

# MINUTES

## BOARD OF GOVERNORS

**Date:** Wednesday 1 April 2020

**Time:** 1500

**Location:** Microsoft Teams online meeting

*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.*

<b>Members</b>		
Professor Liz Barnes	Vice Chancellor	P
Connor Bayliss	Student Governor (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	P
Cathryn Hickey	External Member	A
Colin Hughes (Chair)	External Member	P
Baljinder Kuller	External Member	P
Doug Rouxel	Academic Staff Governor	P
Hannah Gibbard	Professional Support Staff Governor	P
Jonathan Vardon	External Member	P
Scott William-Smith	Student Governor (Vice President, Students' Union)	P
Sara Williams	External Member	P
<b>In attendance</b>		
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	IA
Ian Munton	Director of Library and Student Services ( <i>Know Your Business session</i> )	IA
Andrew Proctor	Pro Vice Chancellor - Digital	IA
Lauren Rooke	Assistant Clerk to the Board of Governors ( <i>minutes</i> )	IA
Lord Stafford	Chancellor	IA

*P = Present (via Teams); A = Apologies; IA = In Attendance (via Teams)*

### **Know Your Business (1500 - 1530) – University Mental Health Charter**

The Board received a presentation from Ian Munton, Director of Library and Student Services, outlining the current position with the above, giving detail on initiatives underway and in development, and highlighting the key priorities and workstreams.

Members commented as follows:


- Tony Evans asked about further analysis of the quoted figures and consistency across the HE sector. Ian Munton clarified that the data for University was broadly consistent with the sector despite its slightly different demographic.

1 MEETING MANAGEMENT	
2607	<b>Apologies for Absence</b> were received from Cathryn Hickey.
2608	There were no new <b>Declarations of Interest</b> .
2609	<b>Membership:</b> The Chair welcomed Baljinder Kuller to his first meeting of the Board of Governors.
2610	<b>The Minutes of the last meeting of the Board of Governors</b> , 20 November 2019 BG/116/01 and 16 Jan 2020 BG/116/01a, were signed as a true and accurate record.
2611	<p><b>Matters arising:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Arising from 25 Sept 2019 BofG Know Your Business (Staffordshire 5G Connected Region)</b> – a brief verbal update was noted from the Vice Chancellor, who clarified that the project was progressing well.</li> <li>• <b>Minute 2571 - OfS Analysis of Degree Classifications Over Time/Grade Inflation</b> – it was noted that no response had been received from OfS following submission on 20 Sept 2019.</li> <li>• <b>Minute 2592 -</b> [REDACTED]</li> <li>• <b>Minute 2596 - Update on OfS Request for Further Information: Unconditional Offers</b> – it was noted that no response had been received from OfS following submission on 20 Nov 2019.</li> </ul>
2 STRATEGIC OVERVIEW	
2612	<p>The Board received and discussed a report on <b>Strategic Developments and Organisational Performance</b> BG/116/02 from the Vice Chancellor. The following main areas were covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• External political landscape, both locally and nationally (including university funding, Budget 2020, Brexit and OfS Regulation).</li> <li>• University performance and development (employee engagement, mental health day, civic fellows, national awards, expansion of the University's Enterprise Zone, and senior staff appointments).</li> <li>• It was noted that the landscape had changed significantly since the writing of the report and that the following paper on Covid-19 would be of greater importance to the Board.</li> </ul> <p>Members commented as follows: NONE</p>
2613	<p>The Board received and discussed an <b>Update on Covid-19</b> BG/116/03 from the Chief Financial Officer. The report comprehensively covered the following main areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Impact on operations and financial sustainability; worst tolerable position; pensions liabilities, capex projects; external audit implications and supply chain impact.</li> <li>• Appendices were provided detailing the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ BG-116-03Appx1_Decisions by the Senior Leadership Team</li> <li>○ BG-116-03Appx2_Assumptions to date</li> <li>○ BG-116-03Appx3_Potential financial impact</li> <li>○ BG-116-03Appx4_Letter from the OfS dated 17 March 2020</li> <li>○ BG-116-03Appx5_Letter from the Minister, Michelle Donelan MP, on Friday 20 March</li> </ul> </li> <li>• The Chief Financial Officer summarised the financial position, noting that the University was in regular communication with its bankers and external auditors.</li> <li>• The Chief Operating Officer highlighted that relations with the unions continued to be strong, and that pay negotiations had been postponed for the next year currently; and that the government had confirmed that there would be no tuition fee refunds – they were clear that teaching and learning were continuing.</li> </ul> <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colin Hughes assured that Board that the committee chairs were being regularly updated by the Vice Chancellor and Chief Operating Officer on developments around Covid-19 and would liaise with the rest of the Board as required.</li> <li>• Kevin Gould asked whether a 35% fall in undergraduate applications seemed realistic. Liz Barnes noted that UUK had issued a communication that morning advising that a 15% drop was more likely.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lord Stafford asked about mitigating potential drops in student numbers and Liz Barnes noted that the government had made clear that no HEIs should make unconditional offers to students until measures around exams were clarified. Institutions that had made unconditional offers regardless were likely to face fines.</li> <li>• Connor Bayliss asked about communications to students over the past two weeks. Liz Barnes confirmed that comprehensive communications had been issued to staff and students in tandem around key decisions, with Ian Blachford highlighting that the appropriate up-to-date information was made available on the MyStaffsUni app for students. Connor noted that different schools had taken different approaches to communicating with students and Liz confirmed that this had been necessarily managed on a local level, given differing requirements and demographics.</li> <li>• Lord Stafford asked for clarification on the potential impact to the University's supply chain. Sally McGill confirmed that work had been undertaken to determine what aspects of the supply chain were most likely to need monitoring and intervention, and that payments to local and smaller suppliers were being processed as quickly as possible.</li> <li>• Sara Williams asked for clarification on whether the University was subject to the guidance in the Cabinet Office's Procurement Policy Note. Sally McGill noted that the University was currently taking guidance from BUFDG on this, but that it seemed unlikely at this stage.</li> <li>• Liz Barnes highlighted the measures that the University was putting in place around community support during the Covid-19 crisis: initiatives such as a bid to manufacture ventilators, business support for local companies, accommodation offers for key workers, and capacity for the children of key workers in the University's nursery.</li> </ul>
2614	<p>The Board received and discussed a report entitled <b>Apprenticeships – Lessons Learnt</b> BG/116/04, introduced by the Vice Chancellor and the Pro Vice Chancellor – Place and Engagement. The following main points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The paper reflected on the University's experience of delivering apprenticeships as an early adopter in 2016 through to 2020, considering the national and institutional context of embarking on the delivery of apprenticeships and how external agencies had driven changes in practice and priority (in particular reviews by Ofsted and the internal auditors – the mock ESFA audit).</li> <li>• The paper commented on the areas of success and the areas of improvement required to ensure the University's apprenticeship portfolio was sustainable into the future, and that it reflected the high quality and vocational excellence demonstrated across all other areas of the University.</li> <li>• Many of the 'lessons learned' highlighted formed the basis of current actions in the OFSTED Quality Improvement Plan, the ESFA action Plan – these actions were listed in Appendix 1.</li> </ul> <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Colin Hughes underlined that Apprenticeships provision had been comprehensively discussed at committee level and featured as a standing item on both Strategy and Performance Committee and Board of Governors agendas.</li> </ul>
2615	<p>Following on from the <b>Strategic Weekend 31 Jan – 01 Feb 2020</b>, the Board received and discussed a paper and accompanying presentation from the Vice Chancellor entitled <b>Towards 2030 (next steps)</b> BG/116/05, noting the following main points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Board of Governors Strategic Weekend had included discussions on some key components of the University's 2030 strategy and on the infrastructure that would be required to enable the delivery.</li> <li>• It had been agreed at the event that the current strategy at its core remained relevant to the University's 'Towards 2030' strategy. The 'talented people' theme required strengthening, but essentially the other themes 'connecting communities' and 'innovative learning and teaching' were appropriately focused.</li> <li>• The current academic portfolio, consideration of student number distribution, and alignment of major academic disciplines to local and regional priorities and to market demand, were central to this strategy. (A separate agenda item considered the more detailed work that was progressing to realign the portfolio.)</li> <li>• The academic portfolio influenced the design of the masterplan and priorities for the future of this. It would also enable better understanding of the potential student numbers and distribution of provision across campuses.</li> <li>• As discussed, as a Civic University, Staffordshire's key role was to drive up higher-level skills and to support business and industry to create more high-level skilled jobs, to retain graduates in our region attracting inward investment to grow high-level skills opportunities, and to support business start-ups and accelerators.</li> <li>• This item was supported by slides that set out the current strategy, how it would evolve and how the University's approach to delivery would be structured. Agreement of this direction of travel would influence decisions on structure of Schools and Services, enable clarity about priorities and clarify responsibilities on delivery.</li> <li>• Senior Leadership team would now prioritise setting out supporting high-level principles and a vision of key deliverables for 2030.</li> </ul> <p>The Board approved the <b>notes from the Strategic Weekend</b> BG/116/06 (<i>previously circulated by email</i>), as well as the direction of travel for the <b>Towards 2030</b> strategy.</p>
2616	<p>The Board received a paper and accompanying presentation on <b>Academic Portfolio</b> BG/116/07 from the Deputy Vice Chancellor and the Director of Academic and Strategic Planning. The following main points were noted:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This paper and presentation built upon discussion about the Academic Strategy and the future academic shape of the University at the BofG and SLT Strategic Weekend at the end of January 2020. Following this, the draft Academic Strategy document had been developed and updated following Academic Board on 26<sup>th</sup> February 2020 and was provided at <b>Annex A</b> for comment by the Board of Governors.</li> <li>The short main paper set out strategic priorities to develop the portfolio over the next 10 years to deliver the Academic Strategy. It was necessarily broad-brush but supported by detailed local student numbers and business planning. SLT agreed and monitored progress through the Five-year Academic Roadmap, which was translated through into the School Five-year Business Plans.</li> <li>The latest version of the five-year Academic Roadmap (which was reviewed and updated annually) had been prepared in winter 2019/20 via the annual student numbers and financial planning round, a process overseen by SLT. A summary of this, and analysis of the University's current portfolio, was shared in the presentation delivered by the Director of Academic and Strategic Planning.</li> </ul> <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sara Williams commended the presentation and asked what three questions were posed to academics during course provision review. Simone Clarke provided clarification on this.</li> <li>Scott William-Smith asked about building in academic sustainability and Martin Jones noted that he would provide further detail on this outside the meeting.</li> <li>Colin Hughes commended the University's approach to the review of academic portfolio as well as Executive's engagement with the Board on this, and this was echoed by other members.</li> <li>Glenn Earlam asked about the branding and naming of courses and the rationale behind this, in a market where this was a key influence on students' course choices. Simone Clarke confirmed that market testing around this was factored into the decision-making processes but further work needed to be undertaken to ensure that these had the desired marketability.</li> </ul>
<b>3 SUB-COMMITTEE BRIEFING SHEETS AND REFERRED ITEMS</b>	
2617	<p><b>The briefing sheets for Audit and Risk Committee, 28 Jan 2020 BG/116/08 and 10 March 2020 BG/116/09</b> were received and noted, with the Chair of Audit and Risk Committee noting that the committee had agreed to defer the tender of the external audit service until a more appropriate time.</p> <p><b>For approval</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Minute 1692 – Review of University-Level Risk Registers</b> (10 Mar 2020) BG/116/10 The Board received and approved the revised University-Level Risk Registers.</li> <li><b>Minute 1693 – Annual Review of Risk Appetites</b> (10 Mar 2020) BG/116/11 The Board received and approved the Annual Review of Risk Appetites.</li> </ol> <p><b>For information</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>*Minute 1671 – Internal Audit - Mock ESFA Funding Assurance Review</b> (28 Jan 2020) BG/116/12 The Board noted the Internal Audit – Mock ESFA Funding Assurance Review.</li> <li><b>*Minute 1675 – Risk Management Framework Update</b> (28 Jan 2020) BG/116/13 The Board noted the Risk Management Framework Update.</li> <li><b>*Minute 1695 – Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2018-19</b> (10 Mar 2020) BG/116/14 The Board noted the Health, Safety and Wellbeing Annual Report 2019-19.</li> </ol>
2618	<p>The briefing sheet for <b>Strategy and Performance Committee, 25 Feb 2020 BG/116/15</b> was received and noted.</p> <p><b>For approval</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>*Minute 133 – KPI Report*</b> BG/116/16 The Board received the KPI Report, which included a proposed amend to the Timely Completion KPI, and approved this.</li> </ol> <p><b>For information</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>*Minute 131 - University Priorities for the 2019-20 Academic Year*</b> BG/116/17 The Board noted the report on University Priorities for the 2019-20 Academic Year (and that item 2.4 on the agenda, <b>Towards 2030</b>, built on this).</li> <li><b>*Minute 132 - Evaluating Delivery of the University Strategic Plan (Connected Communities)*</b> BG/116/18</li> </ol>

	<p>The Board noted the report on Evaluating Delivery of the Strategic Plan (Connected Communities).</p> <p>iv. <b>*Minute 135 - Student Recruitment: In-Year Report*</b> BG/116/19 The Board noted the Student Recruitment: In-Year Report.</p> <p>v. <b>*Minute 136 - Strategic Discussion - International Recruitment*</b> BG/116/20 The Board noted the report on International Recruitment (which had been presented to Strategy and Performance Committee as a precursor to a strategic discussion).</p>
2619	<p>The briefing sheet for <b>Sustainability and Resources Committee, 17 Mar 2020</b> BG/116/21 was received and noted.</p> <p><b>For approval</b></p> <p>i. <b>Minute 262 – Sustainability Strategy</b> BG/116/22 The Chief Financial Officer introduced the Sustainability Strategy, which would be developed further following feedback and approval at the committee on 17 March, and this was approved.</p> <p>ii. <b>Minute 267 – LGPS Triennial Valuation</b> BG/116/23 The Board received a report on the LGPS Triennial Valuation and approved the proposed recommendation.</p> <p>iii. <b>Minute 268 - Staffordshire University Pension Scheme Update</b> BG/116/24 The Board received an update on the Staffordshire University Pension Scheme and approved the proposed recommendation.</p> <p>iv. <b>Minute 269 – Review of Travel and Expenses Policy</b> BG/116/25 The Board received and approved the revised Travel and Expenses Policy, which would take effect from 1 May 2020.</p> <p><b>For information</b></p> <p>v. <b>*Minute 259 – Catalyst Update*</b> BG/116/26 The Board noted this report, with the Deputy Vice Chancellor giving a further brief verbal update highlighting that the Catalyst building had preferred project status for VINCI and that their health and safety arrangements around Covid-19 were comprehensive. It was noted that whilst it was challenging to predict how the supply chain would be affected by the current pandemic, work was underway to ensure resilience on this.</p> <p>Members commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mike Herbert noted that it would be preferable to discuss potential acceleration with Catalyst contractors as soon as possible and Martin Jones confirmed that discussions were in place on this.</li> <li>• Scott William-Smith asked about the projected timeline for the new eSports facility. Andrew Proctor noted that an eSports stage 2 business case would soon be presented to Executive, with a planned go-live date of September. Liz Barnes underlined that Covid-19 would potentially impact on the proposed timeline.</li> </ul> <p>vi. <b>*Minute 261 – DIL Implementation Report*</b> (<i>already sent via email to Board members</i>) The Board noted the implementation report into DIL, now known as Staffordshire University: London.</p> <p>vii. <b>*Minute 266 – Student Numbers and Projected Financial Impact: In-Year Update*</b> BG/116/27 The Board noted the update on student numbers and the projected financial impact.</p>
<b>4 FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR APPROVAL (marked below accordingly)</b>	
2620	<p>The Board received and discussed the report on <b>Apprenticeships Performance and Monitoring</b> BG/116/28, noted the following main points:</p> <div style="background-color: black; width: 100%; height: 100px; margin-top: 10px;"></div> <div style="background-color: black; width: 100%; height: 100px; margin-top: 10px;"></div>

	 <p>There were no comments from members.</p>
<b>5 FOR INFORMATION</b>	
2621	The Board received for information the <b>Students' Union Report BG/116/29</b> , introduced by the President of the Students Union.
2622	The Board received for information the <b>*Academic Board Minutes: 26 Feb 2020 (Unconfirmed)* BG/116/30</b> , introduced by the Vice Chancellor who highlighted that moving to a bigger module structure would give students opportunity for a deeper engagement with their learning and enable a better work-life balance for staff.
<b>6 ADDITIONAL MATTERS</b>	
2623	<p><b>How have we made a positive impact on our students today?</b></p> <p>It was agreed that the significant progress made on the student mental health charter and comprehensive Covid-19 planning would help protect the student experience, as would the monitoring of apprenticeships performance and the developments around academic portfolio pathways.</p>
2624	<p><b>Any additional matters:</b></p> <p>a) Jonathan Vardon commended the business continuity work done so far around Covid-19 and underlined that the Board of Governors was available for support and guidance where needed. Colin Hughes commended the University's resilience in the challenging circumstances, and this was echoed by other members.</p> <p>b) Lord Stafford thanked the Board for the invitation to attend and commended the significant work done on academic portfolio pathways and developments with 5G.</p>
2625	<b>Next meeting:</b> Wednesday 24 June 2020 (Boardroom, University House)