

Approved Minutes

Present

Emma van der Lugt (Committee Chair)	Independent Governor	EvdL
Louise Bridgett	Independent Governor	LB
Vicky Hatton	Independent Governor	VH

In attendance

Prof Claire Taylor	Vice-Chancellor	CT
Simon Arthurs	Chief Operating Officer & Finance Director	SA
Stephen Plant	University Secretary	SP
Clarence Mpofu	Internal Audit Director, TIAA	CM
Lesley Heasman	Internal Audit Manager, TIAA	LH
Jessamie Thomas	Governance Officer (note taker)	JT

1. Welcome, Apologies & Declaration of Conflicts of Interests

- 1.1 Committee Chair, Emma van der Lugt, welcomed colleagues.
- 1.2 No apologies were received.
- 1.3 No conflicts of interest were declared. The full register was included with the papers.

2. Reports of Internal Audit Reviews

- 2.1 Reports of three reviews were received. EvdL invited the Internal Auditors to present an overview.

a) Student Wellbeing (including suicide prevention arrangements) – assurance review

- 2.2 Internal Audit Manager, Lesley Heasman, summarised the overall assessment as **“Reasonable Assurance”**. TIAA confirmed that the University had adequate controls and processes in place with regard to student welfare arrangements. It was noted that the services available were continuing to be developed to further improve the service. Management confirmed its approach to addressing the one important, one routine and three operational action points. The important action point related to the recommendation to review the Mental Health and Wellbeing Policy on a regular basis, to ensure that latest guidance was incorporated within this.
- 2.3 In response to a question around wellbeing champions, it was confirmed that no gaps had been identified. With regard to best practice, Internal Audit Director, Clarence Mpofu, suggested that promoting engagement via attendance on a rotational basis could be helpful. The Vice-Chancellor felt that there was a core group of students who were positively engaged and this could potentially be widened via the Marjon 2030 Strategy development, to be as inclusive and accessible as possible. University Secretary Stephen Plant noted that active use had been made of the Marjon Student Union (MSU) network, particularly with regard to sports societies. Following a discussion regarding the Student Experience Survey and how best to capture feedback, Committee member, Louise Bridgett, offered to share

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details with Pro Vice-Chancellor (Student Success) Katy Willis about a mechanism with which she was familiar.

- 2.4 The Committee thanked LH and CM for their review and report.

b) Staff Recruitment and Retention including professional development

- 2.5 LH summarised the overall assessment as “**Substantial Assurance**”. TIAA confirmed that the University had the expected controls and processes in place to manage the recruitment and development of staff. Right to Work checks were being carried out appropriately. Two routine priority findings were raised in relation to reference checks and also manager recruitment training. TIAA noted that there was a Learning & Development Policy, Procedure & Partnership Agreement in place which served to support the development of all staff across the University. Four operational findings were noted, with management response captured, to the Committee’s satisfaction.
- 2.6 CT commented on the notification around the policy which TIAA had identified in reviews, and confirmed that SP was leading a piece of work around corporate policy and other documents (including contracts). SP confirmed this was being shared with key stakeholders. Governance Officer, Jessamie Thomas, noted her intention to attend a sector webinar on policy management the following month.
- 2.7 CM noted the suggestion from EvdL that the reports include as an appendix the management response, as a means of gathering feedback. **ACTION: CM**
- 2.8 The Committee thanked LH and CM for their review and report.

LH was thanked for her contributions and left the meeting.

c) Value for Money (advisory report)

- 2.10 CM summarised the advisory review over Value for Money, which focussed on supporting the University in developing processes for assessing and reporting Value for Money, including sharing good practice identified from other Universities. The Office for Students (OfS) Audit Code of Practice placed a duty of care on the Higher Education (HE) sector to ensure that public funds were spent on the purposes for which they were intended and that good value for money was sought. As a starting point, reporting on three key elements/metrics was proposed, to include external benchmarking data where available. In due course, further metrics would be included. Chief Operating Officer & Finance Director, Simon Arthurs, confirmed that there had been a discussion around pulling together the metrics in a more coherent format. CT noted that this was timely, as the Marjon 2030 Strategy would see the University challenging itself around the appropriate KPIs going forwards, its definition in terms of approach and values. SP confirmed that a KPI report would be received by the BoG, noting the Office for Students’ (OfS) focus on how the student fee was spent, senior remuneration transparency and key metrics from The Teaching Excellence Framework.
- 2.11 CT suggested it would be helpful to conduct benchmarking with The Cathedrals Group around how Value for Money reporting could be approached. **ACTION: CM**

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- 2.12 SA confirmed that the 'balanced scorecard' which he prepared for the Board of Governors (BoG) focused on measuring and tracking areas to support prioritisation and outcomes, driving the business and effectiveness of the organisation.
- 2.13 The Committee thanked CM for his review and report.

3. Internal Audit Recommendations - Actions

- 3.1 The report was received. EvdL invited CM to present an overview.
- 3.2 CM invited the Committee to review the latest progress of outstanding audit recommendations and approve the requests to close the completed action recorded in the report. As noted in the update to the June 2023 Audit Committee meeting there were a number of actions dependent on system changes, new system projects or team reviews which would take longer to implement. There were 18 recommendations or actions not yet due for implementation. There were 11 recommendations noted as implemented. The Committee was satisfied with the position and **AGREED** that these be closed.
- 3.3 The Committee noted that two recommendations had not yet been implemented and management had requested an extension to the implementation date.
- 3.4 The Committee reminded CM of their request to be shown a demonstration of the portal.
ACTION: CM
- 3.5 The Committee thanked CM for his report.

Reserved Business

See Reserved Business Minutes.

CM was thanked for his contributions and left the meeting.

Reserved Business (No Auditors)

See Reserved Business (No Auditors) Minutes.

In closing the meeting, EvdL invited colleagues to reflect upon whether discussions impacted on the current Risk Register or if changes were proposed. It was felt that the Risk Register captured appropriately the current position.

Supplementary Information

The following reports were received for information with no queries:

HW Fisher Roundtable Webinar Discussion Notes (an event attended by EvdL)

Register of Interests