

MINUTES

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Date: Wednesday 25 September 2019

Time: 1530

Location: Boardroom (Plexal) – The Press Centre, Here East, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park, London E20 3BS

Notes:

1. *Items marked with an asterisk (starred items) were for information only or regarded as noncontentious.*
2. *Items classified as Confidential, and their subsequent minutes (highlighted here in blue), will be redacted before publication of the agenda and minutes on the University's public website.*

Members		
Professor Liz Barnes	Vice Chancellor	P
Connor Bayliss	Student Representative (President, Students' Union)	P
Glenn Earlam	External Member	P
Tony Evans	External Member	P
Kevin Gould	External Member	P
John Henderson (Deputy Chair)	External Member	P
Mike Herbert	External Member	A
Cathryn Hickey	External Member	P
Colin Hughes (Chair)	External Member	P
Doug Rouxel	Academic Staff Representative	A
Sarah Tudor	Professional Support Staff Representative	P
Jonathan Vardon	External Member	P
Scott William-Smith	Student Representative (Vice President, Students' Union)	P
Sara Williams	External Member	A
In attendance		
Ian Blachford	Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board of Governors	IA
Professor Ieuan Ellis	Pro Vice Chancellor – Place & Engagement	IA
Professor Martin Jones	Deputy Vice Chancellor	IA
Sally McGill	Chief Financial Officer (<i>as of 1 July 2019</i>)	IA
Andrew Proctor	Pro Vice Chancellor - Digital	IA
Sue Reece	Pro Vice Chancellor – Student Experience	IA
Lauren Rooke	Assistant Clerk to the Board of Governors (minutes)	A

P = Present; T = via telephone; A = Apologies; IA = In Attendance

Know Your Business – Staffordshire 5G Connected Region

A presentation on delivering innovation and economic growth in Staffordshire and the 5G Connected Region Opportunity was received from Gary Thompson, Director of Development. A further update would be provided on the opportunity and the scoping of this into a clear narrative, together with clear messages as to how this would continue to develop the University, linking to its strategic plan, at future meetings of the Board of Governors.

1 MEETING MANAGEMENT	
2558	<p>Apologies for Absence were received from Mike Herbert, Doug Rouxel and Sara Williams.</p> <p>Andrew Proctor and Colin Hughes were welcomed to their first meeting of the Board of Governors meeting. Sarah Tudor was thanked for her contribution to the Board, as this was her final meeting.</p>
2559	There were no new Declarations of Interest .
2560	The Minutes of the last meeting of the Board of Governors, 25 June 2019 BG/114/01 , were signed as a true and accurate record.
2561	<p>Matters arising:</p> <p>i) Mid-Year Strategic Event – it was noted that this would be included within item 2.1 on the agenda (Vice Chancellor’s report).</p> <p>ii) Minute 525 (Nominations and Governance Committee) – it was noted that Sinead Butters had been unable to accept the role of independent governor due to competing commitments.</p> <p>iii) Minute 526 (Nominations and Governance Committee) – it was noted that Colin Hughes had been appointed as the new Chair of the Board of Governors for the term of office 01 August 2019 to 31 July 2022 and that the OfS and CUC had been informed.</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>v) Minute 2551 – Access and Participation Plan 2020-21 to 2024-25 – it was noted that the Access and Participation Plan had been submitted to the OfS on 27 Aug 2019. This has now been returned to the University on two occasions by the OfS to further clarify detail in the plan. Feedback from across the sector had highlighted the level of scrutiny was consistent in their experience. Approval would not be known until 18th October 2019.</p>
2 STRATEGIC OVERVIEW	
2562	<p>The Board received and discussed a report on Strategic Developments and Organisational Performance BG/114/02 from the Vice Chancellor. The following main areas were covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External landscape (including the national picture on undergrad admissions, Brexit, OfS review of grade inflation, UUK Conference) • University performance and development (including Student Satisfaction, Away Days, Award Nominations and Senior Staffing) • The Vice Chancellor highlighted a number of themes from the Labour Party Conference had highlighted the removal of tuition fees for students, the proposed 32-hour working week, the focus upon widening participation and that the subject level TEF was now being discussed. • The Vice Chancellor highlighted that 23 universities had been contacted for further information upon ‘grade inflation’ from the OfS. The University had provided information to the OfS in response to their request, which was detailed later on the agenda. <p>The report was noted.</p>
3 FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR APPROVAL (marked below accordingly)	
2563	<p>The Board received and discussed a paper on Student Recruitment and Financial Headlines to date BG/114/03, presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Student Experience. The following main points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report provided a forecast of potential intake student numbers for semester 1 2019/20, based on admission data on Friday 13th September 2019 and enrolled student numbers on Monday the 16th September 2019 (following Welcome Weekend). It was noted that the University was still receiving applications and student enrolment would continue to take place over the initial 3 weeks of Semester 1. • With regard to clearing we had 1177 applications received v 625 applications from the previous year. Enrolment was now underway for the FTUG new entrants – 125 students had not engaged with the enrolment process as of today’s date and were now a focus of attention. • The report also gave an overview of financial modelling based on the clearing position on 13 Sept 2019, and a summary of the overall potential financial position. <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liz Barnes asked about the 7% wastage figure that had been included in the reports. SR explained that work was underway to reduce down the wastage levels, with current performance of wastage looking at circa 2.5% although this position would be likely to deteriorate, but it was hoped that it would be better than the model at 7%.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conversation took place regarding the data provided for the Board meeting and the simplification of this so that it would reflect the student recruitment targets year on year, actuals and the percentage changes between year and against target. SR would ensure that the report would be reworked for the Sustainability and Resources Committee, Strategy and Performance Committee and the Board meeting. This would include reference to the Strategic Financial Plan and whether the University was on course to deliver this. • Sally McGill explained the current position on the finances of the University, noting that contingency had been made. However, the variability of the student recruitment across subject areas was an issue and would need to be addressed. • It was noted that whilst applications had been down a tremendous amount of work had been undertaken on conversion activity from offer to acceptance. <p>The report was noted and a further update would be provided the Sustainability and Resources Committee, Strategy and Performance Committee and the Board meeting (this would include reference to the Strategic Financial Plan and whether the University was on course to deliver this).</p>
2564	<p>The Board received and discussed the Student Satisfaction Report 2019 BG/114/04, presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Student Experience. The following main points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report set out the results from the major surveys conducted by the institution – NSS, PTES, PRES and the internal SVS. • It was noted that there had been disappointment in the student survey responses this year. • The report highlighted areas for improvement and action alongside areas where the institution continued to perform well compared with its competitors (and in some cases the whole sector). The report went on to identify emerging themes, actions and the governance structure for the surveys. <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scott William-Smith commented that the report had highlighted a number of themes which reflected their understanding of issues from the Student Union perspective. • Cathryn Hickey asked about the PTES survey and the issue of student safety. SR explained that this was an optional question was included on student safety due to an increased in number of incidents reported on or around campus. Liz Barnes confirmed that the University was working with the councils to address the increase in incidents and how this could be reduced. Jonathan Vardon asked the University to consider further what actions they could take with the Council and other agencies to address the concerns over student safety. • Kevin Gould enquired about the low scores for sustainability recorded in the survey. Connor Bayliss and Scott William-Smith discussed some of the initiatives around sustainability that were taking place but it was noted a holistic approach driven by the University, in partnership with the Students Union, needed to take place, once a new sustainability role had been filled, who would have ownership for the agenda. Kevin Gould stated that he would be willing to work any new appointee and Glenn Earlam offered to have his sustainability lead assist the University in setting the appropriate direction. • Jonathan Vardon enquired about the ability to identify issues in advance, if they were likely to have a negative impact upon the survey results. Sue Reece confirmed that a number of areas could have been avoided or mitigated and these were now being addressed in those particular areas and shared as 'lessons learnt' more broadly. Schools and Services were all reflecting on their contribution to the NSS results and feedback. • Glenn Earlam highlighted the importance of real-time data on student satisfaction that would provide schools and course teams with a pulse of satisfaction. Andrew Proctor confirmed that actions were underway with this. • It was highlighted that whilst there was much work to do to improve, there were many areas that had improved and continue to receive very strong satisfaction levels. Colin Hughes highlighted the need to ensure that focus was upon courses that were negative outliers, impacting upon the overall scores. <p>The report was noted.</p>
2565	<p>The Board received and discussed the Catalyst Update BG/114/05, introduced by the Deputy Vice Chancellor. The following principle points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report updated the Board on progress since June 2019, confirming that design and procurement processes remained on programme. • The report gave updates on the position with the bat mitigation licence and conditional planning permission; the tender process; the digital strategy and delivery and the Brindley demolition. • A summary of the budget position at 29 August 2019 was given, including of extra costs and likely savings, with a more detailed overview included as an appendix. • An overview of the approval timeline for the recommended contractor appointment process was included as an appendix. • The Project Board was therefore requesting a capped budget increase of £2.0m to support the building contract, leaving the £1.9m contingency and client direct budgets of £2.9 m for digital, AV, furniture and wayfinding intact.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> It was clarified within the report that approval for any extra sum required would be sought from Sustainability and Resources Committee in due course, with savings of an equal value identified within the overall Estates masterplan. <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Discussion took place regarding the requested increase in funding for the project. It was highlighted that the budget for the building was large and with the granting of a capped budget increase, whilst not hoping to be fully used, should lead to the creation of a landmark building. <p>The Board approved the capped budget increase of £2.0m to support the building contract, leaving the £1.9m contingency and client direct budgets of £2.9 m for digital, AV, furniture and wayfinding intact.</p>
2566	<p>The Board received and discussed the Estates Update (including Nursery, Blackheath Lane and Blackstone) BG/114/06, presented by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, noting the following main points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The paper gave a summary of progress since June 2019 on the above three projects approved at the 25 June 2019 Board of Governors meeting, including details of design team appointments (and subsequent working up of programmes, cost plans and risks etc). <p>The report was noted.</p>
2567	<p>The Board received and discussed the DIL Update BG/114/07, introduced by the Chief Operating Officer, noting the following main points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report summarised the current position and gave an update on progress since the June 2019 Board of Governors meeting, including details of the fit-out and student recruitment position. It was noted that although overall recruitment numbers were lower than predicted (and reflected the late-cycle promotion of DIL), growth was expected for 2020, with an ambitious and expansive programme of activity planned which would engage schools, colleges and students. There were now 25 students enrolled from September 2019 with strong interest in the 2020 year of entry. The paper also provided an update for the Board on staffing, the future governance of DIL, and proposed next steps (including the provision of a closure report at the Spring Sustainability and Resources Committee meeting). <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Colin Hughes enquired if there were any concerns regarding the smaller cohort sizes. Sue Reece stated that there was a large amount of work regarding onboarding and belonging to ensure that retention remained strong. <p>The report was noted.</p>
2568	<p>The Board received and discussed a briefing paper on the OfS Transparency Return BG/114/08, introduced by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Student Experience. The following principle points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The briefing sheet had been previously circulated to governors by email and gave an overview of the context around the return, the requirements, the preparation of the submission and key themes and risks arising from the analysis, amongst other areas. The full return was available for Governors on the BofG SharePoint site. <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Members commented upon the findings of the return, with some concerning areas which would need to be thoroughly investigated so that the correct issues were identified to be addressed. <p>The report was noted.</p>
2569	<p>The Board received and discussed the Collaborative Register BG/114/09, introduced by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Place & Engagement, who noted that the Register of Collaborative Provision provided as an appendix was an up-to-date and authoritative record of Staffordshire University's collaborative academic partnerships (and was published on the University website). It was a requirement of the Board to approve the Collaborative Register.</p> <p>The Board of Governors approved the Register of Collaborative Academic Provision 2019-20.</p>
5 FOR INFORMATION	
2570	<p>The Students' Union Report BG/114/- was received for information, introduced by the President of the Students' Union. The following main areas were covered:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Governance • Finance (including the preparation of the year-end accounts) • Key strategic areas and updates (sustainability, accommodation guarantee, #ProudToBeStaffs awards, OfS project around student mental health, electoral register project, Black History Month) • Operational updates (student academic rep focus, student employment, advice centre) <p>The Board of Governors noted the Students' Union report.</p>
2571	<p>An update on OfS Requests for Additional Information: i. Analysis of Degree Classifications over time; BG/114/11 was received for information, with a further verbal update being provided by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Student Experience on the OfS' request for ii. Additional Information required on APP.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report on the submission of the University's response to the review of analysis of degree classifications over time noted the context for the request (including and gave a summary of the documents submitted as part of the University's response (Appendix B). <p>The Board of Governors noted the update on OfS requests for additional information.</p>
2572	<p>An update on Apprenticeships Performance BG/114/12 was received for information, introduced by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Student Experience, who noted the following main points:</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p> <p>[REDACTED]</p>
2573	<p>The *Academic Board Minutes: 10 December 2018; 26 June 2019 and 08 August 2019* BG-114-13, -14 and -15 were received and noted.</p>
2574	<p>The *Calendar of Corporate and Public Events 2019/20* BG/114/16 was received and noted with particular reference to the Celebrating Staff Success event the following week.</p>
6 ADDITIONAL MATTERS	
2575	<p>Have we made a positive impact on students today?</p>

	It was agreed that there had been a wealth of discussion regarding the student experience, including the issue of student safety, feedback, data to be proactive in addressing issues. Scott William-Smith also highlighted the developments with the SmartZone had been well received by the students.
2576	There were no additional matters.
2577	Early Indication of the Financial Statements Sally McGill provided high level messages from the current draft financial statements. It was noted that the full financial statements would be provided to the Audit and Risk Committee, Sustainability and Resources Committee and then the next meeting of the Board of Governors.
2578	Next meeting: Wednesday 20 November 2019 (Boardroom, University House)