

BOARD OF GOVERNORS

Meeting 4/2018-19

Friday 12 July 2019, Room W210

Approved Minutes

Present

Mr Graham Raikes MBE (Chair)	Independent Governor	GR
Mr Richard Bayly	Independent Governor	RB
Dr Sue Cooper	Academic Staff Governor	SC
Mr Matt Evans	Independent Governor	ME
Ms Claire Gibson	Independent Governor	CG
Mrs Pamela Greener	Independent Governor	PG
Mr Geoffery Gulzar	Student Governor (SU President)	GG
Mr Alex Hawtin	Independent Governor	AH
Prof Patricia Hind	Independent Governor	PH
Bishop Nick McKinnell	Independent Governor	NM
Mr John Searson	Independent Governor	JS
Ms Michele Shoebridge	Independent Governor	MS
Mr Richard Stevens	Independent Governor	RS
Mrs Lynn Tamsett-White	Professional Services Staff Governor	LTW
Mrs Emma van der Lugt	Independent Governor	EvdL
Prof Rob Warner	Vice-Chancellor	RW

In Attendance

Mr Simon Arthurs	Finance Director	SA
Mrs Kate Doodson	Attendee	KD
Mrs Victoria Holbrook	Attendee	VH
Prof Michelle Jones	Deputy Vice-Chancellor	MJ
Rev'd Michelle Parkman	University Chaplain	MP
Mrs Unity Stuart	Clerk to the Board of Governors	US

For item 3

Mr John Bailey	Director of Estates and IT infrastructure	JB
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For item 7

Mrs Lucy Pengelly	HR Director	LP
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For item 8

Mrs Sarah Stevenson	Enterprise & Employability Manager	SS
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For items 9-12

Prof Ian Luke	Executive Dean	IL
Mr Stephen Plant	Registrar	SP

1. Apologies & declarations of conflicts of interest

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Mike Baker, Elected Academic Staff Governor.
- 1.2 GR welcomed new governors to the meeting and each attendee introduced themselves.
- 1.3 GR invited governors to unstar items from Part B for discussion and nothing was identified.
- 1.4 Thanks were recorded to Laura Butler, outgoing Deputy President, for her outgoing report and contribution to the Board.

2. Minutes of the previous meeting (22 March 2019)

- 2.1 The minutes of the previous meeting were approved with no amendments.

3. To receive and approve the H&S policy

- 3.1 JB joined the meeting for this item only. He noted that the policy is reviewed annually and some amendments had already been submitted from Finance & resources Committee. Key changes to the policy included amending the policy to be more clear and concise.
- 3.2 JB also noted the intent to request formal approval for the 'statement of intent' from the Board annually, with the full and detailed policy to be reviewed by the Finance & Resources sub-committee.
- 3.3 JB noted that the Board is ultimately responsible for Health & Safety at the University, delegating to the Vice-Chancellor, and then managers below.
- 3.4 JB provided some answers to queries relating to the policy previously received from F&R.
- 3.5 **ACTION** The roles and responsibilities were queried specifically, and it was agreed that JB would review this again for submission to Finance & Resources Committee.
- 3.6 RB noted that it is important to get the policy right, and improvements had been made in recent years.

3.7 **ACTION** It was suggested that the Board should be asked to approve annually the statement of intent and the two sections following. The statement of intent was **APPROVED** by the Board.

3.8 It was suggested that Audit committee might review Health & Safety (including the policy) as well regularly.

4. Introductory Report from the incoming Student Union President

4.1 GG introduced himself and outlined some of his experience at the University and his aims as Student Union President. This included increasing opportunities for international travel and a range of activities for students. GG noted the importance for students to engage with the University, both academically and socially. Improving the SU website and how clubs and societies work have been his first tasks.

4.2 Governors offered their support to GG in various ways.

4.3 NM noted that the Board are keen to hear the student voice through the SU and hope to engage students in decision making processes as much as possible.

4.4 It was suggested that GG might work closely with Laura Butler and Katy Willis to further support student engagement and experience.

5. Report from the Vice-Chancellor, including approval of the (IHRA) definition of anti- Semitism

5.1 SA joined the meeting.

5.2 RW outlined some key points from his report, including the recent outcomes of the NSS. A full report on the results and an action plan would be submitted to the Board at the September meeting. The weak areas would be addressed in the meantime within the faculty.

5.3 RW noted some key headlines which place Marjon 1st or 2nd in England in a number of areas.

5.4 It was suggested that consistently strong NSS results will also support recruitment from within and without the region.

5.5 RW reported a recent HSE reported incident that had subsequently been resolved swiftly.

5.6 The recent Honorary Degree awarded to Stephen Criddle was noted as a positive event.

5.7 The departure of the recently elected Deputy President was also reported to the Board and a role had been created to support the SU in place of the Deputy over the summer.

5.8 RW noted that the University will also support the students in aligning with the City Council to declare a climate emergency and begin to address this as of September. Potential funding for electric car charging points had also been identified.

5.9 MJ noted some further engagement with the City Council to potentially become a 'wellbeing hub' in the city. RS noted these hubs have started to gain national, as well as local, attention.

5.10 A short video from Marjon Sports Graduates was shown and RW noted the upcoming BBC opening event and Alumni Ball.

ACTION Governors to be invited to and to input into these events.

5.11 The Studio School was briefly discussed and RW noted that there has been some progress with the DofE regarding its future use, and conversations are ongoing. RW agreed to ensure the Board are kept up to date. The various proposed uses for the Studio School were discussed including 14-16, sixth form or HE use.

5.12 The Never Ok campaign was noted and KD queried whether the 'near misses' or early resolutions are also recorded. RW noted that this would be recorded and it might be valuable for Katy Willis and Laura Butler to present on this further in future.

5.13 Further, a review of investigatory processes is underway to ensure there are no concerns in this area. Both the disciplinary and support processes are also currently managed within the same team and separating these roles would be beneficial.

5.14 The proposed declaration on a climate crisis was noted as a positive step and how this would be taken forward was queried. RW noted it was likely to involve work within the Estates Department, as part of the Sustainable Campus Development Plan as well as being driven by the SU and student societies.

5.15 The Board **APPROVED** the (IHRA) definition of anti-Semitism as requested in the VCs report.

6. Update from Finance Director, including approval of the Final Budgets (Capital & Revenue) & Financial Regulations

6.1 The potential impact of the anticipated change in fees was raised. RW introduced SA and noted his recent appointment to the role of Finance Director. The uncertainty surrounding anticipated UG fees and political environment which will impact on this was noted as a key financial risk.

6.2 It was noted that campus development work and capital investment will continue to be needed to support the work of the University and student experience.

6.3 SA outlined some of the challenges and achievements made since he was appointed as well as his professional experience before joining Marjon.

6.4 SA noted some improvements in processes already made and the some of the wider strategic priorities planned.

6.5 The timings for financial planning, monitoring and modelling as well as submissions to the OfS were outlined as well as some wider context in the HE, banking sector and political environment.

6.6 SA noted some of the costs within the 2019/20 budget including staffing, pension liabilities, projects and inflation. Some areas for efficiency savings and increased income were also discussed.

6.7 It was suggested that historically, commitments to expenditure may have been made without full consideration, and SA provided assurance that lessons have been learned to avoid this in future.

6.8 The OfS subscription fees were also discussed and it was noted that these are likely to continue to increase and should therefore be accounted for.

6.9 PG noted that the 4% surplus budget was ambitious and the task of achieving this is likely to be a challenging one. The proposed new 'invest to save approach' was welcomed. A number of governors queried the areas identified for savings and noted that a 1% surplus should be minimum aim.

6.10 The university's appetite for widening income streams (i.e. conferencing, short courses etc) was also queried, MJ noted this will be part of the Ambition programme and would be carefully managed to ensure the growing reputation of the University is protected.

6.11 LTW noted that further savings are likely to be found in her area and hopefully in other departments as well. SA noted that procurement processes have improved with the interim appointment of an expert in this area and more cost savings are likely to be identified in this way.

6.12 The expenditure was identified as the key variable to manage in order to reach a surplus and consideration would be needed for whether proposed areas of growth can be 'afforded'.

6.13 The Board asked the Executive team to achieve a minimum of 0.4% surplus.

6.14 **ACTION** An updated and final budget would be submitted to the September Board.

6.15 The Financial Regulations were discussed and SA noted some 'tweaks' for a fuller strategic review in the following year. These were **APPROVED** by the Board.

7. Group session

7.1 GR noted that due to the timings, the group work would not be undertaken. The Board took a short comfort break instead.

8. HR Annual Update

8.1 LP, IL, SS and SP joined the meeting.

8.2 LP provided some context regarding where the University has been, where it is now and where it is going in terms of people management, values and behaviours, and staff satisfaction.

8.3 The Balance initiatives were noted as positive with more work planned to further engage staff and develop other activities.

8.4 Internal communications have developed and improved, and this had also had an impact on staff satisfaction and engagement. Some significant improvements in the staff survey results between 2016 and 2018 were noted.

8.5 LP noted that sickness absence has improved significantly but noted some key points in the year when sickness absence rises and this will be addressed.

8.6 The balance between time spent in HR on operational, advisory and strategic level tasks would be a key focus in the future to improve efficiencies.

8.7 Plans for the future approach to people management, developing a people strategy and use of technology to support the HR provision were also all outlined and discussed.

8.8 Refocusing the learning and development strategy will be a further task to support how the University develops staff from within.

8.9 RB noted a significant step change from previous years and thanked LP for her work.

8.10 LP left the meeting.

9. Presentation from the Careers and Employability Service

9.1 SS joined the meeting, introduced herself and the work of the careers and employability service.

9.2 Key initiatives such as increasing opportunities for volunteering, international experiences, placements and professional skills tests were all noted as being available to students and having contributed to their improved employability and ability to get promoted.

9.3 SS showed a short video surrounding the online support available to students.

9.4 It was noted that the employability provision has significantly improved in recent years. Measuring learning gain, ensuring that students make progress, and ensuring all students access the employability service is important and SS noted that there is data to measure, track and improve this. Initiatives are also in place to encourage student engagement with the service.

9.5 SS invited all governors to visit the team and offer their time and expertise to students.

9.6 SS also noted that a member of her team had been awarded with an award for innovative contribution to the Abintegro system. The Board Congratulated Pip on this achievement.

9.7 SS left the meeting.

10. Research Update

10.1 MJ provided an update on her work surrounding the REF 2021 submission and noted that the Code of Practice had been submitted as required.

10.2 MJ noted that some areas will be stronger than others in terms of the number of 'REF-able' staff, the impact studies and the number of REF compliant submissions.

10.3 The research culture more generally has been reviewed with new governance arrangements and revised committee ToRs. Writing retreats have taken place and this will continue to support the REF submission.

10.4 PGR processes have been revised with improvements to student and applicant experience.

10.5 MJ noted that the PG fees will not be affected by the Augar review.

10.6 Commercial opportunities surrounding research and knowledge exchange were also queried and MJ noted that while this is considered, there are currently no staff members in post to manage bids, research funding and HEIF. SC and IL noted some opportunities in this area.

10.7 The timetable for RDAP was also briefly outlined and the Board felt that generally MJ offered some good news and significant progress in the research area.

11. Student Recruitment, Retention and trends

11.1 SP reported briefly on recruitment and withdrawals, noting a 30% improvement compared with the sector. A growth in applications was noted both from inside and outside the region.

11.2 Increasing 'conversions' from applications to accepts is key, and this has been an area of focus within the Student recruitment and marketing team. SP noted that once students visit campus this is more likely to support conversion.

11.3 In-year withdrawals were noted and in comparison, with this time last year, the position has improved. Collaborative provision was also noted and while this can be more difficult to manage, improved partnership meetings and communications continue to support this.

11.4 SP outlined the HESA and HEIDI data and noted some changes in this area including to statutory requirements and the fees associated with accessing this data.

11.5 Some overlap between in year withdrawals and retention data was noted and the NSS data had this year also offered a gender breakdown.

11.6 IL reported that with regards to the NSS, the areas that appear 'weaker' are in fact still above sector. The results are also positive for those in POLAR quintiles.

11.7 IL noted that some legacy NSS data will still be apparent in the TEF data but this will begin to improve going forward.

11.8 GR noted that the new Student Engagement Officer role and new committee for student engagement and outcomes also continues to support retention.

12. To approve the shortlist for the role of Chancellor

12.1 **ACTION** It was agreed that this would be postponed for the September 2019 meeting to ensure enough time was given for discussion.

Part B

All items at Part B were received and noted for information.

13. To note the Matters Arising from the previous meeting and updates (22 March)

14. To note the minutes of committees

- a) Finance & Resources – April (approved) and June (unapproved)
- b) Audit Committee – March (approved) and June (unapproved)
- c) Governance & Nominations – March (unapproved)
- d) Senate – April (approved)

15. To receive a closing report from the Outgoing SU President
16. To note the Freedom of Expression Guide
17. To note a report on Fraudulent, Whistleblowing, Health and Safety Incidents and Legal Activities
18. Student Protection Plan
19. To note the Prevent Duty Outcome Letter
20. To note the letter to Chairs on financial sustainability in the sector (OfS)
21. To consider a report on equality and diversity - staff, Board and students (Noms in March and SMG before)
22. Access and Participation Plan
23. To note the cycle of business and items for next meeting
24. To note the events calendar for the year
25. MSU Yearend accounts 2017/18

Action Log

Minute: 3.5

Action: The roles and responsibilities in the H&S policy were queried specifically and it was agreed that JB would review this again for submission to Finance & Resources Committee.

Owner: JB

Deadline: Next F&R October 2019

Minute: 3.7

Action: It was suggested that the Board should be asked to approve annually the Statement of Intent and the two sections following.

Owner: JB

Deadline: July 2020

Minute: 5.10

Action: Governors to be invited to and asked for input into BBC opening event and Alumni Ball.

Owner: US/KW

Deadline: Asap

Minute: 6.14

Action: An updated and final budget would be submitted to the September Board.

Owner: SA

Deadline: September Board

Minute: 12.1

Action: It was agreed that consideration of the role of Chancellor would be postponed to the September 2019 meeting to ensure enough time was given for discussion.

Owner: RW

Deadline: September Board