

Board of Governors

Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 December 2018

Present:

Sylvia Hughes (Chair)

David Baker

Sue Dutton

Rafael Garcia-Krailing

Jeff Halliwell

Richard Horsley

Frank Jordan

Edward Lord (to item 235)

Gemma Lovegrove

Lee Machado

Mark Mulcahey

Nick Petford

Nick Pitts-Tucker

Nick Robertson

Apologies:

Sara Goodwin, Martin Pettifor, John Skelton

In attendance:

Jane Bunce (Director of Student and Academic Services), Emma Finlay (Governance Assistant), Miriam Lakin (Clerk), Deborah Mattock (Director of HR, Marketing and International Relations)

From item: 236

Brendan Fawcett (Head of Planning), Mark Hall (Director of Finance), Terry Neville (Chief Operating Officer), Ann Shelton-Mayes (Executive Dean Student Experience)

233/18 Welcome, Apologies and Quorum

233.1 The Chair welcomed those present, noted apologies and confirmed quoracy.

234/18 Confidential Minutes of Previous Meeting

234.1 The Board approved the minutes of item 207 from the meeting held on 21 November 2018 as a true record of that item, and agreed that it would be kept confidential to the Board.

235/18 Succession Planning

Minute 235 is in a section of these minutes which is confidential to Board members only.

Edward Lord left the meeting.

236/18 Declarations of Interest

236.1 No declarations of interest were received in addition to those held on file by the Clerk's Office.

237/18 Minutes of Previous Meeting

237.1 The Board approved the minutes and confidential minutes of the meeting held on 21 November 2018 as a true record of that meeting.

238/18 Matters Arising

238.1 The Board received and noted Paper B on actions arising from previous meetings. Additional comments were received on the following:

238.2 Increased TPS Contribution

The Director of Finance confirmed that he had briefed the Treasury Committee on the implications of an increase in TPS pension contributions.

239/18 Report from the Vice Chancellor

239.1 Policy Update

The Vice Chancellor advised the Board that there was a new Higher Education Minister, Chris Skidmore, who had previously worked with David Willetts. He confirmed that the government review of post-18 education funding (the Augur Review), was due to report at the end of February 2019. He advised the Board that the review included discussions about charging different fees for different types of course, with STEM courses receiving higher funding. The Vice Chancellor advised the Board that he had joined other sector leaders in expressing concerns about a potential reduction in tuition fees. This included writing to local MPs, of whom Andrea Leadsom had written to the Chancellor of the Exchequer about the issue. The SU Vice President for Education mentioned a national NUS campaign against differential fees.

239.2 The Chair of the Audit Committee confirmed that a reduction in tuition fees was a key risk for the University and asked about additional preparation by the University's executive to prepare for the risk. The Vice Chancellor advised the Board that KPMG were producing modelling of the impact on the University of

reduced fees. Some of the severity of the impact would depend on whether a phased approach was taken to fee reduction. The Vice Chancellor stated that the possibility of lower fees was already having an impact on recruitment, with a national drop in applications for entry in 2019 being seen. He confirmed that representatives from UCAS would present at the Board Away Day in January 2019.

239.3 The Vice Chancellor noted that negative press interest in University salaries continued. He referred the Board to information from UCEA (the Universities and Colleges Employer Association) on pay multiples across the sector. The OfS had requested the publication of a pay multiple for each institution based on the highest and lowest paid member of staff. On this basis, the sector average pay multiple was 6.8, comparable with the NHS and local government.

239.4 Key Performance Indicators

The Vice Chancellor provided the Board with statistical data, focusing on the Board-level KPIs related to the University's Super Supportive critical success factor. These included KPIs on:

- Graduate employability
- Student continuation and progression
- Teaching staff with professional qualifications
- Student satisfaction.

Data compared the University to the lower, median and upper quartile in the sector, and the University's set of comparator institutions.

239.5 Graduate Employability

The Vice Chancellor advised the Board about that the University was in the low to middle quartile for graduate employability. He advised the Board of the challenges to achieving a high performance in this area, including:

- The national definition of a graduate job excluded certain roles, for example creative arts
- The data was compiled six months after graduation. The Head of Planning advised the Board that this system had now ended and in future the national survey would gather data 18 months after graduation.

239.6 Members asked about how the University could have a positive influence on graduate employability. The Executive Dean of Student Experience advised the Board about a number of measures including the impact of the Changemaker Hub, and the Employment Promise. Under this scheme certain students who had not found full-time employment 12 months after graduating would be found a paid internship or supported into postgraduate study. The Executive Dean of Student Experience advised the Board that such activities would be examined by a TEF (Teaching Excellence Framework) panel to assess their ability to impact graduate employability.

239.7 The Vice Chancellor advised the Board about employability by faculty, and noted that joint honours programmes performed less well in terms of graduate employability. The Changemaker Hub had developed materials to help joint honours graduates market themselves to employers. The Executive Dean of Student Experience advised the Board on how faculties work with graduate employability data and monitor outcomes.

239.8 The Vice Chancellor discussed employability by ethnicity, noting that nationally it took BME graduates longer to find graduate employment, and that over 40% of the University's undergraduates were black and minority ethnic. Improving BME employability rates was a key focus of the Inclusive Student Experience Group.

239.9 Good Degrees

The Vice Chancellor reported that 'good degrees' were defined nationally as first and upper second class degrees. They were used in League Tables, creating a

possible perverse incentive for grade inflation. He noted that there was a reciprocal relationship between good degrees and graduate employability. The Executive Dean of Student Experience advised the Board that the University's KPI for good degrees was not a target, as the University had been clear that this was undesirable. The KPI was based on a range within which the University expected most of its degrees to fit. This was based on the historical performance of the University and of the sector. Degrees which performed outside the expected range, whether above or below, were investigated. It was noted that the breakdown of degree results did not show significant grade inflation.

239.10 Continuation after Entry

The Vice Chancellor advised the Board that the sector median for student continuation had dropped. It was noted that the decision not to continue with studies was complex and multi-factoral. Factors could include commuting, cultural background, qualifications on entry, equality and diversity factors, and levels of engagement. The Executive Dean of Student Experience advised the Board that the University was focusing on the design of the entry year curriculum and especially the first term, including readiness to study, timetabling and assessments to ensure that these reflected the student population. It was possible that this could involve significant change. As well as the impact on the student experience, the financial impact of losing students was noted, and therefore work in this area could be considered an investment.

239.11 Teaching Staff with Professional Qualifications

The Vice Chancellor reported that around 60% of academic staff now had teaching qualifications including HEA Fellowships, PGCEs and FE teaching qualifications. The University expected to reach the comparator mean by the end of the current cycle. It was noted that academic teaching staff could often be from a different background to their students, and this could have an impact

on student performance which the possession of a teaching qualification helped to mitigate.

239.12 Postgraduate Satisfaction

The Vice Chancellor advised the Board about excellent results in national surveys of satisfaction for both taught and research postgraduate students. Whilst this was a small number of students, future TEF exercises would consider postgraduate taught student satisfaction.

239.13 The Board thanked the Vice Chancellor for an informative review of the super supportive Board level KPI's.

240/18 Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer Report

240.1 The Board received and noted Paper C, a report from the Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer.

241/18 Good Degrees and Grade Inflation

241.1 The Board received Paper D, a report on Good Degrees and Grade Inflation.

241.2 The Executive Dean of Student Experience advised the Board that data on good degrees and external examining was reported through the Annual Report on Quality and Standards. She advised the Board that the TEF process now required each university to account for its trend and position in relation to the sector, and that the paper should give the Board assurance about the University's position.

242/18 Risk Register

242.1 The Board received and noted Paper E, the Risk Register.

242.2 The Chief Operating Officer confirmed that item 4 on the risk register regarding changes in government policy, would continue to be rated as a red risk.

242.3 The Chief Operating Officer reported that there were a number of emerging issues which had not yet been discussed at Audit Committee. The viability of the Maidwell Building at the Avenue campus was an emerging risk due to the cost of running and maintaining the building and the unsuitability of the accommodation. He stated that alternative accommodation would need to be found by the end of the current academic year. Options close to the Waterside campus would be considered. The Vice Chancellor advised the Board that the facilities at Avenue campus could have an impact on student satisfaction in the National Student Survey and affect continuation results.

242.4 Members asked whether this would change the future options for the Avenue site. The Chief Operating Officer advised the Board that there were no changes to the options for the Avenue site and the University was currently awaiting planning permission.

242.5 The Chair of the Audit Committee advised the Board that the risk register should be seen as a dynamic document and updated as circumstances changed to ensure that risks were reported appropriately to the Board.

242.6 It was noted that a mention of the Project Assurance Committee on the risk register would be amended.

243/18 Waterside Update

243.1 Following the first term of operations at Waterside, the Chief Operating Officer reported on the following:

- IT – Leading edge technology had been installed across the campus and had huge potential. One aspect of integration with the previous systems was outstanding and this would be addressed by April 2019

- Catering – There was an over provision of catering facilities at the Waterside campus as the proximity of the town offered a range of alternatives. A decision had been taken to close some of the facilities and reduce services in others
- Security – Recruitment of permanent security staff had been difficult. There was a reliance on agency staff which required ongoing training
- Outsourcing – Generally, the performance of outsourced areas had been variable and had required ongoing management by SMT
- Building issues – There had been issues with the reliability of the lifts which had been raised at MD level with the suppliers and contractors. External hand pushes would be fitted to automatic doors to ensure that the buildings were fully accessible. The ground floor of the Senate building would be refitted to improve the working environment and manage the flow of people
- Facilities Management – To protect the investment that the University had made, effective support services needed to be in place. The systems used to run the new buildings required revisions to the type of management and support provided, and this was being addressed
- Travel and transport – Onsite parking was working well and there was adequate capacity for staff and visitors. The bus service was running effectively. It was confirmed that the cost of the park and ride service was £1 per day for students. Due to the popularity of the free inter-campus service, around 25% of journeys were now free. This had changed Uno Buses (Northampton)'s business model. There was potential to market the park and ride service to other local organisations
- Onsite Policing – The dedicated policing arrangement was working well and had been an asset in addressing some difficult issues. The University had been approached by several other universities who were interested in

establishing similar arrangements. Members suggested that the University should consider extending the arrangement beyond the current contract

- Smart campus – the use of smart campus technology would provide the University with interesting data to be able to track student and staff trends and preferences. In time, there was a possibility for an interesting case study.

243.2 Members asked about relationship with the local community. It was reported that the University kept in contact with local residents around the campus, for example through residents' meetings. The Borough Council had begun to tow away cars which were illegally parked in the local streets, which was welcomed by the University. Ongoing issues of the behaviour of some students which was disruptive to residents were more difficult to control.

243.3 Members asked more broadly about the attitude of the wider community in the town towards the University. It was suggested that it would be helpful to the University as a major participant in the local economy to track local opinion, seek objective views and respond proactively. An online panel was suggested. Members of the executive agreed to consider this further outside the meeting.

244/18 Senate Minutes from October 2018

244.1 The Board received and noted Paper F, the minutes of the Senate meeting held on 10 October 2018.

244.2 The Director of Student and Academic Services advised the Board about matters covered in the recent Senate meeting held on 5 December 2018. These included:

- Student recruitment
- TEF briefing
- Revised UK Quality Code for Higher Education

- New Academic Assurance Committee effective as of January 2019
- Protocols between the Board of Governors and the Senate had been approved by the Senate.

245/18 Annual Report to the Office for Students on Reportable Events

245.1 The Board received Paper G, an Annual Report to the Office for Students (OfS) on reportable events, and noted its appendix, guidance from the OfS on reportable events.

245.2 The Director of Student and Academic Services highlighted the following events which were reported to the OfS:

- Changes to academic partnerships
- The opening of the Waterside campus.

246/18 Proposal for Additional Students' Union Sabbatical Role

246.1 The Board received Paper H, a proposal to change the constitution of the Students' Union to create an additional sabbatical officer post for a Vice-President for BME.

246.2 The President of the Students' Union advised the Board of the importance of the role and its advantages including representation and better engagement with the BME student population.

246.3 There was a question about whether the Students' Union was confident that the skills required for such a role could be secured via an election process. The President of the Students' Union advised the Board that all elected posts were accountable to the students they represented.

246.4 Members asked about funding for the role. The President of the Students' Union confirmed that the question of funding would be addressed through the usual budget negotiation with the University. However, changes to the SU Constitution required Board approval. It was noted that a paper to be submitted

in Spring 2019 would provide for the Board a reminder and assessment of the Board's role and responsibilities of the Board in relation to the SU.

246.5 The Board approved the changes to the Students' Union bye-laws and constitution as set out in the paper and strongly supported the proposed new sabbatical officer role.

247/18 Outline for the Board Away Day on 10 and 11 January

247.1 The Board received and noted Paper I, an outline for the Board Away Day on 10 and 11 January 2019.

247.2 The Vice Chancellor advised the Board that the session on 10 January 2019, would focus on two areas:

The role of development. A discussion paper would be circulated prior to the Away Day

How to respond to the current context to ensure that the longer-term future of the University was secured and the momentum of the Waterside development was preserved.

247.3 Members asked for the inclusion of thinking about corporate professional development and the engagement of local corporates, possibly as a separate but related topic of the discussion on advancement.

247.4 Members asked about the session on Board development. The Clerk advised the Board that there would be a written paper giving a review of the progress made on the recommendations of the external effectiveness review. She asked members to complete an online questionnaire which would inform where discussion of future Board development would be best directed. A link to the questionnaire would be emailed to Board members.

248/18 Update from Chair and Deputy Chair – Recent Conferences and Events

248.1 The Chair reported to the Board about a recent conference hosted by Advance HE entitled 'Evolution or Fundamental Change to Governance'. The conference included a selection of workshops on specific areas of change affecting higher education and the governance of institutions.

248.2 Members of the Board who attended the conference provided an overview of the different workshops they had attended. The Board discussed a workshop on board effectiveness with specific reference to the limits of the volunteer model for governors. Members raised the topic of payment for governors and the potential positive impact this could have on Board diversity. The Clerk advised the Board that charity law prevented payment being made to all governors.

248.3 Members asked if there could be further discussion regarding the payment of governors during 2019. It was agreed that there would be a further discussion in Spring 2019. Members noted that the ability to provide payment may have a positive impact on the ability to recruit and to ensure a diverse Board in the future. Members of the Nominations Committee reported that the Committee had discussed in depth the diversity of the Board and that actions had been taken to support Board diversity.

248.4 The Chair advised the Board that a recruitment campaign for new governors was just starting.

249/18 Audit Committee Minutes 14 November 2018

249.1 The Board received and noted Paper J, the minutes of the Audit Committee meeting held on 14 November 2018.

250/18 Audit Committee Terms of Reference

250.1 The Board received Paper K, the Audit Committee updated Terms of Reference.

250.2 The Board approved the updated terms of reference for the Audit Committee.

251/18 Ratification of Signatures Under Seal

251.1 The Board received Paper L and ratified the signature of documents under seal as set out in the paper.

252/18 Any Other Business

252.1 Business Contacts

Nick Robertson asked Board members to provide a few sentences about the University aimed at business contacts in the county to encourage them to give guest lectures.

252.2 Conference on How to create a Social Echo

The Vice Chancellor thanked everyone involved in the Big Issue Social Echo conference. He advised the Board that 150 companies had attended, and it was hoped to create some leverage as a result.

252.3 Women in IT Excellence Awards

The Board congratulated Belinda Green, a Learning Technologist at the University who had won 'Hero of the Year' at the awards.

252.4 Official Waterside Opening

The Vice Chancellor advised the Board that a high profile person was still being sought.

252.5 Governor Recruitment

The Deputy Chair asked for the Board's support with the recruitment of a new governor and asked them to speak to their diverse networks. The Clerk advised the Board that there was a new brochure for the recruitment process which she would distribute.

253/18 Confirmation of Availability of Papers

253.1 The following papers were confirmed as confidential to the meeting:

Paper D – Maintenance of Standards ‘Good Degrees and Grade Inflation

Paper F – Senate minutes of the meeting held on 10 October 2018

Paper G – Reportable Events

Paper I – Away Day Outline

Paper J – Audit Committee minutes of the meeting held on 14 November 2018

254/18 Dates of Forthcoming Meetings

254.1 Away Day – 10-11 January 2019

Board of Governors – 23 January 2019

Development Committee – 12 February 2019

Board of Governors – 20 February 2019

Remuneration Committee – 20 February 2019