

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the meeting of the Board of Governors held on Tuesday 21 September 2021.

Present: David Lamb (Chair), Richard Bacon, Jenny Body, Evan Botwood,(until G21.09.9.7), Laura Claydon, Carolyn Donoghue, Professor Marc Griffiths (until G21.09.9.7), Grant Mansfield, Dr Chris Moore (until G21.09.9.7), Tim Simmonds, Dave Tansley, Professor Steve West (until G21.09.9.7), Andrea Young.

Apologies: Professor John Craven, Ian MacKenzie, Kalpna Woolf.

In Attendance: Dr Jodie Anstee, Clerk (until G21.09.9.7), Professor Martin Boddy, PVC Research and Enterprise (until G21.09.9.7), Professor Amanda Coffey, DVC and Provost (until G21.09.9.7), William Liew, Chief Financial Officer (until G21.09.9.7), Jo Midgley, Registrar and PVC Student Experience (until G21.09.9.7), Professor Paul Olomolaiye, PVC Equalities and Civic Engagement (until G21.09.9.7), Joanna Wallis, FOI and Governance Officer (until G21.09.9.7), Alison Weeks, Head of Health and Safety (for G21.09.7), Christine Gledhill, Deputy Clerk (minutes, until G21.09.9.7).

G21.09.1 MEMBERSHIP AND APOLOGIES

G21.09.1.1 Apologies were noted as set out above.

Confirmation of Chair and Deputy Chair

G21.09.1.2 Members confirmed David Lamb as Chair of the Board of Governors.

G21.09.1.3 Members **ratified** approval provided via email that Jenny Body, Independent Member, be appointed as Deputy Chair.

Confirmation of Appointment to Committees

G21.09.1.4 Members also **ratified** approval provided via email that Laura Claydon, Independent Member, be appointed as Chair of the Remuneration Committee.

G21.09.2 DECLARATIONS OF INTERESTS

None received.

G21.09.3 MINUTES AND MATTERS ARISING

Paper G21/09/01 was received

G21.09.3.1 Members **approved** the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2021.

Matters Arising

Members noted that all but one of the actions from the last meeting were completed.

Post-Board Meeting Supper (G21.07.9.4 refers)

Members noted that given the enrichment activity planned for the year's Board meeting dates (each of which would include networking opportunities over lunch), and that the Strategic Away Day in March would also include a dinner at the end of the first day, there was no longer a requirement for these post-meeting suppers.

G21.09.4 OPENING DISCUSSION

- G21.09.4.1 The Chair invited Members to raise any further matters for consideration at the meeting or for a future meeting of the Board.
- G21.09.4.2 He commented upon the earlier strategic seminar 'Health and Social Wellbeing Vision' presented by Professor Marc Griffiths and remarked that it would be useful for the Board to be kept apprised of the developments and ideas that were shared, as appropriate.

STRATEGIC ITEMS

G21.09.5 VICE-CHANCELLOR'S REPORT

Paper G21/09/02 was received

- G21.09.5.1 Members noted the content of the report and received an update from the Vice-Chancellor. Members noted the following in particular:
- G21.09.5.2 *External Policy Developments*
- i. Nadhim Zahawi had been appointed the previous week as the new Secretary of State for Education, replacing Gavin Williamson. The Vice-Chancellor was due to speak with Mr Zahawi the following day.
 - ii. A consultation was expected soon on post-18 provision and funding (post-Augar Review), and this was anticipated to flow into the Comprehensive Spending Review (CSR). Likely expected outcomes included:
 - a. No move to reduce tuition fees – the £9,250 would be held for 5 years, although adjustments could be made to payment schemes (e.g. threshold, length of time to repay, change in interest rates).
 - b. Continued clear government focus on 'low value' programmes and degrees.
 - iii. The negative narrative about the HE sector in the media and from the government presented a challenge; however, the University was well-positioned to offer evidence and demonstrate its impact on employability and its contribution to the economy ("levelling up"),
- G21.09.5.3 *Student Recruitment and Accommodation Position*
- i. The University's student recruitment position continued to remain strong, despite the ongoing impact of Covid-19, with the majority of UWE Bristol students due to begin the following week.
 - ii. The University continued to support students to find accommodation and were discouraging them from arriving without first having secured somewhere to live.
- G21.09.5.4 *Preparations for the New Academic Year*
- i. The University was starting to welcome students to its campuses for the new academic year, the majority of whom would begin the following week for Starting Block (for a period of two weeks).
 - ii. All students would resume in-person teaching across all programmes, complemented by a range of digitally-enhanced learning opportunities.
 - iii. The University would also continue to push public health messages and was encouraging everyone within its community to behave responsibly and be accountable for their actions.
- G21.09.5.5 *Guardian League Table*
Members noted that work was underway to address the drop in league table performance, the details of which would be provided in the Strategy 2030 Implementation agenda item.
- G21.09.5.6 *Pro Vice-Chancellor and Head of College Recruitment*
Members noted that the recruitment campaign had started, with a closing date of 5 October; it was expected that a decision would be made before Christmas.

G21.09.5.7 Members also noted that the recruitment process for a new Chief People Officer currently remained a work-in-progress and were reminded that oversight of the HR department was within the remit of the Registrar and Pro Vice-Chancellor, Jo Midgley.

G21.09.5.8 *Strategic Risks*

Members noted the current Strategic Risk Register Summary, as reviewed by the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee at its meeting on 13 September 2021.

G21.09.5.9 Members also noted the following current areas of attention for the government:

- A' level results and how to recover from the level of inflation grading to A*. This was the most pressing, given that the deadline for medical school applications fell in October, and offers would start to be made.
- Funding.
- The relationship between HE and FE.

None of these were expected to have an immediate impact.

G21.09.5.10 Members referred to the reported drops in EU student applications and acceptances, and asked whether the overall student numbers had remained the same. Members noted that that this was the case, even a little higher.

G21.09.5.11 Members also noted that these decreases were not as high as those reported elsewhere in the sector and had been expected to some degree, given the absence of access to student loans. The University's overall international student numbers had increased and the diversity of that cohort had improved significantly.

G21.09.5.12 Jo Midgley, Registrar and Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Experience informed Members that the University had long and well-established relationships with partners in Europe with regard to exchange provision and that the University had secured funding from the Turing Scheme to continue to support these international opportunities to education and training.

G21.09.6 PURPOSE: STRATEGY 2030 IMPLEMENTATION

G21.09.6.1 Members received an update from Jo Midgley, Registrar and Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Experience and noted the following:

- i. A reminder that Strategy 2030 was built around the University's values and had three areas of focus:
 - a. Our Purpose
 - b. Our People
 - c. Our Place.
- ii. Values – the University recognised that collaboration – both across the University and beyond – and an enterprising mindset were vital.
- iii. Early priorities for 2021-2023:
 - a. Subject Readiness
 - b. Digital Learning -
 - c. Assessment
 - d. Closing award gaps
 - e. Research readiness
 - f. Research excellence.

G21.09.6.2 Purpose

- i. Led by Amanda Coffey, Deputy Vice-Chancellor and Provost, this focused on the University's education provision and research excellence.
- ii. *Subject Readiness Review* – critical reflections were already being received, indicating some excellent work. These would be reported to the Board,

supported by insights/deep-dives and a exploration as to what the new academic schools would look like.

- iii. *Digital Learning*
 - a. The pandemic had challenged the University around how digitally responsive and enabled it was, and how digital poverty disadvantaged students and staff.
 - b. A Head of Digital Learning had been appointed recently and would use the learnings of the pandemic to determine what a holistic service design for UWE would be.
- iv. *Assessment* – this was a significant issue for the sector – and for UWE – and a bounce back plan in response to the NSS results had begun, and would involve a year of discussions, with actions. The work on the University’s academic regulations would continue.

G21.09.6.3 Members endorsed the view that the University should be bold in its approach to assessment criteria.

- G21.09.6.4
 - v. *Closing Award Gaps* – a People, Culture, Quality and Standards (PCQS) Committee session focused on where shifts were occurring and where blockages existed, had been arranged for 1 November, and was open to other Governors to attend.
 - vi. *Research Readiness and Research Excellence* – the intention to increase research capacity to develop research income and research centres, consideration of where to invest and the sorts of research structures that would be required. The REF2021 outcomes would inform this process. Members noted that the sector was seeing movement among research staff in some areas, with some institutions ‘angling’ for particular areas of research expertise.

- G21.09.6.5 Members noted that underlying all this activity, would be “University done well”, y way of:
 - a. NSS improvement cycles,
 - b. support for the Apprenticeship programmes,
 - c. determination of what ‘practice-led’ and ‘practice-informed’ meant for all students
 - d. incorporating global experiences.

All of which would be considered by either the PCQS Committee or the Board, as required.

G21.09.6.6 Members referred to the Subject Readiness Review, acknowledging that this exercise may involve the divesting of some subjects and asked how those would be decided upon.

G21.09.6.7 Members noted that critical to this would be the examination of data; for example, award gaps, market share, where the future of subjects were, or where the University needed to be forward-thinking. Members acknowledged that it was entirely fitting for the University’s portfolio to shift and evolve.

G21.09.6.8 Members also noted that reducing the assessment load would be the most significant ‘unlocker’ of awarding gaps, together with the whole University-wide approach to mental health and wellbeing.

G21.09.6.9 **People**

- i. Led by Jo Midgley, Registrar and Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Experience, this was focused on both staff and students.

- ii. *College and School Structure* - the new Pro Vice-Chancellor and Head of College appointments would be key to the development of the leadership space.
- iii. *Target Operating Model:*
 - a. this was an enterprise-wide model within the programme space, the work for which would be informed by the activity being undertaken within Purpose and would ensure minimal bureaucracy.
 - b. Programme support pilots were about to commence (programme co-ordinators, success coaches and communications).
 - c. Whilst the TOM journey would not be completed by 2023, it was anticipated that significant progress would have been made by that point.
- iv. *Staff Journey:*
 - a. the University was exploring how best to ‘pulse-check’ with staff to ensure the lived experience was understood.
 - b. Health and Wellbeing – the transition of staff back to work was being carefully and sensitively managed.

G21.09.6.10 Members acknowledged the importance of securing regular feedback of both staff and students.

G21.09.6.11 **Place**

- i. This area of focus was being informed as events emerged externally; including how to best to develop partnerships and relationships with others. For example, a great deal of work continued around education and skills with employers, FE colleges (Weston, Bath, Gloucestershire) in relation to apprenticeships and the Institute of Technology (IoT), the latter of which was still regarded by the government as an important part of the skills landscape.
- ii. The development and enrichment of the relationship with the Arnolfini. Similar activity was required with the Bristol Old Vic Theatre School (BOVTS); an important part of the Bristol landscape, but was also a niche provider, so potentially challenged in terms of funding changes.
- iii. Discussions were ongoing with City of Bristol College (COBC). Members noted that:
 - a. The college’s strategic leadership team was seeking to work more closely with the University. COBC also currently worked in partnership with the University of Plymouth and Bath Spa University.
 - b. COBC’s current Ofsted rating of ‘Requires Improvement’.
 - c. The Vice-Chancellor had met with the Chair of the COBC governing body.

G21.09.6.12 Members asked what would be the implications for the University if it were to work more closely with COBC and noted that these were currently unclear, although the University would need to reach out to the college’s senior team, with a view to finding a way to move from the current Ofsted rating to that of ‘Satisfactory’. Members noted that discussions were currently at academic partnership level.

G21.09.6.13 Members also noted that Professor Marc Griffiths, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Executive Dean, Health and Applied Sciences (HAS) had recently joined the COBC Board of Governors.

G21.09.6.14 iv. *Campus Life* – a significant piece of work had started around the University’s campuses and digital space.

G21.09.6.15 Members requested sight of the financial roadmap/capital budget behind the plans, and noted that these would be provided in due course as decisions would be required of the Board.

ACTION: DVC and Provost/Chief Financial Officer

G21.09.6.16 Members also requested to see a transformation roadmap that detailed the progressive stages, with milestones clearly expressed, and noted that the Strategy 2030 Implementation roadmaps would be presented at the November Board meeting.

ACTION: Clerk

G21.09.6.17 The document illustrating a representation of 'The University Cycle, A Whole University Approach' was tabled.

Members noted that this cycle assumed one or two student intakes a year, but in reality there were 6-8 intakes and the cycles were continual, which inevitably impacted on the institution and how it was led.

G21.09.6.18 Known Risks and Challenges

- i. *Monies* (one of key risks) – projects and initiatives would not start until funds were secured and completion was certain. These would also be mapped across the whole 10-year period of Strategy 2030.
- ii. *Industrial Relations* – expectation of potential industrial action over the next 12 months (pensions, pay, workload).
- iii. *Covid-19* would remain alongside University activity.
- iv. Staff turnover/expertise.
- v. *Learning and Teaching themes* – the University's strengths and the areas in which to invest were known; a similar focus on impact and strength would be applied to the University's Research activity.
- vi. *NSS*:
 - a. Mixed picture of NSS results: some results had been excellent and some larger areas/programmes had fared particularly poorly.
 - b. The University remained above the sector for overall student satisfaction.
 - c. There would be a whole-University focus on the student experience – of students already at UWE and of those who had recently sat A' levels.

G21.09.6.19 Members asked about the extent to which the NSS results had come as a surprise. Members noted the confirmation that whilst excellent results were not expected given the pandemic and overall satisfaction level had held above the sector average, what had been surprising were the areas where some of the biggest falls had occurred.

G21.09.6.20 Members were informed that subsequent discussions with Executive Deans, Heads of Department and Programme Leaders had shown that these had been completely unforeseen; this was particularly worrying as it indicated the possibility that either University processes were ineffectual or there was a significant disconnect between students and staff in some areas.

G21.09.6.21 The Registrar and Pro Vice-Chancellor, Student Experience remarked that a great student experience, a sense of belonging and community, and good organisation and management, all led to great NSS outcomes. Members noted that the commentary provided by the respondents suggested that these were the areas where they had had issues.

G21.09.6.22 Members noted that analysis of the sector NSS data showed that smaller niche providers had done better, post-1992 institutions had all experienced falls and research-intensive institutions had not been impacted in the same way. It was suggested that this may be the result of the way in which the metrics operated, which were complicated and somewhat volatile.

- G21.09.6.23 Members asked if the volatility presented a risk that the very positive results were the anomaly and noted that this was not the case as trends over the last decade showed a gradual increase.
- G21.09.6.24 Members endorsed the comment that it was important to remember that this was the first time in 6 years that the University had fallen in the NSS.
- G21.09.6.25 Members were informed that the University had examined each qualitative comment in the results and was working to address those. They noted in particular that every programme and University service would complete a NSS action plan, which would be scrutinised by Deans, Heads of Service and ultimately, by the Directorate. Resources would be targeted towards areas where the greatest impact could be achieved.
- G21.09.6.26 Members noted that the University's response 'NSS Bounce Back' included new roles (secondment positions):
- Programme Coordinators – providing support for Programme Leaders, who were responsible for maximising the student experience but who were also inundated with requests for information and data. This support would be given by new Programme Coordinators to the Programme Leaders of the five large programmes, providing administrative support for the management of those programmes.
 - Success Coaches – focused on final year students, to provide support for those 'not feeling ready for their futures'; nuanced support would be in place across the University.
 - Student Communications – whilst there was an excellent central Student Communications Team in place, there were also 33,000 students at UWE. These new roles would sit closely to each programme team, would be located in the Faculties and would listen to students, undertaking 'temperature checks' of the lived experience.
- G21.09.6.27 Members noted the intention to treat all students as though they were new to the University and to focus on enhancing the sense of belonging and community.
- G21.09.6.28 Members also noted the range of activity being facilitated through third parties to support the University's NSS response.
- G21.09.6.29 Members commended the pace at which the University had enacted its response plan.

ITEMS FOR APPROVAL

G21.09.7 PEOPLE AND PLACE: ANNUAL REPORT ON HEALTH AND SAFETY 2020/2021 *Paper G21/09/03 was received*

G21.09.7.1 Annual Health and Safety (H&S) Report 2020-2021

Alison Weeks, the University's Head of Health and Safety joined the meeting and led Members through the highlights of the report.

G21.09.7.2 *Covid-19*

Members noted the following:

- i. Covid-19 had impacted on activity throughout 2020/2021 and continued to do so; health and safety continued to underpin the decisions and plans being made. Despite this, a lot of work had been completed around the Health, Safety and Workplace Wellbeing Roadmap 2030, although it had been necessary to postpone some aspects of this a year or two.
- ii. Significant work was continuing to embed local action plans and reporting; particularly notable had been the receipt of many questions and requests for permission. Whilst it had been right to take a more central restricted position

at the time, the University was now moving Covid-19 to business as usual, and an emphasis on organisational and individual responsibility.

G21.09.7.3 *Staff Health and Wellbeing Group*

Members noted that the Group had been successful in ensuring a focus on staff health and wellbeing during Covid-19 and as a result it would remain in place to support the implementation of the Transforming Futures Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2030.

G21.09.7.4 *Statutory compliance*

Members noted that overall compliance remained for all relevant legislation.

G21.09.7.5 Members referred to students living in off-campus accommodation and enquired as to the extent to which the University's responsibilities reached. Members noted that the owners of that type of accommodation were responsible for the health and safety of their tenants and that the University worked closely with them to ensure that appropriate measures (e.g. fire safety) were in place and regular assessments undertaken.

G21.09.7.6 The Head of Health and Safety added that the pandemic had necessitated the need for the University to work with local councils and landlords and this had resulted in some relationships starting to develop with key individuals in those councils, which helped in getting important information shared and questions asked.

G21.09.7.7 Members also referred to the reported need for the development of a Security Threat risk assessment and asked how this would be progressed. Members noted that this would be taken forward by the University's Head of Business Resilience.

G21.09.7.8 Health and Safety Policy Statement

Members **approved** the policy statement for signature by the Chair and the Vice-Chancellor.

G21.09.8 **PLACE: STUDENT ACCOMMODATION PROJECT (SAP3)**

Paper G21/09/04 was received

This item is recorded as a confidential minute.

ITEMS TO NOTE

G21.09.9 **CLERK'S REPORT**

Paper G21/09/05 was received

G21.09.9.1 Members noted the content of the report. Dr Jodie Anstee, Clerk to the Board of Governors highlighted the following in particular:

G21.09.9.2 Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Annual Statement 2020-2021

Members were reminded that the University's annual Modern Slavery and Human Trafficking Statement was considered for approval by the Board in September each year, for publication on the website and inclusion in the University's Annual Report. The progress made in the 2020/2021 academic year and plans for 2021/2022 were noted by the Board.

Members **approved** the annual statement for signature by the Vice-Chancellor and publication.

G21.09.9.3 Risk Policy and Risk Management Procedure

Members noted that the revised policy was considered by the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee at its meeting on the 13 September 2021 and was recommended by the Committee to the Board for approval.

Members **approved** the revised Risk Policy and Risk Management Procedure.

- G21.09.9.4 Lloyds Bank Loan Contract Change of Reference Rate from LIBOR to SONIA
The Chief Financial Officer reported that LIBOR (the London Inter-bank Offered Rate) was being terminated at the end of the 2021, and was being replaced by the Sterling Overnight Index Average (SONIA).

Members noted that the Lloyds Bank loan agreement was referenced to LIBOR and required changing.

- G21.09.9.5 The Board of Governors **approved** the switch from reference of LIBOR to SONIA on the University's Lloyds Bank loan with the agreed proposal of:
- SONIA to be compounded in arrears;
 - Switch date of 1 January 2022 (or earlier if a cessation event occurs before; and
 - CAS method to be based on 5YHM.

- G21.09.9.6 Board of Governors and Committee Business Plan 2021/2022
Members noted that the plan set out the programme of work for the Board of Governors across its seminar programme, informal engagements, formal Board meetings, and Committee meetings. The plan was a working document and a live version will be available to all members of the Board and kept updated on the Board of Governors Teams site.

- G21.09.9.7 Finance, Estates and IT Committee Terms of Reference
Members **approved** the removal of ToR 6 "To ensure that funds provided by external bodies are used in accordance with the terms and conditions specified", as this was addressed in the External Auditors' report to the Audit, Risk and Assurance Committee each year.

At this point all University staff, Staff and Student Nominees left the meeting.

- G21.09.10 INDEPENDENT GOVERNOR DISCUSSION**
This session involved Lay Governors only and was not minuted.

- *G21.09.11 BOARD OF GOVERNORS MEETING SCHEDULE 2022/2023**
*Paper *G21/09/06 was received and noted.*

- *G21.09.12 OFFICE FOR STUDENTS (OfS) GRANT LETTER**
*Paper *G21/09/07 was received and noted.*

- *G21.09.13 CORPORATE SEAL**
*Paper *G21/09/08 was received and noted.*

- *G21.09.13 ACADEMIC BOARD MINUTES**
*The minutes of 7 July 2021 (Paper *G21/09/09) were yet to be received and would be provided as a starred agenda item at the next meeting.*

DATES OF FUTURE MEETINGS

23 November 2021	13:00 – 18:00	Bolland Boardroom, Frenchay Campus preceded by a tour and strategic seminar, Engineering Building
22-23 March 2022	inc. Away Day	Clevedon Hall
12 July 2022	13:00 – 18:00	Frenchay Campus

OUTSTANDING ACTIONS			
Meeting	Minute	Action	Status
21 Sept 2021	G21.09.6.15	DVC and Provost and Chief Financial Officer to provide financial roadmap/capital budget for the Strategy 2030 implementation.	
21 Sept 2021	G21.09.6.16	Clerk to ensure that Strategy 2030 Implementation roadmaps are included on the agenda for the Board at its meeting on 23 November 2021.	