approval to renegotiate the terms related to the sale of Bournemouth House. [Redacted]

5.3. Elliot Road Lease Surrender (COO)

20/145 The COO sought the Board's approval for the early surrender of a lease on an off-site unit previously used by the Faculty of Media and Communication. These facilities were now provided through the Poole Gateway Building instead but the lease was not due to expire until August 2021. [Redacted]

20/146 The Board **approved** the early surrender of the lease held on Unit 2, Roundways Industrial Estate, Elliott Road and the completion of dilapidation works, or payment of the sum equivalent to the value of such works, being approximately £[redacted].

20/147 The Board **delegated** authority by way of a written resolution (passed in the meeting) specially authorising any two of the Director of Estates, the COO and any other member of UET to execute the property documentation and to witness the application of the seal on behalf of the University pursuant to paragraph 10.1 of the Instrument of Government.

5.4. Royal London House (RLH) Update - Disposal and Lease (COO) – STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

20/148 The COO introduced this paper and explained that the Board had previously approved the disposal of RLH and terms of exclusivity in the agreement with the potential purchaser prevented disposal to any alternative purchaser until after 31st January 2021. [Redacted]

20/150 The Board **approved** the recommendation that BU enters into a variation of the exclusivity agreement with the proposed buyer of Royal London House to amend the option period in the draft option agreement and that the Board delegates authority to the COO (or in his absence the Vice-Chancellor) to approve the final dates of the option period provided that the option period shall not extend beyond the 31 January 2021 being the end of the current exclusivity period; and

20/151 The Board **delegated** authority by way of a written resolution (passed in the meeting) specially authorising:

- a. any one of the members of UET to sign the variation to the exclusivity agreement and the option agreement (when exercised by the proposed buyer); and
- b. any two of the Director of Estates, the COO and any other member of UET to execute the option agreement (if requested by the buyer to be by way of deed) and the transfer deed for the sale of Royal London House and to witness the application of the seal on behalf of the University pursuant to paragraph 10.1 of the Instrument of Government.

20/152 The Board **approved** a variation to the terms of the Board approval for the lease of units 7 and 8 RLH as set out in the paper and above.

20/153 The Board **delegated** authority by way of a written resolution (passed in the meeting) specially authorising any two of the Director of Estates, the COO and any other member of UET to execute the lease of units 7 and 8 Royal London House and to witness the application of the seal on behalf of the University pursuant to paragraph 10.1 of the Instrument of Government.

5.5. EU Fees

20/154 The DVC explained that, following on from the previous Board discussion of fees, the Government had confirmed that EU/EEA and Swiss national students would lose their home fee status and support from the student loans system from 1 August 2021 (an exception applied to Irish nationals). It was not possible to set differential fees for EU and non-EU international students as this would be likely to constitute discrimination on the grounds of nationality under the Equality Act. As a result, fee status, fees and scholarships were recommended to be equalised for EU/EEA and Swiss national students alongside non-EU international students.

20/155 The Board **approved** the recommended fee levels for EU/EEA/Swiss national students for 2021/22

entry.

5.6. Senate Terms of Reference (VC)

20/156 An amendment was proposed to the Senate membership to add a representative of the University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust (UHDFT) following the establishment of this new partnership. This would be a reciprocal arrangement, with BU being represented on the UHDFT Board.

20/157 The revised Senate Terms of Reference were **approved**.

6. Any Other Business (Chair)

20/158 The COO advised that a recommendation for the early surrender of a lease in respect of the Santander bank on campus may be required via written resolution.

20/159 The Chair advised that additional meetings of FRC and the Board would be required to approve the final banking facility terms.

20/160 The Chair noted that, due to the remote meeting arrangements, Members were no longer able to have the same level of informal engagement outside of meetings, for example via Board dinners. It was agreed that informal drop-in sessions, without agendas or minutes, would be held on a trial basis.

Action: Set a date for an informal Board engagement drop-in session in early November and notify members.

Action by: Clerk to the Board.

Date of Next Meeting: Friday, 27 November 2020 at 9.00am to 12.30pm