

UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Minutes of the twelfth meeting, held on 16 July 2009

Present	Mr Andrew Bentley	Chair, Chair of Governors
	Dr Mark Atlay	Staff Governor
	Mr David Baggott	Independent Governor
	Mr Stephen Ball	Independent Governor
	Dr Ann Cook	Independent Governor
	Dr Geoffrey Copland CBE	Co-opted Governor
	Mrs Jane Creasy	Vice Chair of Governors
	Professor Les Ebdon CBE	Vice Chancellor
	Ms Lindsey Fidler-Baker	Co-opted Governor
	Mr Jeff Halliwell	Independent Governor
	Dr Yasmin Jetha	Vice Chair of Governors
	Dr Martin Lockett	Co-opted Governor
	Mr Tim Paine	Staff Governor
	Mrs Gita Patel	Independent Governor
	Mr David Pearson	Independent Governor
	Mr Thomas Phillips	Student Governor
Ms Julie Sadlier	Student Governor	
Councillor Raja Saleem	Co-opted Governor	
Ms Diana Saulsbury	Staff Governor	
Mr Paul Wells	Independent Governor	
Apologies	Dr Roger Holdom	Independent Governor
	Mr Andrew Morgan	Co-opted Governor
	Dame Denise Platt DBE	Independent Governor
	Ms Carol Richmond	Independent Governor
Attending	Ms Kate Boulter	Assistant Secretary
	Mr Adam Calvert	Vice President, Students Union
	Mr Adrian Parry	Clerk to the Governors (designate)
	Mr Arthur Sullivan	Secretary, Clerk to the Governors

UB175 Introductory remarks

175.1 The Chair welcomed Mr Adam Calvert, recently elected Vice President of the Students Union, who was attending the meeting as an observer. Mr Calvert will take up office as a Governor for the academic year 2009-10, succeeding Mr Thomas Phillips. The Chair also welcomed as an observer Mr Adrian Parry, who takes up office as University Secretary and Clerk to the Governors on 1 August 2009, succeeding Mr Arthur Sullivan.

UB176 Conflicts of interest

176.1 None of those present declared a conflict of interest in relation to matters on the agenda.

UB177 Constitutional and membership matters

177.1 The Board noted the issues related to Board and Committee membership listed in paper GB08/46. The Clerk to the Governors will consult Governors in writing concerning the appointment of new Board and Committee members, following the forthcoming meeting of the Nominations Committee.

UB178 Minutes of the eleventh meeting of the Board, held on 7 May 2009

178.1 The minutes were confirmed as an accurate record, for signature by the Chair.

UB179 Matters arising

179.1 The Board noted paper GB08/48, reporting on matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda.

179.2 (156.3) The Vice Chancellor reported that, nationally, it is believed that around 5% of academies have failed. Failure has mainly been attributed to issues of leadership.

179.3 (162.3) National pay negotiations for the current year have concluded with a final offer from employers of an increase of 0.5%, in a context in which the Retail Prices Index currently stands at minus 1.6%, and two-thirds of staff will receive increments averaging 2%. Unions are now consulting their members on the offer, which is coupled with an offer to work jointly on issues relating to financial sustainability within the sector.

UB180 Development of the academic portfolio

180.1 The meeting discussed and commented upon paper GB08/49, reporting on University's progress with refreshing the academic portfolio since the Board's residential meeting in February 2009, where this was a major topic.

180.2 Governors were reminded that courses leading to University awards are usually made up of individual units, which are shared with other courses. Whilst a particular award may therefore have a small number of registered students, it may nonetheless be making a financial contribution if all the units are shared. Further difficulties arise where cross-disciplinary courses are run jointly by faculties. A review of the demand levels for the current portfolio of units is to be conducted by the new Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) upon taking up post in September 2009.

180.3 Governors were nonetheless concerned that the executive should have in place a framework for evaluating opportunities for investment, even if this were based on indicative and relative means of evaluating costs and benefits. In terms of the continuing sustainability of the University, they sought reassurance that the resource allocation process provides a similar means of evaluating current provision in the increasingly tight economic position, and asked that a presentation of the process be provided to the next meeting.

Action: Professor Ebdon and Mr Harley

UB181 Revision of the strategic plan

181.1 The Board endorsed the executive's proposals for reviewing the strategic plan, advanced in paper GB08/50. Governors confirmed the University's continuing commitment to its vision, mission and values as set out in the current strategic plan, and continued adherence to the four strands of activity it contains.

181.2 The revision will take account of the fact that some indicators of success need now to be revised in the light the University's exceptional performance, or that of funding restrictions introduced as a result of the economic climate.

181.3 The meeting also suggested that the revision might focus on the University's contribution to sustainability, both environmental and human.

181.4 The strategy itself, and the accompanying financial forecasts, will be presented to the Board for approval at its next meeting. Governors asked that information regarding the detailed funding level scenarios considered for these exercises, and their outcomes, be presented at that meeting, with a recommended option presented to the Board for approval.

Action: Dr Franklin and Mr Harley

UB182 University sustainability

182.1 The Board also considered the commentary upon issues of sustainability provided in paper GB08/51.

182.2 Governors noted that government is expecting universities to provide leadership over environmental issues, both in their own operations and practice, and through the curriculum which is delivered to future leaders and opinion formers. Institutions are currently being exhorted to take an holistic view of their operations, and to consider the global environmental impact of their activities.

182.3 Potential students are also increasingly taking an interest in institutions' records on environmental issues, and this thus becomes a marketing issue. Governors suggested that the University should engage current students in framing the University's agenda for sustainability, and ensure that all students are aware of the relevance of environmental issues for their own subject area.

182.4 Finally, Governors proposed that the University should determine a set of internal metrics against which it should assess current status and future objectives, and monitor and report progress, possibly through publishing a regular statement of corporate responsibility.

Action: Professor Ebdon

UB183 Report from the Academic Board

183.1 The meeting noted the report of matters discussed at the most recent meeting of the Academic Board (paper GB08/52).

183.2 In respect of the Research Strategy, confirmation was provided at the meeting that academic staff will be required to engage in both research and enterprise activity in future. The Board welcomed news that the University has appointed twelve new professors across a range of disciplines in recent months, following advertisements which attracted a very high standard of applicant.

183.2 The Board also noted that preparations are advancing for the Quality Assurance Agency's institutional audit in December 2009, for which the University is submitting an Institutional Briefing Paper which will draw attention to a number of areas of excellent practice.

UB184 Report from the Audit Committee

184.1 The Chair of the Audit Committee drew attention to the re-appointment of KPMG as the University's auditors for a further five year period, following a tendering exercise (Paper GB08/53 refers). She also confirmed that Deloitte LLP has been appointed to provide internal audit services for a further year, pending a further review of options for procuring internal audit.

184.2 The Audit Committee is to receive a presentation at its next meeting on the University's arrangements for ensuring the quality of its data, as a means of providing assurance to the Committee, which is required to provide an opinion in its annual report. The Board noted that the University has recently received a letter from the Funding Council indicating that it does not have a major concern over the University's data submissions at present. Nonetheless, the executive is taking steps to improve the collection of data on entry qualifications of EU and other students with 'non standard' qualifications.

UB185 Report from the Human Resources Committee

185.1 In reporting on matters from the Human Resources Committee (paper GB08/54), the Chair noted that the Committee has considered issues of data quality on a number of occasions over the past year, especially in relation to the introduction of the new HR system, Trent.

185.2 The major matter discussed at the most recent meeting of the Committee was the Human Resources Strategy (see paragraph 190 below).

UB186 Report from the Marketing and Communications Committee

186.1 The Chair of the Committee drew attention to the report on the work of the Marketing and Communications Committee since its formation, appended to the report in paper GB08/55. In particular, he noted that major areas of focus for the Committee, reputation, brand recognition, and league table position have all improved considerably during its lifespan.

186.2 The meeting noted, and congratulated the University upon, the award of Recruitment Team of the Year to the international recruitment team in the recent Times Higher leadership awards.

UB187 Report from the Planning, Finance and Resources Committee

187.1 As noted in paper GB08/56, the main business considered by the Committee at its last meeting was the budget for 2009-10, considered elsewhere on the Board's agenda (see paragraph 189 below).

187.2 The Chair of the Committee noted that the University's successful financial performance in 2008-09 was the result of new developments in international student recruitment. For the future, it will be necessary for the new Committee to continue to monitor levels of student debt and the steps the University is taking to reduce these.

187.3 Because of the higher than anticipated income level for the year, the Committee has authorised the redemption of a loan originally taken for £3.265m, which included a potential charge on the Park Square premises. The Board also noted that an exceptional cost item for the year has been included for accelerated depreciation on premises which are likely to be redeveloped in the next phase of the Luton campus development.

UB188 Report from the Remuneration Committee

188.1 The Chair of Governors reported on the outcome of the meeting of the Remuneration Committee held on 9 July, whose agenda was broadly described in paper GB08/57. The Vice Chancellor and members of the Vice Chancellor's Management Group left the meeting for this part of the discussion.

188.2 The Remuneration Committee had approved a salary increase of approximately 4.7% for the Vice Chancellor, in the expectation that this will maintain the reward position for the post relative to the remainder of the sector. The Committee also awarded the Vice Chancellor a bonus for 2008-09 in recognition of performance against the criteria set out in paper GB08/57.

188.3 The Board also noted that the Committee had given the Vice Chancellor approval to award salary increases of between 1% and 5% to staff on spot salaries, including the Vice Chancellor's Management Group and professors, subject to an overall limit on increases to the salary bill for this group of 3%.

188.4 The Board noted that the Committee has taken account of the need for succession to the post of Vice Chancellor, and that this is being sequenced with the succession to the role of Chair of Governors.

188.5 Following this discussion the Vice Chancellor and senior managers re-joined the meeting.

UB189 Revenue and capital budget 2009-10

189.1 The Board approved the revenue budget for 2009-10 and the capital proposals for the year, set out in paper GB08/58, as recommended by the Planning, Finance and Resources Committee.

189.2 The Board noted that the Planning, Finance and Resources Committee had reviewed the proposals in relation to the medium and long-term sustainability of the University, and had taken account of anticipated cuts in grant funding for the year. Governors welcomed the fact that, whilst budgeted income takes account of an anticipated further increase in international students, no equivalent increase in core costs has been built in to the budget. However, agents' commission has increased relative to

fee income, as more students are recruited through agents and higher incentive payments are made to reward the achievement of recruitment targets. Bad debt provision has been set at an appropriate level to reflect the increase in the volume of students, but also the mitigating impact of requirements and incentives for international students to pay fees in advance.

189.3 Governors noted that it is important that, when scenario planning, the University should consider the speed at which cost savings can be achieved. The Board noted that it would be helpful to receive cash flow information and a balance sheet in connection with the budget, and agreed that this should be circulated to all members after the meeting, and included in papers for approval in future years.

Action: Mr Harley

UB190 Human resources strategy

190.1 The Board approved the human resources strategy for 2009-12, set out in paper GB08/59, as recommended by the Human Resources Committee.

190.2 Governors commended the strategy, which strengthens the core values of the University whilst establishing a professional, flexible and customer focused workforce. Of greatest importance will be ensuring that the strategy is owned by the whole management team, although particular staff will be responsible for driving and monitoring the achievement of individual initiatives. Care should also be taken that deadlines in the action plan are kept achievable, if staff are not to be disappointed.

190.3 The Board asked that periodic snapshots on progress against the strategy be provided at future meetings, and that its congratulations on the document be passed on to the Director of Human Resources.

Action: Professor Ebdon

UB191 Student code of conduct and disciplinary procedure

191.1 Subject to minor amendments to the wording of paragraphs 6, 11 and 28, the Board also approved new student disciplinary regulations as set out in paper GB08/60, on the recommendation of the Academic Board and after consultation with the Students Union

UB192 Vice Chancellor's report on current issues

192.1 The Board received the Vice Chancellor's report in paper GB08/61, and supported the changes to the University's OFFA Agreement as outlined in the paper.

192.2 The Vice Chancellor reported that it was still anticipated that the government will announce the release of 10,000 additional places for new entrants in 2009-10, with no additional funding for institutions. The University has in place plans for responding to such an announcement.

192.3 The Board was reassured that, whilst the executive's proposals for revising the OFFA agreement would result in a reduction in the amount of bursaries available, the University's widening participation mission would remain unaffected. Evidence from students indicates that the amount of bursary is not a factor in institutional choice. The main factors in achieving widening participation objectives will remain the Foundation Degrees offered through college partners, and the close relations with those partners

which encourage students to apply directly to the University. The money saved from the bursary scheme will instead be invested in providing facilities for students and support for the learning experience.

192.4 The Board also noted the preparations which are under way for the Quality Assurance Agency's visit in December 2009.

UB193 Balanced scorecard

193.1 The Board received the latest revision of the balanced scorecard (paper GB08/62), and noted that it will be revised to reflect objectives in the forthcoming review of the strategic plan. Particular attention was drawn to the need to separate the trans-national education and international recruitment aspects of the University's overseas activities.

UB194 Risk register

194.1 The Board also received the latest revision to the corporate risk register high level status report (paper GB08/63). Members noted the importance of the executive evaluating the impact of the action plan for maintaining the quality of the student experience.

UB195 Estates strategy

195.1 The Board received and commented upon the latest report on the Luton campus redevelopment, provided in paper GB08/64.

195.2 The Board endorsed the executive's view that all possible effort should be made to ensure that new student accommodation is available at Luton from September 2011. Whilst it would be preferable for the University to partner with Liberty Living in this, the University should explore all possible options, including phasing the development further, self-financing, and sale and lease-back arrangements for the completed development.

195.3 Achievement of the target date will require that a final agreement on the implementation route by November 2009. Accordingly, the Board asked that dates be arranged for the Estates Strategy Review Group to consider options put forward by the executive in sufficient time for a recommendation to be made at the November meeting of the Governing Body.

Action: Mr Harley, Mr Sullivan

UB196 Minutes of meetings of Committees since May 2009

196.1 The Board received the minutes of these meetings, provided in paper GB08/65.

UB197 Any other business

197.1 The meeting joined with the Chairs of current Board Committees in thanking all Governors and co-opted members for their commitment and contribution to the University's progress, through their participation in the work of Committees. The Chair of Governors especially thanked Dr Jetha, Mrs Creasy, Mr Pearson and Mr Wells for their work as Committee Chairs.

197.2 Governors also suggested that the University should consider the possibility that an award might be made annually by the Board to a member of staff to reward outstanding achievement or performance.

Action: Mr Sullivan

197.3 The Board welcomed the fact that the new Chancellor has engaged very fully with the staff, students and work of the University since her appointment.

197.4 The Chair paid particular tribute to Mr Thomas Phillips, who was attending his last meeting as a Student Governor. Mr Phillips has represented the students' interests to the Board with great effectiveness. The Board joined the Chair in wishing Mr Phillips well in his future career.

197.5 This was also the last meeting at which Mr Arthur Sullivan would be present as Clerk to the Governors. The Chair thanked Mr Sullivan for his outstanding service to the Board.

UB198 Next meeting

198.1 The next meeting will take place on 26 November 2009, at Putteridge Bury.

Arthur Sullivan
Clerk to the Governors
27 July 2009