

Unreserved Minutes of the Board Meeting Held on 16 May 2024 at 1.00pm at The Belsfield Hotel, Kendal Road, Bowness-on-Windermere, LA23 3EL

Present:

Sue Ion (Chair)

Graham Baldwin
Jon Baldwin
Jim Carter
Luke Fitzgerald
Ridwanah Gurjee
Lesley Lloyd

Ruth Lowry
Anne McCarthy
Lorraine Norris
Khalil Rehman
Lindsay Robinson
Lis Smith

Also in attendance:

Lisa Brooks (Governance and Compliance Manager)
George Charles (Chief Finance Officer)
Ruth Connor (Deputy Vice-Chancellor (Operations))
Craig Darlison (Executive Director of IT and Digital Services) - for Item 13
Jim Edney (Resources Committee)
Ian Fisher (University Secretary and General Counsel/Clerk to the Board)
Carolyn Johnson (Executive Officer to the Vice-Chancellor)
Ken Lee (Chief People Officer)
Chris Roberts (AWE Consulting) - for Item 13
Mike Sheppard (Director of Estates and Campus Services) - for Item 14
Fiona Winters (Head of Governance/Deputy Clerk to the Board)

UB1214. Welcome and Apologies

The Chair welcomed all present including Mr Jim Edney who was attending as an observer in his role as a co-opted member of the Resources Committee.

Apologies had been received from Mr Richard Frediani and Mr Richard Hext and Dr Fiona Rayment, who had sent written comments on the papers.

UB1215. Declaration of Interests

There were no declarations of interest in addition to those already declared in the register.

UB1216. Chair's Announcements

The Chair announced that expressions of interest in the role of Chair and Deputy Chair of the Board had been received from Miss McCarthy and Mr J Baldwin, respectively. It was, therefore, recommended that the Board appoint Miss McCarthy as Chair and Mr J Baldwin as Deputy Chair of the Board with effect from 1st January 2025.

The Chair summarised other events of interest that she had attended since the last meeting including: (i) a conference hosted by the University of Lincoln which acknowledged the challenges facing the sector and explored opportunities for collaboration with industry; (ii) the Burnley Health Mela organised in collaboration with the NHS and showcasing the University's student volunteers; and (iii) a meeting with the Chief Executive of the Northern Powerhouse where the impact of the University's research was commended and opportunities for securing grants in line with the levelling up agenda were discussed.

Resolved: That Miss Anne McCarthy and Mr Jon Baldwin be appointed as Chair and Deputy Chair of the Board, respectively, with effect from 1st January 2025.

UB1217. Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting held on 11 April 2024

The Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the previous meeting held on 11 April 2024 were agreed as a true record, to be signed by the Chair.

UB1218. Matters Arising

The Chair reported that the majority of matters were addressed within the Vice-Chancellor's report or elsewhere on the agenda. The following matters arising were highlighted:

- (i) A presentation on 'Preparing and protecting our students from risk' would be delivered by the Director of Student Services on Day 2 of the Board Residential (Minute UB1204).
- (ii) **Reserved Minute - Text Redacted**
- (iii) **Reserved Minute - Text Redacted**

UB1219. Vice-Chancellor's Report

The Vice-Chancellor presented his report which provided an update on external factors affecting the University and a summary of ongoing internal activity. A copy of the report is set out in the Minute Book.

In summarising his report, Professor Baldwin focused on areas of strategic significance or where there had been further updates since the time of writing, as follows:

- (i) *League Tables*

The University's position in the Complete University Guide 2025 had risen overall and more significantly in the category of 'student satisfaction', because of the University's improved results in the National Student Survey (NSS) 2023. The results of the next NSS were due to be published in July 2024. Having secured a good response rate, it was hoped for another positive set of results which would translate into further improvements in the University's position in the league tables.

(ii) *Reserved Minute - Text Redacted*

(iii) *Financial Sustainability of the Sector*

The University's cost reduction exercise was progressing well in the context of the significant financial challenges facing the sector. There had been an opportunity to highlight these challenges during a recent visit to the Preston Campus by the Shadow Minister for Higher Education, Matt Western, as well as showcasing the work of the University which he had commended. Activity was continuing at sector level to raise awareness about the multiple pressures facing universities.

In the meantime, the OfS had published its annual report on the financial sustainability of the sector which acknowledged a significant deterioration in the short to medium term financial outlook, whilst predicting an improvement from 2027 based on increased student recruitment. The findings of the report would be analysed and factored into the University's strategic planning.

(iv) *International Recruitment*

The Migration Advisory Committee (MAC) had completed its review of the graduate route and the report had been published on 14 May. The review did not find any evidence of widespread abuse or to suggest that the graduate route was undermining the quality of UK higher education. The overall recommendation was for the graduate route to be retained, subject to a mandatory registration scheme for international agents which was already being implemented by the sector. This was an encouraging outcome given the attraction of the graduate route for international students. A final decision was awaited from the Prime Minister's office.

(v) *Reserved Minute - Text Redacted*

(vi) *Reserved Minute - Text Redacted*

(vii) *Reserved Minute - Text Redacted*

(viii) *Reserved Minute - Text Redacted*

The Chair thanked Professor Baldwin for his comprehensive and current report.

Mr Fisher reported that Dr Rayment had sent written comments in which she had commended the focus on liaison with Government, Shadow Government and MPs on the key challenges facing the University and the sector and reiterated the suggestion

that a report be commissioned by the Royal Academy of Engineering or the Royal Society on the negative impact of policy decisions on UK universities. She also acknowledged the suite of highlights from the External Affairs section of the Report.

Resolved: That the Vice-Chancellor's Update Report be noted.

UB1220. Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

UB1221. Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

UB1222. Students' Union Update Report

The President of the Students' Union presented the regular report giving an update on key initiatives being progressed by the Students' Union (SU). A copy of the report is set out in the Minute Book.

In briefly summarising the report, Mr Fitzgerald highlighted the following:

- (i) The new strategic framework entitled 'Learn Well, Live Well' was designed to align with the University's strategic plan and run to 2028. It was built around three 'calls to action': boosting attainment; protecting student wellbeing; and tackling the cost of studying.
- (ii) 'Study Break' had been a hugely successful campaign conducted across three campuses in collaboration with the University, with a focus on promoting joy and reducing stress, including free food, yoga and alpacas, with a carnival at Westlakes.
- (iii) The Preston Golden Roses had been hosted in 53 Degrees which was a fitting venue for the SU to show its appreciation of University staff, with a corresponding event at Westlakes. The ACEs was a relaxed and inclusive celebration of over 1000 student volunteers.
- (iv) The SU had hosted a Vice-Chancellor's Question Time which addressed issues ranging from EDI concerns to the University's financial future and generated some 'quick wins' including the availability of hot halal food in the Foster and Harrington Refectories.

Mrs Lloyd acknowledged the SU's success in ensuring the availability of hot halal food and noted the need for this to be included within the University's new catering strategy. She also commended the success of the 'Study Break' initiative, noting the benefits of animals including dogs in reducing stress levels.

The Chair confirmed that Members of the Board would be happy to attend any SU awards ceremonies or similar events in the future.

Resolved: That the Students' Union Update Report be noted.

UB1223. 'Pulse' Staff Survey

The Chief People Officer presented a report on the results of the 'Pulse' Staff Survey which had been deferred from the last meeting. A copy of the report is set out in the Minute Book.

Mr Lee reported that the 'Pulse' Staff Survey which supplemented the biennial Staff Survey, posed 5 questions aligned with the strategic KPIs for Priority 3: 'Our People Experience'.

The results for the last 12 months showed that 87% of respondents felt proud to work at UCLan and 79% felt a sense of belonging. Overall, the results were consistent with or an improvement on KPIs from previous surveys. Notwithstanding these encouraging figures, the People Team was mindful that the current cost saving exercise placed significant strain on colleague engagement.

With reference to the proportion of negative comments about workload, Ms Robinson suggested that it would be helpful for the University to promote recent developments in relation to Project Next and key messages about doing things differently.

Members noted the breadth of responses within individual schools which posed a diverse range of challenges. Mr Lee confirmed that the results were being analysed with Deans to inform school-level action plans.

Resolved: That the report on the 'Pulse' Staff Survey be noted.

UB1224. Committee Chair's Updates

Governance, Risk and Nominations Committee - 25 April 2024

A report providing a summary of discussions at the meeting of the Governance, Risk and Nominations Committee held on 25 April 2024 was received, as set out in the Minute Book.

Dr Ion reported that the Committee had considered the Value for Money Statement 2022/23, the Risk Register and the report on OfS Regulatory Requirements and Compliance, which did not identify any matters of concern regarding any actual or potential breach in compliance.

She drew the following key matters to the attention of the Board:

- (i) The process of appointing new Board members with expertise in cyber, HR, finance and audit was in progress, with the intention of attracting a diverse pool of applicants. The Recruitment Packs had been updated to reflect recent changes and to highlight the role of the Board in promoting EDI. Mr Fisher offered to disseminate the packs to enable members to share them with relevant contacts.
- (ii) The Governance Effectiveness Review (GER) was in progress. The independent expert appointed by the Board was reviewing a range of constitutional documents. Plans were in place for her to meet with Committee Chairs and observe a forthcoming committee meeting. The outcome of one-to-one

meetings between the Chair and Board members would be fed into the GER and it was anticipated that the final report would be available in the summer.

Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

UB1225. Any Other Business

Mrs Lloyd stressed the need for assurance that the University had in place an effective strategy on Artificial Intelligence (AI).

UB1226. Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

UB1227. Reserved Minute - Text Redacted

UB1228. Date and Time of the Next Meeting

Resolved: That the next meeting take place on 27 June 2024 commencing at 5.00pm on the Preston campus.

**Ian Fisher
Clerk to the Board**