

MINUTES

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Date: Wednesday 24 June 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.

Members		
Professor Liz Barnes	Vice Chancellor	P
Connor Bayliss	Student Governor (President, Students' Union)	P
Glenn Earlam	External Member	A
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	P
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
In attendance		
Ian Blachford	Chief Operating Officer and Clerk to the Board of Governors	IA
Professor Ieuan Ellis	Pro Vice Chancellor – Place & Engagement	IA
Tuesday Forrest	Vice-President, Students' Union (incoming student governor)	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

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

Know Your Business (1500 - 1530) – Learning and reflections from Covid-19

A presentation was received from the Director of Estates & Commercial Services and the Director of Library & Student Services, giving an overview of the approach the University was taking to reopening the campus and how it had adapted to deliver key student support services and maintain the student experience during the pandemic.


Members and attendees commented as follows:

- Tony Evans commended the presentation and the approach taken so far by the University; this was echoed by Colin Hughes.

1 MEETING MANAGEMENT	
2567	Apologies for absence were received from Glenn Earlam.
2568	There were no new Declarations of interest .
2569	The Minutes of the last meeting of the Board of Governors , 1 Apr & 30 Apr BG/117/01 & 01a, were confirmed as a true and accurate record.
2570	<p>Matters arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minute 2596 - OfS Request for Further Information: Unconditional Offers – it was noted that following the submission of the University’s response on 20 Nov 2019, a letter had been received on 3 June 2020 confirming OfS’ current position on the matter, to which it would return post Covid-19. • Minute 2613 – it was noted that following the meeting, clarification on the PPH02/20 procurement strategy had been issued by HEPA, confirming that this was guidance rather than statutory and that there was no commitment where one-off purchases were made, or those via frameworks.
2 STRATEGIC OVERVIEW	
2571	<p>The Board received and discussed a report on Strategic Developments and Organisational Performance BG/117/02 from the Vice Chancellor. The following main areas were covered:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • External landscape, both locally and nationally (including government-imposed measures as a result of COVID-19) • Transition out of lockdown (including our own principles for returning to work and into blended learning and teaching, and those of UUK and UCEA) • University performance and development (CUG 2021, Guardian League Table, employee engagement, upcoming digital showcases such as GradEx20, collaborative partnerships, senior staff appointments, DL100 nomination and VC engagement in response to COVID-19) • It was highlighted that one of the key metrics impacting the results of the CUG was spend and counter-intuitively, measures to help shore up the University’s financial sustainability such as pension cost reductions were in fact contributing to a drop in CUG results. Staff: student ratios were also key to the CUG, and it was recognised that there remained work to be done within some Schools to improve these. • It was further noted that it had been very recently confirmed that Michael Barber would not continue for a second term as Chair of OfS but would be conducting a review into digital learning within the sector. • A response regarding the University’s appeal on SNCs had been issued today and it had been confirmed that all partnership numbers would still be counted. However, it had been clarified that student numbers would be counted in December rather than in September, giving slightly more headroom (owing to expected attrition). <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connor Bayliss underlined that the Students’ Union would support the University in its communications with the DfE and NUS. • Jonathan Vardon congratulated Andrew Proctor on his nomination for the Digital Leader 100.
2572	<p>The Board received and discussed a Covid-19 update BG/117/03, introduced by the Chief Operating Officer. The following principal points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The University had successfully managed the move to the remote working in March 2020 in response to the pandemic and the paper summarised the actions that were now underway in planning for the recovery stage. • It appeared that the government would continue to impose social distancing measures for the foreseeable future, and the University needed to plan for similar measures to be implemented on its operations. • UUK and UCEA guiding principles for the pandemic recovery stage had been helpful in validating the University’s own thinking (and were attached as appendices). • Workstreams were in place focusing around priority areas to plan and implement. Consideration of teaching and learning was paramount, in order to provide a quality academic and student experience and to protect the University’s finances. The principles determined by this would focus on the delivery of the Towards 2030 Strategy. (Strategy and Performance Committee had recently considered a high-level presentation on the strategic impact of the pandemic, which had been made available on SharePoint for the Board). • Communications with students and staff remained vitally important and links to examples of recent comms were included.

	<p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <p>NONE</p>
2573	<p>The Board received and considered a paper entitled Supporting economic recovery in Stoke-on-Trent BG/117/04 (<i>circulated by email on 24 June 2020</i>), introduced by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Digital and the Pro Vice Chancellor – Place and Engagement. The following main points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper aimed to provide a high-level overview of our current thinking regarding the development of an enterprise ecosystem to support economic recovery within the local area in the post-COVID-19 world as an 'anchor plus' civic institution. • It was widely accepted that every sector across the UK was facing significant uncertainty and challenges in both the short, medium and longer-term due to the current, unprecedented situation. The University believed that higher education would be pivotal to the economic recovery of the UK and as such, its approach was to accept this uncertainty and embrace the opportunity to emerge from this crisis with a reinvigorated brand and reputation. • Recent figures indicated a significant increase in the number of people within S-o-T accessing Universal Credit, with it also becoming clear from other metrics that young people were being disproportionately impacted by COVID-19 within Stoke and Staffordshire. • The proposed E³ programme brought together several pre-existing and planned initiatives alongside a reprioritised estate masterplan to align and accelerate the University's ambition to position its Stoke-on-Trent campus as a centre for innovative commercial activity. It aligned with each stage of the Stoke and Staffordshire LEP COVID-19 Strategy: Respond, Recover, Renew and Transform, whilst also acknowledging and learning lessons from past missteps. • The core components of the proposed programme were infrastructure, platforms and human capital, and the report gave an overview of the current and planned activities within each of these three areas. • By focussing less on the development and promotion of individual, siloed initiatives; E³ would see the University begin to develop the interconnectivity between its existing and future capabilities to create the foundations of an enterprise ecosystem in order to help drive the local economy, improve opportunities for its students, increase its reputation, grow the Staffordshire University brand and ultimately, achieve its 2030 ambitions. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tony Evans asked about the response from local stakeholders and Ieuan Ellis confirmed that the paper had not been put out for formal consultation but that the University would work with key stakeholders as necessary. • Sara Williams noted her belief that the paper appeared to focus on the physical aspects of economic recovery rather than looking at the broader picture of how the University could leverage its unique position to benefit both its students and the local region. Ieuan Ellis confirmed that it was recognised that our students were key drivers in this issue, and catalysts for change, and that the paper should accurately reflect the University's position on this. Sara further noted her preference for the paper to take a more overtly forward-looking view and Colin Hughes proposed that the relevant member of Executive work with a small group of governors in order to refine the proposal further.
3 SUB-COMMITTEE BRIEFING SHEETS AND REFERRED ITEMS	
2574	<p>The briefing sheet for Remuneration Committee, 12 May 2020 BG/117/05 was received and noted (there were no items for approval or information).</p>
2575	<p>The briefing sheet for Nominations and Governance Committee, 12 May 2020 BG/117/06 was received and noted</p> <p>For approval</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Minute 561 - Co-opted member of Sustainability and Resources Committee BG/117/07 The Board received and approved the proposal for a co-opted member of the Sustainability and Resources Committee with effect from 1 August 2020. Minute 562 - Independent Governor vacancy BG/117/08 The Board received and approved the proposal to appoint Dame Sue Hill as an independent governor with effect from 1 August 2020. Minute 564 - Proposed membership of the Board and sub-committees 2020-21 BG/117/09 The Board received and approved the proposed membership of the Board and its sub-committees 2020-21. <p>For information</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Minute 563 - Academic Staff Governor appointment BG/117/10 The Board noted the update re the Academic Staff Governor appointment. Minute 565 – Review of effectiveness of the Board 2020 (AdvanceHE Review) BG/117/11 The Board noted the update regarding the Review of Board Effectiveness 2020.

2576	<p>The briefing sheet for Sustainability and Resources Committee, 19 May 2020 BG/117/12 was received and noted.</p> <p>For approval</p> <p>NONE</p> <p>For information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Minute 291 – Catalyst Updates BG/117/13 and 13a The Board noted the Catalyst Updates, with the Deputy Vice Chancellor giving a further brief verbal update highlighting that the projected delay as at the time of reporting was just under 6 weeks. (There were currently no supply chain implications: the delay was mainly due to changes to work practices as a result of social distancing.) The Deputy Vice Chancellor further noted that he would be reporting to Sustainability and Resources Committee following each monthly meeting of the Catalyst Board. ii. Minute 295 – Recruitment and potential intakes for academic year 2020-21 (no paper as superseded by item 4.1) iii. Minute 296 - Impact of Covid-19 on Budget 2020-21 and medium-term financial sustainability (no paper as superseded by item 4.1) iv. Minute 297 – Management accounts to 31 May 2020 (P10) BG/117/14 The Board noted the Management Accounts to 31 May 2020. v. Minute 306 – Wellbeing strategy BG/117/15 The Board noted the Wellbeing Strategy.
2577	<p>The briefing sheet for Audit and Risk Committee, 2 Jun 2020 BG/117/16 was received and noted.</p> <p>For approval</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Minute 1710 – Determination of internal audit plan 2020-21 BG/117/17 The Board received and approved the internal audit plan 2020-21. <p>For information</p> <p>NONE</p>
2578	<p>The briefing sheet for Strategy and Performance Committee, 9 Jun 2020 BG/117/18 was received and noted.</p> <p>For approval</p> <p>NONE</p> <p>For information</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i. Minute 151 – Strategic discussion on covid-19 and strategy to 2030 (see SharePoint link in BG/117/03) ii. Minute 152 – Delivery of the University’s strategic plan – talented people BG/117/19 The Board noted the report on Evaluating Delivery of the Strategic Plan (talented people). iii. Minute 153 – KPI report BG/117/20 The Board noted the KPI report. iv. Minute 155 – Apprenticeship performance and monitoring BG/117/21 The Board noted the Apprenticeships report. v. Minute 156 – League table performance BG/117/22 Following on from the earlier discussion on this in minute 2571, the Board noted the league table performance report. vi. Minute 160 - Access and Participation Plan 2020–25 Update BG/117/23 The Board noted the update on the Access and Participation Plan 2020-25.
4 FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR APPROVAL	
2579	<p>The Board received and considered a paper entitled Impact of COVID-19 on budget 2020-21 and medium-term financial sustainability BG/117/24, presented by the Chief Financial Officer and the Pro Vice Chancellor – Place & Engagement. The following main points were noted:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The paper built on the scenarios previously considered by Sustainability and Resources Committee on 19 May 2020. Student Number Controls (SNCs) had been introduced since that meeting and the University's allocated number of places fell short of the current forecast, including partners' projections – further detail on how this calculation had been reached was given in Appendix A. • As a result of the SNC, the University would not be able to recruit additionally during clearing and would have to reduce the number of students recruited by partners. The Vice Chancellor's letter to the Secretary of State for Education, appealing the low allocation, was included as Appendix B. • The paper gave an update on the financial consequences in the form of four potential scenarios (updated since consideration at Sustainability and Resources Committee), and the projected figures behind these. • It was also confirmed that the budget for 2020-21 and the five-year strategic financial plan would be presented to the Board for approval in September 2020. •  <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doug Rouxel asked about the possibility of providing potential on-campus places for students who would now be unable to attend courses at partner institutions as a result of awards being withdrawn and Ieuan Ellis confirmed that this was under consideration where possible. • Connor Bayliss asked about the savings shown in travel costs due to COVID-19. Sally McGill noted that some of this would be due to savings realised as a result of trips to visit overseas and UK partnerships being cancelled, but that were several other factors including delays to projects and cancellation of external conferences and events.
2580	<p>The Board received and considered the Revised Memorandum of Understanding – Students' Union BG/117/25, introduced by the Chief Operating Officer.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A June 2019 internal audit report had highlighted the need to review the memorandum that existed between the Student Union and the University. Following this, a substantial overhaul of the memorandum had been undertaken drawing from best practice across the sector. • The revised document represented an agreed position between the University and the Student Union, which had also been subject to legal oversight. This provided a fully comprehensive overview of the current position between both parties and signalled that several areas would develop collaboratively over the next planning period. (It would be reviewed on an annual basis and presented to the Board of Governors in the event of any substantive proposed changes.) • The document had already been approved by the Board of Trustees of the Student Union. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <p>NONE</p> <p>The Board approved the revised Memorandum of Understanding with the Students' Union.</p>
2581	<p>The Board received and considered a paper on Blackheath Lane teaching facilities additional funding BG/117/26, introduced by the Pro Vice Chancellor - Digital. The following principle points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenders had now been received for the new teaching facilities project at the Centre of Excellence, Blackheath Lane, Stafford showing an increase in construction costs. At the same time, developments in the simulation and immersive technology, coupled with experience gained from changes in learning and teaching practices as a result of COVID-19, had resulted in a requirement to revise the simulation and immersive proposals. • Approval was now sought to increase the project budget to reflect these two changes and, subject to agreement of the above, approve the award of the construction contract to Pave Aways Ltd. • The business case for increasing the project budget was attached, setting out in detail the proposal for the development of the simulation and immersive technology facilities and summarising the increase in construction costs (detailed in the tender recommendation report prepared by MACE - also attached). • Approval was sought to increase the project budget of £5.3m by £479k to £5.779m. A full break down of the Project budget was contained in the tender recommendation report. • Also attached was a contract award recommendation report prepared by the external project managers MACE. The report covered the tender programme, evaluation criteria, pricing and qualitative scoring, together with commercial and project risks and recommends the award of the contract to Pave Aways Ltd., for the sum of £3,674,327.43. • Project risks to highlight had been the ongoing difficulties in gaining timely responses from the Local Authority Planning Department (Stafford Borough Council), who had requested extensions resulting in a delay to the start date of approximately 4 weeks. Also highlighted was the uncertainty of the long-term impact of COVID-19 on the supply of materials. A completion date for the 2021 academic year was still anticipated, but contingency plans for teaching were currently being developed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Andrew Proctor also noted that we had been shortlisted for a funding bid put in to the LEP for 50% match funding of the uplift costs. There was of course no guarantee that this would be granted. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mike Herbert enquired about likely traffic and drainage issues. Andrew Proctor clarified that the traffic issue required a survey to be undertaken post-construction and confirmed that Adrian Rowlands would revert separately regarding the drainage matters. Scott William-Smith asked about the Equality Impact Assessment for this item and Andrew Proctor confirmed that this would be circulated. <p>The Board approved the proposal for additional funding for the Blackheath Lane teaching facilities.</p>
2582	<p>The Board received and considered the Degree Outcomes Statement 2020 BG/117/27, introduced by the Deputy Vice Chancellor. The following main points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> In November 2018, the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment (UKSCQA) launched a consultation on proposed changes to the degree classification system in the UK designed to ensure transparent, consistent and fair academic standards. That consultation asked how the higher education sector could implement the recommendations of Degree classification: transparent, consistent and fair academic standards, published in parallel. Building on the findings and recommendations of the above report and the outcomes of the consultation, a sector Statement of Intent was published in May 2019, signed by sector representative groups and endorsed by the UK Standing Committee for Quality Assessment. The Statement of Intent called on providers to meet certain conditions and stated that in order to achieve the aims and objectives of the Statement, institutions awarding degrees in England should publish a 'degree outcomes statement' articulating the results of an internal institutional review, in the academic year 2019-20, covering final classifications for graduates on Level 6 FHEQ. QAA had published Guidance for Degree-Awarding Bodies on Producing Degree Outcomes Statements along with a Checklist for Considering and Validating Degree Outcomes Statements (both also stored in the BG-117 24 Jun 2020 SharePoint folder) to assist providers in the development and sign-off of their degree outcomes statements, which required approval from both Academic Board and Board of Governors and should be published online and publicly available alongside an institution's academic regulations and policies. A group, convened by Quality and Enhancement Committee (QEC), had been meeting to develop the University's degree outcomes statement, which was now attached for the Board's consideration, having been considered and approved at Academic Board on 17 June 2020. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <p>NONE</p> <p>The Board approved the Degree Outcomes Statement.</p>
2583	<p>The Board received and considered a paper regarding the RECM – staffing profile BG/117/28, introduced by the Chief Operating Officer. The following main points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The University was in the process of finalising its submission to AdvanceHE to be reaccredited with the Race Equality Chartermark. The Chartermark focused upon ethnicity in both our staff and student profiles, with the aim of undertaking detailed analysis, to inform actions to improve race equality within institutions. The student profile of the University and performance against key metrics, disaggregated by ethnicity, has been an area of in-depth analysis over the past few years. However, the staffing profile had not. Therefore, the final submission to AdvanceHE would have familiar messages on race equality in the student profile, but unfamiliar messages with regards to staff – the paper sought to draw these out. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Doug Rouxel asked about the process of decolonising the curriculum. Ian Blachford noted that work would be taking place to determine why certain courses were not attractive to BAME students. Martin Jones further noted that the current (and planned) work underway around the academic strategy would impact on this (on the theme of PPS – People, Place, Society). Colin Hughes asked whether RECM was HE-specific and Ian confirmed that this was the case. Colin further asked whether there had been any significant staff or student response as a result of the recent prominence of the Black Lives Matter movement. Ian confirmed that the University had put out a supporting statement at the time and that the feedback had been broadly positive. Kevin Gould asked about measures around E&D within the University more broadly. Ian Blachford clarified that SLT would now have ownership of these measures throughout the institution, rather than a smaller group having specific responsibility, and would monitor progress through its meetings. Progress would be reported to governors via

	Sustainability and Resources Committee (which would then refer items to Board of Governors as appropriate.) as part of the annual; EDI Report.
2584	<p>The Board received and considered a paper entitled Statement of Research Integrity BG/117/29, introduced by the Deputy Vice Chancellor.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Concordat to Support Research Integrity (link here) provided a national framework for high standards of research conduct and its governance. It set out commitments that institutions, researchers and funders should abide by to ensure that research integrity was upheld in the UK research environment. • Under the Concordat, institutions were obliged to produce an annual statement on research integrity, to be presented to their governing body. The attached document was Staffordshire University's annual statement for 2018-19. • The attached statement also provided a summary of activities and actions undertaken in 2019-20 to date. A full report of 2019-20 would be presented to Research & Innovation Committee, Academic Board and Board of Governors in autumn 2020 (and annually each autumn thereafter). • Universities must demonstrate compliance with the revised Concordat (including an annual statement) by 25 October 2020, hence this report being presented well in advance of that external deadline. • Governors should note that the format of the statement was largely dictated by the Concordat and the headings in the attached document were largely standardised (the statement should be viewed as akin to a statutory report). • The attached statement had been approved by the Research & Innovation Committee on 3 June 2020 and at Academic Board on 17 June 2020. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows: NONE</p> <p>The Board approved the Statement of Research Integrity.</p>
2585	<p>The Board received and considered the Students' Union Report BG/117/30, introduced by the President of the Students' Union. The following main points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The report (and recent activity within the Union) was much dominated by the developments necessitated due to COVID-19. The Students' Union noted the constructive and open collaboration that various departments had experience with academic and professional teams across the University. • Further updates were given on the development of the Emergency Academic Regulations, learning and teaching, student experience (particularly in relation to accommodation), Union finances and the approach to furloughing, and the likely financial impact of COVID-19 on the Students' Union. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows: NONE</p>
5 FOR INFORMATION	
2586	The Board received for information the *OIA Statement 2019* BG/117/31.
2587	The Board received for information the *Prevent monitoring: ADR and risk assessment outcome* BG/117/32.
6 ADDITIONAL MATTERS	
2588	<p>How have we made a positive impact on our students today?</p> <p>It was agreed that continued focus on the safe return to campus was key, as was the progress on the Student's Union MoU and the Blackheath Lane teaching facilities building work. (Scott William-Smith commended the approach of Executive and the Board of Governors to student experience and wellbeing during the pandemic.)</p>
2589	<p>Any additional matters:</p> <p>a) Colin Hughes thanked Scott William-Smith, Mike Herbert and Doug Rouxel for their very valued contributions to the Board of Governors, commending them all for their dedication and work.</p>
2590	Next meeting: Fri 21 August 2020 (then Thurs 24 September 2020)