

UNIVERSITY OF BEDFORDSHIRE

Minutes of the eighteenth meeting held on 5 March 2011

Present	Mr Andrew Bentley	Chair of Governors
	Mr David Baggott	Independent Governor
	Mr Stephen Ball	Independent Governor
	Professor David Barrett	Staff Governor
	Mr Clem Brohier	Independent Governor
	Mr Alan Cook	Independent Governor
	Mrs Jane Creasy	Independent Governor
	Mr Ajay Gowda	Student Governor
	Dr Geoffrey Copland CBE	Co-opted Governor
	Professor Les Ebdon CBE	Vice Chancellor
	Mr Jeff Halliwell	Independent Governor
	Dr Yasmin Jetha	Vice Chair of Governors
	Dr Martin Lockett	Co-opted Governor
	Ms Jill Millns	Co-opted Governor
	Mr David Pearson	Independent Governor
	Dame Denise Platt	Independent Governor
	Ms Carol Richmond	Independent Governor
Ms Lyndsay Murphy	Student Governor	
Mr John Sentinella	Staff Governor	
Mr Paul Wells	Independent Governor	
Apologies	Ms Ann Keen	Co-opted Governor
	Ms Tabitha Aldrich Smith	Co-opted Governor
	Mr James Shea	Staff Governor
Attending	Ms Kate Boulter	Assistant University Secretary
	Miss Alice Hynes	Registrar
	Mr Donald Harley	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Resources)
	Professor Ashraf Jawaid	Deputy Vice Chancellor (External Relations)
	Professor Mary Malcolm	Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic)
	Professor Carsten Maple	Pro Vice Chancellor (Research and Enterprise)
	Ms Patricia Murchie	Director of Marketing, Admissions, Recruitment and Communication
	Mr Adrian Parry	University Secretary
Ms Martina Rohr	Academic Registrar	

UB304 Welcome and Quoracy

- 304.1 The Chair welcomed Mr Alan Cook to his first meeting as a governor of the University of Bedfordshire.
- 304.2 The Clerk confirmed that the meeting was quorate and could proceed to business.
- 304.3 The Chair expressed his appreciation for the hard work of the University's staff. Their efforts had ensured that the University was in a strong position to face the challenges ahead. It was agreed that the Vice Chancellor would write to all staff to convey the thanks of the Board.
- 304.4 The Board noted that Ms Tabitha Aldrich Smith had recently given birth to a daughter and wished to offer its congratulations. It was noted that she had been unable to attend a Board of Governors meeting since her appointment in February 2010. As she was currently on maternity leave, the Board exercised the discretion provided under Instrument 6(3) of its Instrument and Articles of Government to provide permission for her absence.

UB305 Conflicts of Interest

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

UB306 Constitutional and membership matters

306.1 The Board received a report that provided an update of membership and constitutional matters.

306.2 The following points were made in discussion:

- (i) The Board of Governors had agreed at its meeting on the previous evening that the term of office for the Chair of the Board should be extended for up to six months beyond May 2011 and that, in the meantime, a process would be undertaken to identify and recruit his successor.
- (ii) The Board should seek to appoint a new governor with expertise in the fields of continuous professional development, consultancy and research. This would assist the commercial development of the new Postgraduate and CPD Centre.

307.3 It was noted that Dr Yasmin Jetha would retire from the Board in July 2011. This would create a vacancy for a Vice Chair. Any governors wishing to express an interest in this role were invited to speak to the Chairman.

307.4 RESOLVED: The Board:

- (a) Noted the current vacancies for an independent and a co-opted Board member.
- (b) Agreed that Dr Geoffrey Copland and Mr Jeff Halliwell should be invited to serve for second terms as a co-opted and independent governor respectively.

UB307 Minutes of the sixteenth meeting of the Board held on 25 November 2010

281.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were agreed as an accurate record.

UB308 Matters arising

308.1 (289.2(iii)) The University would submit a revised financial forecast to HEFCE in April 2011 following receipt of its funding letter.

308.2 (290) The Postgraduate and CPD Centre had progressed to the submission for planning permission.

308.3 (290) The Resources and Employment Committee had approved the purchase of Eaton Green hall of residence for £4.35m and refurbishment of the property at a cost of up to £1.5m.

308.4 (295.2) It remained undecided where responsibility should rest for sustainability matters should rest within the Board's committee structure. The matter may be clarified subsequent to the sustainability workshop to be held on 28 March 2011.

UB309 Funding and tuition fees 2011-12

309.1 The Board received a report that summarised anticipated funding announcements for the current year and for 2011-12.

309.2 The following points were made in discussion:

Postgraduate 'writing up' fee

- (i) Many postgraduate research students felt that the removal of the 'writing up' fee was unfair and that this should not apply to existing students.
- (ii) The 'writing up' fee was a disincentive to complete research degrees within acceptable timescales. Its removal was a necessary step to help to reverse the University's poor completion rates for research degrees.
- (iii) Poor research degree completion rates had resulted in negative publicity for the University.
- (iv) The University had stipulated in its action plan to HEFCE that it would remove the 'writing up' fee. The University risked the loss of its research degree awarding powers if it failed to deliver its action plan.
- (v) Some students felt that there had not been consultation before the 'writing up' fee had been withdrawn. However, the issue had been discussed by the University's Research Committee which included representation from postgraduate research students.
- (vi) The University would be prepared to consider any legitimate exceptions and these would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Tuition fees for 2011-12

- (vii) Island fees were regulated fees that were set by the government in negotiation with the Channel Island authorities. There were currently only two islands students studying at the University.
- (viii) There had been an uplift of 66 to the HEFCE student number control and this now stood at 3,285 for 2011-12

309.3 RESOLVED: The Board agreed:

- (a) The schedule of tuition fees for 2011-12 attached at Annex A of the report.
- (b) To delegate authority to the Chair to agree tuition fees for 2011-12 in instances where further information was awaited.

UB310 Tuition fees 2012-13

310.1 The Board received a report that proposed a mechanism for the setting of tuition fees for 2012-13.

310.2 The following points were made in discussion:

- (i) Many uncertainties remained. A decision on the level of tuition fees to be set should be predicated upon the guidance on access agreements to be issued by the Office for Fair Access and the likely costs of the National Scholarship Programme. It would be preferable

to delay a final decision until as much information as possible was available.

- (ii) It was difficult to gauge the impact of increased tuition fees upon demand for higher education. It was unlikely that a better understanding of the market would be gained until the new fees regime entered its second year. In such circumstances, it would be preferable to set fees at a higher rate and then discount if necessary rather than risk setting the fee too low and having to increase it significantly in the next year.
- (iii) A low price strategy should not necessarily be ignored. However, the University was not able to increase its volume of student numbers sufficiently to compensate for charging a lower fee. Similarly, care would be needed to ensure that a low price was not equated with low quality by the market.
- (iv) The University could demonstrate an excellent track-record for access. There was scope, however, to enhance student retention rates and this would need to be a key component of the University's access agreement.
- (v) It was likely that OFFA would wish institutions to offer fee waivers rather than bursaries. This was also the preference of government as it would result in a lower commitment from the public purse for the student support system.
- (vi) The University should explore the incentives for good academic attainment. This would improve retention rates by providing greater motivation to continue studying and would improve the quality of student work.
- (vii) The impact of increased tuition fees upon the take-up of part-time study could not currently be quantified.
- (viii) It may be possible to recruit students at full-cost or through the creation of a private company. However, it would be important to first see whether the forthcoming higher education white paper permitted such flexibilities.
- (ix) Cartel legislation prevented the University from discussing its proposed tuition fees with other higher education providers.
- (x) The University may wish to set a differential tuition fee for honours degree and for foundation degrees. This would be discussed with partner colleges.

310.3 RESOLVED: The Board agreed:

- (a) That the Registrar should inform OFFA that the University intended to charge a Home/EU tuition fee that would exceed £6k.
- (b) To grant delegated authority to the Chair and Vice Chancellor to set the University's Home/EU tuition fee for 2012-13, with assistance from an advisory group of governors.

UB311 Instrument and articles of government

311.1 The Board received a report that proposed amendments to the University's instrument and articles of government to enable the work of the Board of

Governors to progress more efficiently and its committees to function more effectively.

311.2 The following points were made in discussion:

- (i) The University should await the publication of the higher education white paper to ensure that no additional changes were needed prior to submission to the Privy Council.
- (ii) The instruments and articles shared by many post-1992 universities were a legacy of the past and required updating, particularly in the distinctions drawn between independent and co-opted governors. This would require changes to primary legislation and this issue should be raised via the sector's representative bodies.

311.3 RESOLVED: The Board agreed that the amended instrument and articles of government should be submitted to the Privy Council, subject to no additional changes being required as a consequence of the publication of the higher education white paper.

UB312 Student Union accounts

312.1 The Board received the audited accounts of the Student Union.

312.2 The following points were made in discussion:

- (i) The Student Union's deficit had reduced and that it was demonstrating a much improved commercial performance, underpinned by a clear and realistic strategic plan and overseen by a board of trustees.
- (ii) The Student Union was making a marked contribution to the student experience through focus groups and stakeholder consultation to identify issues that were important for students.
- (iii) The Student Union had attained a bronze award for its environmental performance and was working towards securing a silver award.
- (iv) The Student Union's location in the Campus Centre at Luton had enabled it to build credibility and impact with the student body.

312.3 RESOLVED: The Board noted the report.

UB313 Any other business

313.1 The Deputy Vice Chancellor (External Relations) reported that the University had applied for the Queen's Award for Enterprise: International Trade 2011 and had also made a submission in the outstanding international strategy category of the Times Higher awards.

313.2 The Board noted that Dr Roger Holdom had felt unable to accept a second term as a governor due to pressures of work following a recent promotion. He had indicated his wish to return to the Board at a future date. The Board expressed its thanks for his contribution and wished him well for the future.

UB314 Next meeting

314.1 The next meeting would be held on Thursday 12 May 2011 at Bedford.

Adrian Parry
University Secretary
1 April 2011