

Approved Minutes

Present

Graham Raikes MBE (Chair)	Independent Governor	GR
Emma van der Lugt (Deputy Chair)	Independent Governor	EvdL
Prof Michelle Jones	Vice-Chancellor (Interim)	MJ
Dr Greg Borne	Academic Staff Governor (Senate Elected)	GB
Stephen Criddle OBE	Independent Governor	SC
Kate Doodson	Independent Governor	KD
Prof Patricia Hind	Independent Governor	PH
Will Mintram	Student Governor (Marjon Student Union President)	WM
Ruth Mounstephen	Independent Governor	RM
Fiona Nicholls	Academic Staff Governor	FN
Esther Tonna-Morgan	Professional Services Staff Governor	ETM

In attendance

Guy Bolt	Co-opted Board Member	GBo
Rt Rev'd Dr Tim Dakin	Co-opted Board Member	TD
Katherine George	Co-opted Board Member	KG
Rt Rev'd James Grier	Co-opted Board Member	JG
Prof John Scott CBE	Co-opted Board Member	JS
Rev'd Michelle Parkman	University Chaplain	MP
Jessamie Thomas	Governance Officer (note taker)	JT
Caroline Westwood (item 7)	Dean of School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation	CW

In attendance (SMT members)

Simon Arthurs (items 3 -4)	Chief Operating Officer & Finance Director	SA
Katy Willis (items 4-7)	Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Success)	KW
Stephen Plant	University Secretary & Registrar	SP

1. Welcome, Apologies & Declarations of Conflicts of Interests

- 1.1 The Chair, Graham Raikes MBE, welcomed colleagues.
- 1.2 At GR's invitation, University Chaplain, Rev'd Michelle Parkman, opened the meeting with a prayer.
- 1.3 Apologies were received from John Searson; Matt Evans; Vicky Hatton; Alex Hawtin; Jackie Westerman.
- 1.4 Written declarations of interest were contained in Part C, within the Register of Interests. GR invited updates; no new declarations were made.
- 1.5 A warm welcome was extended to Academic Staff Governor, Fiona Nicholls and to Co-optee Prof John Scott, to this their first Board of Governors (BoG) meeting. At GR's invitation they introduced themselves; their skills and experience were noted and they were thanked for their support.

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- 1.6 GR wished to put on record the BoG's thanks to Deputy Joint Chair, John Searson, whose term of office would expire on 1 April 2023. JS's contribution to the BoG's strategic discussions, particularly as a member of the Governance & Nominations Committee, Chair of Estates Project Group and, previously, Deputy Chair of Audit Committee, were highlighted.
 - 1.7 GR wished to put on record BoG's thanks to Stephen Criddle OBE, whose term of office would expire on 12 May 2023. SC's contribution to the BoG's strategic discussions, particularly as Deputy Chair of Audit Committee, and his financial expertise and insights, had been greatly valued.
 - 1.8 GR wished to put on record BoG's thanks to Will Mintram, whose term of office would expire on 30 June 2023. WM's work as MSU President, and the perspective he had brought to BoG, were highlighted.
 - 1.9 GR asked if colleagues wished to 'unstar' any items in Part B. None were identified. Item 10 was **APPROVED**. Items 11 to 19 were noted, together with supporting papers in Part C.
 - 1.10 With regard to the Estates Update, GR urged SMT to prioritise securing the bank loan, which BoG had agreed would be the long-term managed approach to financing the purchase of the Plymouth Studio School and form part of the ten year capital plan. It was confirmed that the building would most likely be utilised from September 2024; GR confirmed that the Senior Management Team (SMT) had provided him and Joint Deputy Chair John Searson with a comprehensive tour of the premises. Space-planning meetings were informing its optimum usage, with students' needs being the focus.
- 2. Report from Vice-Chancellor (Interim)**
- 2.1 The report was received. GR invited Vice-Chancellor (Interim), Prof Michelle Jones, to present a summary. MJ highlighted the following areas and responded to questions from BoG:
 - 2.2 **The landscape for 2023** - It was noted that this element of the report contained text generated by ChatGPT, engagement with which would be essential. MJ confirmed the sector-prominent work of colleagues regarding appropriacy of the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).
 - 2.3 **Teaching and Learning; Quality and Standards** – BoG members joined MJ in commending Deputy Vice-Chancellor Professor Ian Luke on the University's Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) submission, which it was felt successfully articulated Marjon's approach and holistic educational gain.
 - 2.4 BoG noted that it would be appropriate to update the Institutional KPIs related to student success so as to align with relevant OfS B3 metrics related to student continuation, progression and completion.
 - 2.5 **Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy** – MJ reiterated the ongoing focus, sector-wide, in this area. A range of initiatives was being implemented by Marjon; a report on the Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy would follow at item 5.
 - 2.6 **Student Population and Recruitment** – MJ provided analysis of the HESA student return and provided commentary on key points. University and sector-wide levels of non-

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- completion were discussed, noting that the cost of living and financial pressures were resulting in students being compelled to prioritise work over study. The University would continue to support the 'conversion' of applicants and the continuation of current students. A report on Student Recruitment would follow at item 4. BoG members suggested that benchmarking around applications from deprived postcodes could potentially be usefully monitored via annual KPIs. Consideration of how to publicise more widely the University's successes was encouraged, particularly around social mobility.
- 2.7 In response to a question, MJ provided information on the University's apprenticeships, which were offered for teaching training and healthcare education programmes alongside direct entry routes. It was noted that applications for apprenticeships would be via UCAS going forwards.
- 2.8 **'FocusNow' Project** - MJ reminded BoG of the project's purpose: to support three year rolling business planning and budget setting; to ensure business plans supported financial resilience and sustainability, and a shared understanding of priorities; to support collaborative working and identify opportunities for transformation. MJ provided an update on three workshops held to date and the resulting actions and outputs. The financial challenges of the next 18 months were discussed, heightened by external drivers including the fixed tuition fee level, cost of living crisis, energy crisis - coupled with rental income loss and pay inflation. BoG members discussed the scale of savings which would be needed so as to achieve a balanced budget. Further discussion would follow at item 4.
- 2.9 **Digital and Estates** - Longer term planning around the digital and physical infrastructure would be incorporated within the 'FocusNow' project, with an updated Digital Strategy to come to BoG.
- 2.10 **People, Pay and Strikes** – MJ highlighted the positive relationship which Director of People & Organisational Development, Lucy Pengelly, had forged with the unions. An updated joint working statement had been agreed, which MJ considered a good outcome for Marjon and its students. In response to a question, MJ confirmed that a review of arrangements around visiting lecturers would come through the P&OD Sub-Committee and on to the BoG.
- 2.11 BoG noted that SMT had recommended implementation of a part payment for staff, excluding SMT, before August 2023, backdated to 1 February 2023 and paid in May 2023. This had been supported at the Finance & Resources (F&R) Committee by the Chair of the Board, Chair of F&R Committee and Chair of Remuneration Committee. The estimated cost of this in the current financial year was noted.
- 2.12 **Research and Knowledge Exchange** - MJ noted continued progress in this area, including the submission of partnership and funding bids. MJ noted evidence of a growing reputation regionally and gave examples of delivery of activity which had generated a significant impact locally. The Knowledge Exchange Framework (KEF) submission was due for completion the following week.
- 2.13 The positive impact of a project undertaken as part of Transforming Access and Student Outcomes (TASO) in Higher Education, delivered with student colleagues, was discussed and commended.

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- 2.14 **Successes and Things to Look Forward To** - MJ highlighted recent successes and media coverage. These included Marjon being shortlisted in three categories in the Whatuni Student Choice Awards (WUSCAs) 2023: Lecturers and Teaching Quality, Student Support and – for the first time for Marjon - Career Prospects. BoG congratulated all those involved for these tremendous achievements.
- 2.15 The planned investment in health and social care programmes, due to launch in 2024-25, was highlighted, together with projections regarding the transition from cost to contributor of these programmes in approximately 18 months' time.
- 2.16 The installation on Marjon's Quad of Figurehead II, a significant piece of contemporary sculpture by Alexandre da Cunha, received in collaboration with The Box, Plymouth, was highlighted.
- 2.17 MJ was thanked for the report and update and for her leadership as interim Vice-Chancellor.

Chief Operating Officer & Finance Director, Simon Arthurs, joined the meeting.

3. Report from Marjon Student Union (MSU) President, including Summary of MSU Accounts

- 3.1 The report from Student Governor and Marjon Student Union (MSU) President, Will Mintram, was received. GR invited WM to present an overview.
- 3.2 WM's report covered recent areas of focus, notably MSU elections (which would be reported upon at the July BoG meeting), Varsity and Societies.
- 3.3 WM recorded his thanks to Deputy President of MSU, Rebekah Fletcher and to MSU Manager Mick Davies, for their work developing MSU's student societies.
- 3.4 BoG commended WM on the Varsity outcome, the competitiveness of the events and the success of the fundraising for the British Heart Foundation; WM explained the personal connection behind this choice of charity.
- 3.5 WM thanked SMT and the Chaplaincy for their work supporting students. He highlighted, as he had previously, student concerns around the cost of living and noted ways in which MSU, the Chaplaincy and University were seeking to address these. WM commended the University on its supportive approach, particularly as a landlord. BoG went on to discuss this further, noting WM's comments around student concerns about moving into privately rented accommodation and his suggestion that an extension of the University's reach as a landlord across more accommodation would be welcome. It was suggested that a register of approved landlords could be a supportive mechanism for students.
- 3.6 A Staff Governor's perspective, with regard to the financial pressure on students and their need to work being in conflict even with lecture attendance, was shared.
- 3.7 WM suggested that a review of pricing at Marjon Stores would be helpful. BoG discussed this further, noting the challenges to retailers and consumers alike of rising inflation and food prices. SA noted that costs had increased by up to 50%. A review of stock lines and supply chain management would be undertaken; it was suggested that the range of products available at relatively low prices compared favourably with 'express stores' but notwithstanding this, further work on communications and pricing could be helpful, noting the importance of Marjon Stores to the student community and the local community.

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ACTION: SA/KW. GR confirmed that he would discuss this further with the Chartwells manager at a planned visit of Marjon Stores the following week.

- 3.8 In response to a question, it was confirmed that there was support available from the Student Support team for students with regard to budget planning and SA highlighted payment options designed to alleviate students' budgetary pressures.
- 3.9 MSU audited accounts were contained in full in Part C. No issues were raised.
- 3.10 WM was thanked for the report and update. He was commended on his work as MSU President in a challenging national landscape; BoG colleagues looked forward to his contributions to Committee meetings through to the end of his tenure in June. Thanks were also extended to Rebekah Fletcher, unable to attend due to her involvement in the MSU elections, for her dedication to the role.
- A 10 minute break was taken at this point.*

4. Finance Update

- Management Accounts (Mid-Year Review)
- 4.1 The report was received. GR invited SA to present an overview.
- 4.2 SA invited BoG to consider the mid-year review (quarter 2) in relation to financial resilience, financial sustainability and outcomes for 2022/23. SA reminded BoG that the mid-year review was a key milestone, setting out the likely income position based on student continuation. It also served as the planned position through to year-end and the revised baseline position for rolling 3-year business planning. The combined net budget was summarised, with detailed analysis in Appendix B.
- 4.3 In terms of income, with regard to student numbers, BoG discussed levels of continuation and potential reasons behind any variations, together with mitigating actions. In response to a question, it was confirmed that cost of living pressures were resulting in some students leaving in order to secure work, rather than enrolling at other Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).
- 4.4 Other Schools and University income was noted.
- 4.4 BoG discussed the implications of the wider economic position and its impact on the University, particularly with regard to increased costs and pay expectations. SA provided details of the new operating model which was being worked up for 2023-24 and beyond.
- 4.5 Continuing the discussions around 'People, Pay and Strikes' (see item 2.9), the need to off-set the 2023-24 pay award, which was being funded early, in-year, was discussed. SA summarised proposals to achieve this via reductions or deferral of non-staff spend and managing vacancy churn.
- 4.6 The capital budget contained projects in-flight, with some projects now being deferred to the later part of the year so as to protect cashflow and in consideration of the Bank Covenant compliance. The Capital Programme was summarised and the position detailed.
- 4.7 The report provided a detailed revenue update, including student numbers and fees. Analysis of partnerships income and arrangements, including dBs, was noted. Schools income and other income was presented. Cost assumptions and mitigation were detailed.

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- 4.8 With regard to cash, risk and budget control, the impact of proposals was shown in summaries which brought the financial position together and outlined the impact on cash and cash equivalents and balance sheet resilience. Key risks were detailed in Appendix C, with a focus on student recruitment, priority spending, cost control and cost reductions.
- 4.9 The need to continue to closely monitor budgets was noted; SMT would review budgets and manage key actions. SA confirmed that budget monitoring, including cashflow position and compliance with the Bank Covenant, was conducted monthly; the Bank Covenant had been tested successfully for the 2022/23 budget proposal and the mid-year review.
- 4.10 In response to a further question around cashflow, SA confirmed there was resilience in reserves and through careful capital planning, anticipated return on investments, FocusNow Project and digital savings, with increased resilience anticipated through the new operating model.
- 4.11 In response to a question, it was confirmed that there had been investment in marketing staffing levels; the team was preparing for engagement over the summer period.
- 4.12 Noting the need to carefully manage the financial position, it was agreed to schedule an interim F&R Committee meeting in May, by which time the Peninsula Allied Health Centre (PAHC) rental income position would have been confirmed. **ACTION: SA (JT)**
- 4.13 SA was thanked for the report and update.
- Budget Update (including Student Recruitment Update)
Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Success), Katy Willis, joined the meeting.
- 4.14 The report was received. GR invited SA to present an overview.
- 4.15 SA noted that the mid-year review set out the likely income position, the planned position through to year-end and the revised baseline position for rolling three year business planning. Income assumptions were being tested and key cost pressures validated. Notwithstanding these initiatives, a shortfall was anticipated and BoG discussed with SA his planned approach to managing this.
- 4.16 SA's report provided information on the sector and University, indicating transformational changes which would be applied to the operating model, including: reviewing academic contribution rates; the automation of Professional Services; sport and commercial; a three year rolling cycle of revenue planning; capital planning moving to a ten year plan, aligned to the budget on a rolling basis.
- 4.17 With regard to income, the mid-year review had been updated for fee income and partnership assumptions at a high level based on growth in healthcare education courses. Benchmarking data was contained within the report.
- 4.18 SA reminded BoG that analysis via the FocusNow Project of how to grow income and reduce costs would inform income assumptions, for example contribution rate modelling by School, the review of short courses and tenders and other income such as rental income.
- 4.19 With regard to expenditure, SA summarised the approach to managing costs whilst achieving a break-even position. Key cost pressures included the staff pay award; energy; the investment deficit; and potentially the Teachers' Pension Scheme (TPS). A series of

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analytical reviews was under way to determine and SA noted that SMT was building a timeline for staff service reviews.

- 4.20 Once the revenue position was clearer the cash resilience could be determined, which would in turn shape the available resources for Capital.
- 4.21 SA was thanked for the report and update.
- 4.22 GR invited KW to present an overview of the student recruitment position, which was presented in Appendix A, covering key headlines, the wider context around recruitment figures (beyond undergraduate onsite), analysis by age of applicant, undergraduate onsite by school, conversion activity to September. KW responded to questions on analysis of applications by geography, including PL and TR postcodes, noting that the Marjon Truro provision focussed on postgraduate and teacher training. KW reminded BoG that Marjon's students were predominantly from the UK rather than international.
- 4.23 KW summarised the initiatives of the marketing team and the interactions with potential students including at Open Days, Applicant Days and UCAS fairs. KW confirmed that the intelligence gathered from these conversations, around why students choose whether or not to go on to apply, provided valuable insights. KW responded to a question regarding the alignment of the advertising budget. It was suggested that the way Marjon was represented via TikTok could be usefully reviewed, noting the influence of this platform.
- 4.24 KW was thanked for the report and update. SA was thanked for his contributions and left the meeting.

A 10 minute break was taken at this point.

5. Mental Health and Wellbeing Strategy Update on Progress

- 5.1 The report was received. GR invited KW to present an overview of the student recruitment position.
- 5.2 KW summarised the activities of the Mental Health Working Group with regard to the delivery and reporting of the Mental Health Strategy. The University's Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy had been finalised in 2019; the Strategy had been published in 2021. The group convened six times a year with wide representation, to cover the four domains in the Strategy: study, support, live and work.
- 5.3 KW noted good progress on each of these domains in the last year and delivery on many areas of the Mental Health Strategy. The report highlighted themes, progress and future focus, with RAG-rated progress against measures of success. In response to a question, KW confirmed that the one red area, a peer support initiative which had been trialled but which was not ongoing, would be explored via a different approach. Examples of peer support and buddying were noted, both planned and 'organic'.
- 5.4 KW reiterated the University's success in the WUSCAs shortlisting and how this reflected the University's commitment to supporting mental health and wellbeing.
- 5.5 KW was thanked for the report and update.

6. Student Residential Accommodation Update

- 6.1 The report was received. GR invited MJ to present an overview.

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- 6.2 The updating of student residential accommodation, or provision of new accommodation, had been under consideration by BoG since 2021 and included within an Estates Update presented routinely to F&R Committee and Estates Project Group (EPG). The Student Residential Accommodation Update confirmed the importance of the University's Campus Development Plan as a strategic framework and identified a number of emerging factors since its publication, which suggested that a wider range of options should now be considered. BoG noted that progressing the build of a new hall of residence was therefore on hold, while a broader list of options for extending student residential accommodation was explored. An EPG workshop, with external advisors, would convene on 21 April 2023 to discuss these further.
- 6.3 BoG was content with the position. MJ was thanked for the update.

7. Academic Update: Introduction to School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation

- 7.1 Dean of School of Sport, Exercise and Rehabilitation, Caroline Westwood, was welcomed to the meeting. GR invited CW to present an overview of the School's areas of focus, via a slide presentation. CW updated BoG on the School's five year strategy, its intent, academic pillars and enablers. Student numbers and profiles were noted. CW highlighted successes across three key areas: sport coaching and PE; professional services; sport, exercise and rehabilitation sciences.
- 7.2 International Developments were noted and the valuable study opportunities which these represented for Marjon students overseas.
- 7.3 An overview of the football provision was provided, including coaching, strength and conditioning, performance analysis and sports therapy. CW provided information on Marjon's status as a Women's High Performance Football Centre and highlighted notable successes.
- 7.4 The development of a full academic partnership with Plymouth Argyle Community Trust (ACT) was commended, including their investment in a Higher Education (HE) Co-ordinator role. CW highlighted the practical football development module (Level 5), which centred on knowledge exchange and practice with industry partners.
- 7.5 CW provided details of a number of partnerships and accreditations across Professional Services.
- 7.6 CW concluded by sharing news that Marjon would be a regional competition hub. CW was thanked for the work she was doing to develop the School and for her presentation (which would be shared **ACTION: JT**)
CW and KW left the meeting.

8. Update from Committees

- 8.1 **Report from Committee Chairs** - It was noted that minutes of meetings were contained in Part C for information. GR confirmed that F&R Committee was carefully monitoring the financial position, as discussed at item 4. The Chairs' Discussion Group had convened earlier in March and had received a report on preparations for the arrival of Vice-Chancellor Prof Claire Taylor in May 2023.

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- 8.2 **Board Membership - Report from Governance & Nominations Committee** – the report was received.
- The appointment of Professor Mark Llewellyn as Co-opted Member of the Board from 01.04.2023 was **APPROVED**.
 - The appointment of Jennie Walker as Co-opted Member of the Board from 01.04.2023 was **APPROVED**.
 - The appointment of Duncan Swift, qualified accountant, as Member of the Board, to join F&R or Audit Committee, was **APPROVED**.
- 8.3 As noted at item 1.6, JS had tendered his resignation and would be thanked for his service.
- 8.4 As noted at item 1.7, SC's term of office would conclude in May; he was thanked for his service.
- 8.5 As noted at item 1.8, WM's term of office would conclude in June; he was thanked for his service.
- 8.6 BoG noted that Alex Hawtin preferred to relinquish membership of F&R Committee and remain as BoG member.
- 8.7 BoG noted the resignation of Will Jordan, Co-optee and was grateful for the interest he had expressed in supporting the University.
- 8.8 BoG noted the membership position (Appendix 1), Skills Audit and Equality and Diversity grids (Appendices 2,3). The report highlighted the need for BoG to identify a future Chair/Deputies and Committee Chairs as a key priority together with the continued focus on enhancing BoG diversity.
- 8.9 The report confirmed that the Committee had reviewed induction arrangements for the Vice-Chancellor and BoG members. New 'Prevent Duty' training would be signposted. Analysis of the time commitment involved in BoG membership was enclosed in Part C.
- 8.10 At GR's invitation, University Secretary & Registrar, Stephen Plant, provided an update on Prevent Accountability and Data Return (ADR) for the academic year 2021-22. SP confirmed that the Office for Students (OfS) had reviewed the information submitted, with no queries raised. BoG was satisfied with the position.
- 8.11 SP and Governance Officer, Jessamie Thomas, were thanked for the report and update.
9. **Reserved Business** – *See RB minutes.*

Close

GR invited colleagues to consider whether any of the meeting's discussions impacted on the current Risk Register; no new risks were identified.

In closing the meeting, GR thanked BoG for their support and challenge. He looked forward to the afternoon Strategy Session: 'An Overview of Library, Archive & Study Skills Department: Service Developments and Initiatives.'

MJ was commended on her work as interim Vice-Chancellor and thanked for her leadership of the University.

Part B

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The following reports were received and approved:

10. Minutes of Previous BoG Meetings (M1 24 November 2022; Extraordinary Meeting 14 December 2022) were received as an accurate record and **APPROVED** with no amendments.
The following reports were received for information:
11. Matters Arising from Previous Meeting
12. Teaching Excellence Framework (TEF) Submission
13. Office for Students (OfS) B3 Condition Update – Briefing Note
14. OfS Annual Returns: Transparent Approach to Costing (TRAC); Annual Financial Return (AFR)
15. University’s Borrowing Arrangements
16. Access and Participation Update
17. Data Protection and FOI Annual report
18. Strategic Risk Register
19. Estates Update

Part C

The following reports were received for information with no queries:

- C3 • MSU Audited Accounts
- C8 • Board Membership – Candidate Profiles (Confidential)
- C8 • Board Member Time Commitment Calculations
- C14 • AFR Workbook
- C14 • TRAC 2021-22 Workbook
- C • Minutes of Committees/Sub-Committees:
Audit Committee M1 16.11.2022; (b) Estates Project Group M2 01.02.2023 (unapproved); (c) Finance & Resources Committee M1 14.11.2022; M2 10.02.2023; (d) Governance & Nominations Committee M2 01.03.2023 (unapproved); (e) Senate 19.10.2022; 14.12.2022
- C • Register of Interests