

MINUTES

BOARD OF GOVERNORS, BG-123

Date: Wednesday 23 November 2021

Time: 1500

Location: Teddeseley Suite, Moat House Hotel (Acton Trussell)

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
Hannah Blackburn	Student Governor (President, Students' Union)	P
Jonathan Chapman	External Member	P
Glenn Earlam	External Member	P
Tony Evans	External Member	A
Hannah Gibbard	Staff Governor (professional support staff)	P
Kevin Gould	External Member	P
Colin Hughes (Chair)	External Member	P
Baljinder Kuller	External Member	P
Dr Simon Smith	Staff Governor (academic staff)	P
Jonathan Vardon	External Member	P
Anthony Wallace	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 Martin Jones	Deputy Vice Chancellor	IA
Dr Annabel Kiernan	Pro Vice Chancellor - Education	IA
Sally McGill	Chief Financial Officer	IA
Andrew Proctor	Pro Vice Chancellor - Digital	IA
Lauren Rooke	Assistant Clerk to the Board of Governors (<i>minutes</i>)	IA

P = Present; A = Apologies; Ab = Absent; L = Late; IA = In Attendance; T = via Teams

There was no Know Your Business session prior to the meeting, to enable time for consideration of the agenda items.

1 MEETING MANAGEMENT	
2789	Apologies for Absence were received from Tony Evans.
2790	There were no new Declarations of Interest .
2791	The Minutes of the last meeting of the Board of Governors , 22 Sept 2021 BG/123/01 were signed as a true and accurate record.

2792	<p>Matters arising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minute 2272 - Strategic Developments and Organisational Performance – it was noted that clarification re Michele Donelan’s role had been provided by email on 28 Sept 2021. • Minute 2774 – Update on the Financial Context and Future Direction – it was noted that the item on scenario-planning was scheduled for the March meeting of the Sustainability and Resources Committee. • Strategic Event (Spring 2022) – it was noted that this had been scheduled for Thurs 28 April 2022 (and Governors had been notified by email on 16 Nov 2021).
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2 STRATEGIC OVERVIEW

2793	<p>The Board received and considered the Annual Quality and Standards and Student Success Report 2020-21 (incl Degree Outcomes Statement) BG/123/02 (full report available separately on SharePoint), introduced by the Pro Vice Chancellor - Education, who provided a presentation giving the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary of the Higher Education Sector context for 2020/21 • Summary of the specific profile of the Student Population at Staffordshire in 2020/21 • Analysis of performance of our student academic experience 2020/21 • Summary of key areas of QE activity 2020/21, consolidated in the Quality Enhancement Action Plan for 2021/22 (Appendix B) • It was noted that this detailed report and its accompanying action plan, which had already been received by Academic Board, set out of the processes and mechanisms used by the University to continue to enhance and improve the quality of its provision and of the student academic experience, and that a range of metrics had been considered in year through the sub-committee structure. Annex B reported on the delivery of the 2020-21 plan. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jonathan Chapman asked about the management of standards throughout the institution following the unprecedented disruption of the last two years. Annabel Kiernan noted that several pieces of work were underway including transition work with schools and colleges to pinpoint missed learning, and work with those involved in curriculum design and development. • Martin Jones commended the report and noted that it acted as a useful repository of information for staff across the University’s Learning & Teaching community. • Jonathan Vardon asked about ensuring value for employers both in the short- and long-term. Annabel Kiernan clarified that all courses included direct engagement with employers and most of them included work-related experience. Our Employability framework meant that all academic teams were engaged with this. • Glenn Earlam asked about timely completion rates. Annabel Kiernan confirmed that these had deteriorated, partially due to a feeling of dis-location stemming from a drop in on-campus time for students. Work on ensuring proper academic mentoring was in place for all students was underway. • Baljinder Kuller asked for clarification on rates of timely completion for part-time vs full-time students and this was provided by Annabel Kiernan. <p>The Board of Governors approved the Annual Academic Quality, Standards and Student Success report 2020-21.</p>
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2794	<p>The Board of Governors received and considered the report on Strategic developments and organisational performance BG/123/03, introduced by the Vice Chancellor. The report covered the external context, University performance, University business, and senior staff appointments, with it being noted that the overall picture had been relatively stable since the last report just two months ago.</p> <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within the context of Further Education, Martin Jones noted the possibility that BTECs would be phased out at a future point. • Sara Williams highlighted that there would need to be a continued focus on business engagement going forward, and the benefits of being able to easily offer an appropriate, agile business model to prospective partners. • Colin Hughes underlined that an unpredictable external landscape was likely to remain. • Kevin Gould asked about feedback in relation to the failed £2.5m bid for capex on Staffordshire University: London, and it was confirmed that none had been made available. • Simon Smith asked about making these reports available to staff, and Ian Blachford highlighted that staff Governors were able and encouraged to share information with the staff cohort, providing that they navigated any confidential matters.
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3 SUB-COMMITTEE BRIEFING SHEETS AND REFERRED ITEMS

2795	<p>The BRIEFING SHEET - Remuneration Committee, 5 October 2021 BG/123/04 was introduced by the Committee Chair.</p> <p>Approval</p> <p>a. Minute 7 - *Committee Terms of Reference* BG/123/05 The Remuneration Committee Terms of Reference 2021-22 were approved.</p> <p>b. Minute 13 - *Annual Statement of Senior Postholder Remuneration 2020-21* BG/123/06 The Annual Statement of Senior Postholder Remuneration 2020-21 was approved and would be made available on the University's website.</p>
2796	<p>The BRIEFING SHEET - Nominations and Governance Committee, 5 October 2021 BG/123/07 was introduced by the Committee Chair.</p> <p>Approval</p> <p>a. Minute 623 – *Committee Terms of Reference 2021-22* BG/123/08 The Nominations & Governance Committee Terms of Reference 2021-22 were approved.</p> <p>b. Minute 624 – Remuneration of Governors BG/123/09 The proposal on remuneration of Governors was approved.</p> <p>Information</p> <p>c. Minute 626 – Independent Governor Vacancies Update BG/123/10 The paper, summarising the position with regard to the Governor Skills and Experience Matrix and the proposed next steps, was noted. The Board approved the three proposed appointments set out in the paper.</p> <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion focused on the need to actively promote gender diversity on the Board, and how this could be achieved. (Hannah Blackburn highlighted the importance of diversity across the range of protected characteristics, which was also agreed, albeit recent progress had been made with this.) <p>d. *Minute 627 – Board Effectiveness Review 2020 BG/123/11* The paper, summarising the current position and providing an update against each agreed workstream, was noted.</p>
2797	<p>The BRIEFING SHEET - Strategy and Performance Committee, 12 Oct 2021 BG/123/12 was introduced by the Committee Chair.</p> <p>Approval</p> <p>a. Minute 238 – *Committee Terms of Reference* BG/123/13 The Strategy & Performance Committee Terms of Reference 2021-22 were approved by the Board of Governors.</p> <p>Information</p> <p>b. *Minute 241 – Evaluating Delivery of the Strategic Plan – Innovative and Applied Learning BG/123/14* The report, which brought together high-level information on the achievement of this pillar of the strategic plan, was noted.</p>
2798	<p>The BRIEFING SHEET - Audit and Risk Committee, 26 Oct 2021 BG/123/15 was introduced by the Committee Chair.</p> <p>Approval</p> <p>a. Minute 1813 – *Committee Terms of Reference 2021-22* BG/123/16 The Audit & Risk Committee Terms of Reference 2021-22 were approved by the Board of Governors.</p> <p>b. Minute 1816 - RSM Internal Audit Annual Report 2020-21 BG/123/17 The Internal Audit Annual Report 2020-21 was approved.</p> <p>c. Minute 1817 - Annual Report of the Audit & Risk Committee 2020-21 BG/123/18 The report, which gave an overview of the Committee's work during the year, was approved.</p> <p>d. Minute 1820 – Review of risk appetites BG/123/19 It was noted that whilst the overall risk appetite remained the same, changes to five sub-risk categories were proposed. These were approved by the Board of Governors.</p> <p>e. Minute 1821 - University-level risk registers (HLRRs) BG/123/20 It was noted that three new HLRRs were currently under development and that a change had been made to wording within one HLRR (Regulators). The HLRRs were approved by the Board of Governors.</p>

	<p>Information NONE</p>
2799	<p>The BRIEFING SHEET - Sustainability and Resources Committee, 02 Nov 2021 BG/123/21 was introduced by the Committee Chair, who noted his thanks to Executive for their recent work on the Estates masterplan and recurring Estates matters.</p> <p>Approval</p> <p>a. Minute 402 - *Committee Terms of Reference 2021-22* BG/123/22 The Sustainability and Resources Committee Terms of Reference 2021-22 were approved.</p> <p>b. Minute 415 – i) Annual Review and Financial Statements 2020-21 BG/123/23; ii) Draft KPMG audit management letter and Letter of Representation BG/123/24 <i>(both available separately on SharePoint)</i> It was noted that these documents had been considered at both Audit and Risk Committee and Sustainability and Resources Committee. The Annual Review and Financial Statements 2020/21 and KPMG audit management letter and Letter of Representation were approved.</p> <p>Information</p> <p>c. Minute 414 - Student enrolment and financial implications BG/123/25 The update on this, introduced by the Chief Financial Officer & Deputy Chief Executive, was noted.</p> <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Glenn Earlam asked whether total turnover would increase or decrease, given the use of contingency funds. Sally McGill clarified that it would in fact increase, as growth from apprenticeships would counteract the use of contingency. • Discussion continued around the likely long-term impact of the current position and which strategies were likely to need development. Martin Jones underlined the highly changeable nature of the UK labour market within the medium-term. It was noted that analysis was already underway on various aspects of the current position, and that further work was planned to help identify areas of focus. • Sustainability & Resources Committee would consider a further report at the next meeting regarding the financial position of the University and Strategy and Performance Committee would consider the findings from the end of cycle recruitment report. <p>d. *Minute 420 - Students' Union accounts 2020-21 BG/123/26* <i>(on SharePoint)</i> The Students' Union accounts 2020-21 were noted, (having been presented to both Audit and Risk Committee and Sustainability and Resources Committee).</p>
4 FOR DISCUSSION AND/OR APPROVAL (marked below accordingly)	
2800	<p>The Board received for approval the Annual Ofsted Self-Assessment Report (SAR) and Quality Improvement Plan (QIP) BG/123/27, introduced by the Chief Financial Officer and Deputy Chief Executive. The following main points were noted:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Apprenticeship providers were requested by Ofsted to submit an annual Self-Assessment Report (SAR) for apprenticeship performance, along with a Quality Improvement Plan (QIP). • The papers formed part of the risk management strategy for apprenticeships at the University by providing evidence of quality assurance and compliance with Ofsted requirements. • The SAR for the academic year 20-21 required the University to grade itself against key attributes, and accurately and transparently reflect the reality. It provided evidence of an overall effectiveness grade of 2 – Good (Importantly no areas were scored below 2.) Against the overall effectiveness category, certain weaknesses had been identified, which were addressed by the Quality Improvement Plan (the QIP). • Whilst the SAR was retrospective, the QIP set out forward-looking aspirational plans and formed the basis of the continuous course monitoring for 2021-22, co-ordinated by the University's Quality Enhancement Team. The QIP would be updated throughout the years with the updates approved by the Apprenticeship Strategy Group and the Quality Enhancement Committee. • Following approval by the Board of Governors, the SAR and QIP would be uploaded onto the Ofsted portal before the deadline of 31 January 2022. These documents would provide headline information for any Ofsted inspection visit. The University would be asked to update both documents when Ofsted gave advance notice (48 hours) of a visit. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jonathan Chapman asked about a potential audit of this area. It was confirmed that KPMG, the current external auditors, reviewed sub-contracting arrangements annually and mock inspections replicating Ofsted had been undertaken in the past. <p>The Board of Governors approved the Annual Apprenticeships Ofsted SAR and QIP.</p>
2801	<p>The Board received for approval the Annual Statement on Research Integrity 2020-21 BG/123/28, introduced by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, who noted the following main points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Concordat to Support Research Integrity (last revised in Oct 2019) provided a national framework for high standards of research conduct and its governance. Under the Concordat, institutions were obliged to produce an annual statement on research integrity, to be presented to their governing body. The University's 2020-21 statement for the outlined the actions and activities undertaken throughout the course of the academic year and the frameworks in place to foster and strengthen a culture of research integrity. It also provided a high-level summary of investigations of research misconduct that have been undertaken by the University. The format was largely dictated by the Concordat and as such, this statement should be viewed as akin to a statutory return. A gap analysis (and associated action plan) of our compliance with the revised Concordat had been approved by the Research and Innovation Committee in June 2020. (That Committee had responsibility for overseeing institutional compliance with the Concordat.) It was recommended that the Board of Governors considered and approved the annual statement, which would then be made publicly available on our external facing website (as required by the Concordat) and sent for information to the Concordat secretariat. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <p>NONE</p> <p>The Board of Governors approved the annual statement of research integrity 2020-21.</p>
2802	<p>The Board received for approval the Tuition Fee Policy 2023/2024 BG/123/29, introduced by the Deputy Vice Chancellor, who noted the following main points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> This paper set out the Fees Group recommendations for 2023/24 tuition fees. The University differentiated fees charged according to the fee status of the student, charging different fees for Home and International students. EU students would be charged the same tuition fees as international non-EU students, unless they were eligible for Home student status, which would be dependent upon individual circumstances as set out by the UK government. Irish students covered by the Common Travel Area arrangement would be charged in line with Home fees. Where courses were delivered by one of our Collaborative Academic Partners, the fee would be set by the individual partner. For this reason, Collaborative Academic Partner fees were not included in this paper. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <p>NONE</p> <p>The Board of Governors approved the proposed Tuition Fee Policy 2023-24.</p>
2803	<p>The Board received the OfS Annual Financial Return BG/123/30 (<i>and on SharePoint</i>), presented by the Chief Financial Officer & Deputy Chief Executive, who noted the following main points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The return was submitted annually to OfS and comprised 14 tables. It reported on 2 years' actual data and forecasted data to 2024-25, as well as data from audited accounts and 5-year Strategic Plan. Table 8 reported 2020-21 University costs split by activity and HESA cost centre (some Table 8 costs were used for league tables). The supporting commentary was included within the papers and the workbook was available on SharePoint for Governors to review. <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <p>NONE</p> <p>The Board of Governors approved the OfS Annual Financial Return.</p>
2804	<p>The Board received for consideration the Access and Participation Plan 2020-25 Annual Report (DISCUSSION) BG/123/31, presented by the Pro Vice Chancellor – Education, who noted the following main points:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [REDACTED]
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4 FOR INFORMATION

2807	<p>The Board received for information the Students’ Union Report BG/123/34, introduced by the President of the Students’ Union, who highlighted several good news stories from within the student community including awards won by student media channels, increases in active student interest groups (and collaboration by these across campuses) and the Union’s response to the national rise in drink-spiking incidents.</p> <p>Members and attendees commented as follows:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discussion focused on these recent successes, as well as around student mental health and the removal of perceived barriers to students asking for help with this. Liz Barnes commended the campus-wide approach that had been taken. Anthony Wallace noted that providing non-pressurised environments for students was proving very successful.
2808	<p>A paper on Board of Governors – Accountability and Assurance BG/123/35, introduced by the Chief Operating Officer, was received for information. It was noted that the paper outlined how the Board received assurance on the various areas of accountability that formed the business of the Board of Governors (and would be made available on SharePoint).</p>
2809	<p>The *Draft Academic Board minutes (unconfirmed): 03 November 2021* BG/123/36 were received for information.</p>

5 ADDITIONAL MATTERS

2810	<p>How have we made a positive impact today?</p> <p>It was agreed that the academic quality assurance provided by the Annual Quality, Standards and Student Success report was crucial to the continued quality of the student experience. It was also agreed that the update on the APP 2020-25, and a continued focus on this area, was key.</p>
2811	<p>Additional matters:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Glenn Earlam highlighted the need for urgency on the assessment of factors behind poor student recruitment numbers. Liz Barnes confirmed that this had been discussed extensively in UEB the day prior, and that analysis into undergraduate numbers had already taken place. There were various actions in train e.g., around recruitment and marketing, schools & colleges liaison, some of which were being pulled forward in the cycle. Colin Hughes placed on record his thanks and very best wishes to Professor Liz Barnes on her retirement as Vice Chancellor and presented her with a gift from the Board of Governors.
2812	<p>Next meeting: Wednesday 6 April 2022 (Catalyst building, Leek Road)</p>