



University
of Worcester

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the meeting held on the 11th May 2015

14/34 Attendance

34.1 Present

Mr J Pallett	Chair
Mr C Arntzen	
Mr J Bateman	
Mrs M Chamberlain	
Professor M Clarke	
Mr T Clarke	
Mr D Dale	
Mrs O Fielding	
Professor D Green	Vice Chancellor
Mrs A Hooper	
Mr W Hudson	
Mr D Iddon	
Mrs A Leonetti	
Dr D McDougall	
Mr M Newitt	
Rev'd Dr A Pettersen	
Mrs C Richardson	
Mrs S Speck	
Dr R Woolley	

34.2 In Attendance

Mr R Bonham	Director of Finance
Dr H Forland	Pro Vice Chancellor (International)
Professor S Greer	Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic)
Ms H Johnstone	Assistant University Secretary
Dr C O'Malley	Pro Vice Chancellor (Business & Development)
Mr J Ryan	University Secretary & Clerk to the Board of Governors

34.3 Apologies

Miss A Clarke
Mr W Hudson
Mr Z Padda
Mr T Patrickson
Mrs J Swan

34.4 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

34.5 Papers to be received without discussion

The following paper was received without discussion

Agenda item 10 – Report from Academic Board [BG14/46]

14/35 Chair's Business

- 35.1 The Chair welcomed Mr Lewis Arnold to his first meeting of the Board. It was noted that Lewis was Vice President Elect: Education and would be taking over the post currently held by Mr Tom Clarke. The Board also noted that it was Mr Clarke's last meeting of the Board and members thanked him for his work as Vice President and wished him well for the future.

14/36 Minutes

- 36.1 The open minutes of the meeting [BG14/38] held on the 9th February were confirmed as a correct record.
- 36.2 The confidential minutes of the meeting [BG14/39] held on the 9th February were confirmed as a correct record.
- 36.3 There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

14/37 Vice Chancellor's Business

The Vice Chancellor provided a briefing to the Board on the University's current position and the impact of the outcome of the General Election.

- 37.1 The University continues to do well on student retention and achievement. The attrition rates for nurses and midwives currently studying at the University are at their best level ever and buck the high dropout rate nationally.
- 37.2 The University's excellent achievement in the REF has translated to funding of £900k, the second highest percentage increase in the country. The University will also be receiving a grant from HEFCE of £750k from the HEIF (Innovation Fund). This grant has been reinstated after being withdrawn by the government as part of the 2011-12 cuts. The University is one of only a few to have their grant reinstated due to the organisation's continued work in this area despite the withdrawal of funding.
- 37.3 The University has invested in a range of initiatives to improve student recruitment including an improved website, the appointment of graduate ambassadors and improving turnaround of offers. Applications are up on the last two years and the focus is now on the number of firm acceptances of offers made. To date this stands at 1783 compared to 1441 at the same point in 2014 and it is anticipated this will rise to circa 3000 by the end of the cycle.
- 37.4 There had been little course development in the last couple of years which may have impacted on student recruitment. This is now being addressed with a range of new courses being developed including with partner organisations. The Learning Institute in the South West wish to increase their course offer with the University and Hereford and Ludlow College have raised the possibility of setting up an HE Centre in Hereford on which the University will lead. The University is also benefitting from a better relationship with the new leadership of Birmingham Metropolitan College.
- 37.5 It was noted that applicants are now applying for University accommodation and the University is confident that it can source sufficient accommodation for the first year demand. Worcester City Council has introduced additional requirements for HMO (Houses of Multiple Occupancy) and landlords are therefore rushing to make changes etc before the new rules come into place. This in turn means that there should be a surfeit of properties available for the University to rent for first year students joining through clearing. Members noted that the University had paused the construction of student accommodation and this project needed to be restarted. The increase in student numbers would not only impact on student residential accommodation but on other areas of the University estate including teaching space, specialist academic facilities and staff office space.
- 37.6 The Board had previously raised concern at the University's NSS results which placed it just below the national average in terms of completions. The University, along with the Students' Union, has made a concerted effort to encourage students to complete the survey and completions have risen to 75%, with some courses achieving 80% and above. It is hoped that with the improved completion rate the University's overall results will be improved. The Vice Chancellor thanked the Vice President Education for his and the StARs' work on the initiative.

- 37.7 A new Director of International Recruitment has been appointed to work with the Pro Vice Chancellor (International) and a new Pro Vice Chancellor (Students) has been appointed who will join the University on the 1st August. The advertisements for the new Clerk to the Board of Governors and a Director of Communications have been placed. The post of University Secretary will be advertised in due course.
- 37.8 The Vice Chancellor commented that the manifesto commitments of the new elected Conservative Party were potentially favourable to the University. The manifesto included commitments to teacher training, mental health, funding for masters students, work-based learning and degree apprenticeships. There was however no reference, positive or negative, to the training of nurses. The manifesto included a commitment to a referendum of the European Union and it is important for the University that the outcome is a decision to remain in the EU due to the benefits of recruiting students and to research.
- 37.9 The University has recently been audited by UKVI on its visa arrangements and the outcome of the visit is awaited. However, oral feedback at the end of the visit indicated that the audit went well.
- 37.10 The University's officers will now start work on drawing up a new Strategic Plan and this will include discussions at the Board as well as with a range of partner organisations, staff and students. The new Strategic Plan will be a major topic of discussion at upcoming Board meetings including at an extraordinary meeting of the Board in September.
- 37.11 The Board received the report.

14/38 Report of Audit Committee [BG14/41]

- 38.1 The University Secretary presented the report of the Committee. In particular he drew attention to the internal audit report on the Students' Union which had been given an amber/red level of assurance. It was noted that the Committee had discussed the outcomes of the internal audit report with the Chief Executive of the Students' Union and recognised that some of the issues arose from the small size of the organisation. The University has offered to provide administrative assistance.
- 38.2 It was noted that the Committee had also received a financial benchmarking report which would be used as background information for the Strategic Plan discussions. Members recognised that whilst the report provided a range of information benchmarking was not an exact science and it was important to understand the information behind the benchmarks in order to ascertain their relevance.
- 38.3 The Board also noted that the interviews had recently been held with companies tendering for the internal audit provision and a decision would be announced in due course.
- 38.4 The Board received the report.

14/39 Report of Finance & Development Committee [BG14/42]

- 39.1 Mrs Leonetti presented the report of the Committee much of which had been covered under Vice Chancellor's Business.
- 39.2 Members noted that detail of the Director of Finance's report which forecast that the University would achieve its budgeted surplus of £3.3m and that this may increase to £3.8m. The Board also noted the improved position on student debt.
- 39.3 The Board also noted that the budget for 2015/16 was being drawn up and currently it was anticipated that a surplus of £3.1m would be forecast.
- 39.4 The Board received the report.

14/40 Report of Personnel Committee [BG14/44]

- 40.1 The Chair of the Committee presented the report of the Committee.
- 40.2 Members noted that the national pay negotiations were ongoing and it was anticipated that an award of 1-2% would be made with the majority of institutions favouring 1%. The Committee had noted that 46% of university staff would receive an incremental rise during the financial year.
- 40.3 The Committee also reported that a number of policies and procedures relating to staff disciplinary, improving performance and grievance had been reviewed and the drafts were being reviewed by ACAS before being submitted to the University Executive and Personnel Committee for approval.
- 40.4 The Board noted that Mrs Richardson was the Board's new representative on the University's Diversity & Equality Committee.

14/41 Report of Nominations Committee

- 41.1 Mr Bateman advised the Board that as a result of the recent advertisement for independent governors 15 applications had been received. Of these 4 had been interviewed and the Committee recommended that the Board appoint Mrs Diana Gant. Mrs Gant lived in St John's, was a retired Head Teacher and had previously served for 9 years on the Board of Governors of York St John University.
- 41.2 The Board noted that as of the 1st August Mr Iddon, Rev'd Dr Pettersen and Mrs Richardson would move from being co-opted governors to being independent governors and with the appointment of Mrs Gant all the independent governor positions would be full. However, members were encouraged to identify to the Clerk to the Board any potential candidates for governorship, particularly those with current business experience.
- 41.3 The Board approved the appointment of Mrs Gant and received the report.

14/42 Report of Academic Board [BG14/46]

- 42.1 The report was received without discussion.

14/43 Access Agreement [BG14/47]

- 43.1 At the request of the Vice Chair the report was unstarred.
- 43.2 The University Secretary reported that in 2016/17 the University's Access Agreement commits it to spend 18% of its additional fee income on additional access and retention measures.
- 43.3 The University has an excellent reputation for widening participation but this is not reflected in the HEFCE performance indicators. The area that is most challenging for the University is recruitment from low participation neighbourhood as there are very few within the University's immediate catchment area. However, the University exceeds its benchmark for recruiting from low income backgrounds. The University has argued that its holistic approach to widening participation and access should be better reflected and work on how this might be evaluated is underway. It was noted that OFFA had recognised the issue and the University's Director of Access and Inclusion was a member of a national working group looking at how HEIs address this matter.
- 43.4 It was noted that the University recruits a significant number of students with BTEC qualifications but 25% leave without a qualification. The University is exploring why this is so that it can put appropriate support for these students in place which will include creating a Maths Advice Centre to assist students with numeracy. It was further noted that nationally the performance of BTEC students is lower than average.
- 43.5 The Board acknowledged the University's officers' view that the University was on the front foot in terms of access and retention and was working with OFFA on the methodology to assist it in better representing its achievements.
- 43.6 The Board received the Access Agreement for 2016/17

14/44 Report from the Students' Union [BG14/48]

- 44.1 The President of the Students' Union presented the report. It was noted that Mr Hudson had been re-elected as President and that Mr Arnold and Mr Pathirana had been elected as Vice President Education and Vice President Student Activities respectively.
- 44.2 The Board noted that Mr Johnson, the Chief Executive of the Students' Union had resigned in order to relocate. The post had been advertised and attracted 24 applications with 6 candidates shortlisted for interview.
- 44.3 The Students' Union has been active in providing support for students in the lead up to exams and assignment hand-ins. In conjunction with Student Services the Students' Union has also held its first student safety event with the intention of educating students on being safe on nights out.
- 44.4 The NUS Green Impact Excellent Project, which encouraged students to reduce their energy usage, has now been completed and audited and it is anticipated that there will be a favourable report from the auditor. The new NUS pilot, Responsible Futures, which aims to embed sustainability into the curriculum will be audited in May.
- 44.5 The Students' Union, working with the University and the Suicide Safer Project, will be launching a new Nightline service on the 11th May. The service will run from 8:00pm to 8:00am and is student led. Initially it will run for a 2 week trial over the exam period with the intention of recruiting more volunteers in order to roll out the service on a permanent basis from September.
- 44.6 The target of 22,500 hours of volunteering has been exceeded and it is anticipated that the final figure will be around 32,000 hours. At least two students have achieved 500 hours volunteering and a new award has been established to reflect this. Students volunteering achievements will be celebrated at the VoSCAs during Celebration Week at the end of May.
- 44.7 The University's position in the BUCS league has improved by 4 places to 58th. The Students' Union clubs will be entering more sports next year due to a range of new clubs being established as a result of amended guidelines. The Students' Union won the Varsity tournament against Gloucester University for the first time in nine years by 6 points.
- 44.8 The Vice President Education reported that the final StARS Forum of the session had been held which had looked at employability matters. The overall impression was that students were happy with placement opportunities especially in the Institute of Science and the Environment. However it was noted that students felt placements in their third year when they also had dissertations to complete should be reviewed. The StARS system will continue to be developed with focus in the coming year on raising staff awareness and understanding of how StARS can be utilised more effectively.
- 44.9 It was noted that the Students' Union has received 296 nominations for Student Led Teaching Awards which was a significant increase on the 80 received in 2013/14.
- 44.10 The Board received the report.

14/45 Any Other Business

- 45.1 The Vice Chancellor reported that one of the University's Sports Therapy students had saved a man's life at a football match by delivering CPR. The University's Honorary Awards Committee had agreed that a new award, the Vice Chancellor's Medal, should be established and awarded to the student during graduation.
- 45.2 The Director of Finance requested that the Board should approve a recommendation to amend the authorisation to Barclays Bank on signatories. Previously the authorisation had included individual names and this was to be amended to job titles. The revised list included: Vice Chancellor and Chief Executive, University Secretary, Director of Finance & Resources, Pro Vice Chancellor (Academic), Chair of the Board of Governors, and Chair of the Finance & Development Committee. The Board approved the recommendation.

14/46 Date of Next Meeting

46.1 Monday 12th October 2015

..... (Chair)

..... (Date)