



Board of Governors - Meeting 2
/2018-19 Wednesday 14th
November 15.00-18.00 Upper Gate
House, Dartington Hall

Approved Minutes

Present:

Mrs Emma van der Lugt (Interim Chair)	Independent Governor	EvdL
Prof Rob Warner	Vice-Chancellor	RW
Mr Mike Baker	Academic Staff Governor	MB
Mr Richard Bayly	Independent Governor	RB
Dr Sue Brownlow	Independent Governor	SB
Dr Sue Cooper	Academic Staff Governor	SC
Ms Claire Gibson	Independent Governor	CG
Mrs Pamela Greener	Independent Governor	PG
Mr Graham Raikes MBE	Independent Governor	GR
Mr Rhys Roberts	Student Governor (SU President)	RR
Mr John Searson	Independent Governor	JS
Ms Michele Shoebridge	Independent Governor	MS
Mrs Lynn Tamsett-White	Professional Services Staff Governor	LTW

In Attendance:

Miss Laura Butler	Deputy President MSU	LB
Rev'd Michelle Parkman	University Chaplain	MP
Mrs Unity Stuart	Clerk to the Board of Governors	US

From item 6

Dr Ian Luke	Executive Dean	IL
Mrs Katy Willis	PVC, Student Success	KW

1. Apologies & Declarations of Conflict of Interests

1.1 The Rt Rev'd Nick McKinnel and Prof Patricia Hind gave apologies.

1.2 EvdL asked the Board to join her in giving thanks to Peter Upton who had stepped down as Chair since the last meeting.

1.3 EvdL welcomed Lynn Tamsett-White and Pamela Greener to their first meetings as newly appointed governors.

1.4 No new conflicts of interest were declared.

2. Minutes of the e-meeting

2.1 The minutes of the e-meeting were circulated at the meeting and approved with no suggested amendments.

3. Matters Arising

3.1 The action regarding the Director of Finance was briefly discussed. RW reported that the interim FD is due to finish in December, a new Finance Manager has recently been appointed and the advert for a permanent FD has since been published with a closing date for applications of 30 November.

3.2 RB noted as Chair of Finance & Resources Committee that no significant risks have been identified during this period of change.

3.3 RW noted that the Director of HR and Registrar have been supporting work surrounding statutory returns and supporting the finance team during this period.

3.4 Following the cancellation of the September meeting, the Board queried whether the e-meeting which took place would count as a full meeting in accordance with the Articles of Association and the need to hold at least four meetings of the Board per year. It was agreed that

the e-meeting was understood to be a full meeting of the Board, was quorate and allowed proper discussion of the papers. The minutes of the e-meeting were briefly discussed and EvdL noted this would be discussed further at the Strategy Day on the following day.

4. Approval of recommended new governors

4.1 GR left the meeting for this item.

4.2 EvdL provided some context for the Board, outlining that following Peter Upton's resignation, as Interim Chair she had written to the Board to invite internal applications to the role of Chair. One application, from GR, had been received and an Appointment Panel had been formed to interview him.

4.3 A recruitment company had been consulted and quoted a significant figure for the recruitment of a Chair and governors. The Governance & Nominations Committee and Appointment Panel therefore recommend that Graham Raikes be appointed as Chair of the Board. The Board approved this.

4.4 EvdL confirmed that she would Chair the remainder of the meeting to ensure that the statutory returns were signed by her as Interim Chair.

4.5 GR re-joined the meeting and the Board congratulated him on his appointment.

4.6 RW briefly discussed the other proposed new governors; Alex Hawtin, Matt Evans, and Richard Stevens and the skills they would bring to the Board and sub-committees.

4.7 The Board expressed their support and confirmed the appointment of each individual in turn.

4.8 Bishop Chris Goldsmith was briefly discussed and recommended as a governor from November 2019 replacing Richard Bayly. This was agreed.

4.9 RW further proposed co-opted membership of Lindsey Hall and former Governor Prof Chris King to the Board and committees. US outlined the role of the co-optee for clarity. EvdL noted that Chris was particularly sorry to step down from the Board and was very keen to be involved further in some way. The two Board co-optees were approved.

4.10 RW also provided some context with regards to the remaining potential governors and that the Clerk would continue to arrange discussions with them, the VC and Chair. Governance & Nominations committee would then subsequently make any recommendations to fill the remaining vacancies.

5. Vice Chancellor's Report

5.1 RW noted that the University had achieved both a 5% financial surplus and an increase in quality and delivery in the last year. He thanked staff for their contribution in 'going the extra mile'.

5.2 The improved performance in the NSS by 10 places was noted as was the achievement in the Good University Guide of 10th in the UK for Student Experience and 2nd in the UK for teaching quality (1st in England).

5.3 RW provided an update on retention and recruitment figures which would be further discussed later in the meeting.

5.4 RW further outlined some key points from his report including on update on the recent Graduation ceremonies and the current strong financial position.

5.5 RW noted that there had been some rumours apparently in the city regarding Marjon being at risk of bankruptcy. He reassured the Board that the financial position is currently strong and cash reserves are also significant.

5.6 RW outlined the plans for reviewing the 'Tribal' data with the benchmarking group and the headlines including the comparative position of the University regarding energy costs per square metre and the amount of space the University has per staff and student. He would continue to update the Board on the results of the benchmarking exercise and the proposed subsequent plans.

5.7 The recent minor estates developments were noted and RW confirmed that the newly appointed DVC, Professor Michelle Jones, and Director of Estates, John Bailey, are both due to begin before the end of the year.

5.8 RW referred to his paper on fees and funding and noted that while this remains uncertain, the potential implications and financial impact continue to be modelled.

5.9 The consideration of a University Chancellor was discussed, and it was suggested that prior to Governance & Nominations Committee discussing this issue further, staff might be asked to make nominations to this role. RW agreed this would be appropriate. Following this the ToR and any proposals would be submitted to the Board for approval at a later date.

ACTION RW to take this forward. It was also suggested that staff might be thanked for their contribution to the current success of the University and RW noted that a Christmas celebration had been planned.

5.10 ACTION following one query, RW agreed to provide a further summary of data on the NSS weak areas as well as the strong.

5.11 GR noted that he recently attended the Lord Caradon Lecture at the University and the Student Ambassadors were particularly helpful, reminding the Board that the students are central to the work of the University and Marjon and are a credit to the institution.

5.12 Collaborative provision and potential new partnerships were briefly discussed and RW indicated that some meetings have taken place to this effect.

5.13 RB requested that thanks be recorded to staff, students and the Vice-Chancellor for their contribution to what has been a particularly successful year for the University.

5.14 Some recent changes in senior management at two of the local colleges were briefly discussed and some governors provided their perspective surrounding this.

5.15 SB noted that while the Board are kept well informed, some further assurance and updates surrounding student outcomes and graduate employability would be gratefully received.

ACTION for March or July a presentation to the Board from Ian Luke and Sarah Stevenson on this.

5.16 ACTION PG suggested that the internal auditors might be able to provide a credit score to further support the good news story surrounding the University and quash any continued rumours within the City.

5.17 Some queries surrounding recruitment of international students was briefly discussed and RW confirmed that while currently this is in niche areas, there would be an appetite to increase the focus on this in future, however any international partnerships would need to be carefully considered.

5.18 Research was briefly discussed and RW confirmed that once Michelle Jones, DVC commences, she will assume leadership of research at Marjon, both for the REF and the subsequent application for RDAP (Research degree awarding powers). In the case of TDAP (taught degree awarding powers), OfS has just produced a new procedure, and so we await new RDAP requirements being published. RW further noted that it is a key part of the Marjon Growth Plan that we continue to enhance our research profile. As the REF 2021 deadline closes in upon all universities, we know that our first REF submission is a significant strategic opportunity, and also

a stepping stone to the longer-term enhancement of research at Marjon

ACTION More discussion on research at the Away Day and again at future meetings of the Board, with DVC in attendance.

5.19 CG further noted that applying for research funding can be time consuming and resource intensive and the timing and pace for this needs to be considered.

6. Report on Student Retention

6.1 IL and KW joined the meeting at this point.

6.2 Data on student retention had only been received towards the end of the last week and as such the report was delivered verbally at the meeting.

6.3 IL noted 12.5% attrition in the previous year with a slight increase in the current year, largely attributed to partner students. Retention for core provision was reported at 90% and collaborative provision 80%. IL also noted improvements in some specific areas of provision.

6.4 IL provided some context surrounding partner organisations and the impact of this on overall figures for retention, recruitment and student experience, which appears to be mixed; some programmes being particularly successful, but some areas of weakness identified.

6.5 RW noted that the Internal Auditors had also been invited to undertake an audit of collaborative provision in some specific areas in the coming year.

6.6 The difference between mature students and 'standard' students was noted with retention rates lower for mature students, specifically in the first and third years.

6.7 Differences in declared disability, gender, those with parents in HE and those leaving social care, were also reported to the Board.

6.8 IL confirmed that where weaknesses in retention have been identified, work is underway to address this and further support students. IL indicated much has already been done and a number of processes are already in place which will begin to have an impact.

6.9 The end of the academic year was also identified as a key point to ensure that support remains in place for students to encourage their return into the next stage.

6.10 JS recommended some contacts for IL to engage further with those working with care leavers in the region.

6.11 IL noted that identifying the real reasons surrounding poor retention can be challenging as students will often indicate a 'simple' reason such as finances rather than more complex issues.

Progress surrounding monitoring retention and engagement was noted including the 'check-in' system.

6.12 The relationship between students who were granted unconditional offers and retention was discussed as well as those on placements.

7. Report on Student Recruitment

7.1 KW noted that the timing of this report means that the current data on recruitment is changeable. However, a 5% increase on the previous year is anticipated. A number of marketing indicators support this, including an increase in course page views, prospectus requests, Open Day bookings, and attendance at Discover Days.

7.2 The rate of conversion was queried and at which stage in the cycle prospective students withdraw their applications. KW noted that where prospective students have indicated an 'insurance' place with the University, they are highly unlikely to actually enrol and therefore the point in which the University gets 'firm accepts' is the critical point.

7.3 KW outlined the key points in the year in which recruitment figures are known, including 'decline by default days'.

7.4 The potential changes to fees and funding were also discussed and the impact this may have in terms of recruitment.

7.5 The programmes on offer were briefly discussed and it was noted that previously programmes have been based on the University's strengths and the local and regional demand, however the culture surrounding programme development continues to improve.

8. Update on Alumni

8.1 KW noted the current developments are being trialled to be launched on 1st December. This will consist of contacting alumni to request financial support towards international opportunities for students. The piloting of this project will also bring to light any challenges that could be overcome prior to a wider rollout, testing social media and the logistics.

8.2 Secondly KW introduced the idea of inviting alumni back to the University to upgrade their current degrees with a small ceremony and to invite them to make a donation or other contribution.

8.3 The Board gave their thanks to KW for her update and the progress made in this area.

9. Student Union President's Report

9.1 RR noted that the report that was circulated had been intended for the September meeting of the Board and therefore provided a verbal update.

9.2 RR noted that LB had settled in well as Deputy and was working closely with students, the student support team and others. LB had launched a sexual misconduct campaign and is working with employability on a campaign as well.

9.3 The SU team met with their Board trustees earlier in the year and noted the progress made since the turnaround Board had formed and then disbanded.

9.4 Fresher's fair social events were noted as well as new sponsorship opportunities which will include opportunities for students such as work experience.

9.5 Developing more student opportunities, more societies and enhancing student engagement are priorities for the year and the NSS results for the SU represented an improvement. Some weak scores on this were received from partner students and RR had arranged to meet with the partner students to ensure that a suitable SU provision is available for those students not based at the Marjon campus.

9.6 The role of the SU in providing academic support and advice was queried and RR reported some more work in this area. Student wellbeing is also addressed by the SU in partnership with the Chaplaincy and Student Support teams. RW also noted some additional student representation on University committees, including Senate. The Student Union would also be Chairing the Student Experience Committee going forward and IL noted other initiatives including 'ChatBack' and mid-module reviews to ensure the student voice is heard during the academic year rather than after, and ensuring rapid response.

9.7 The support provided by the SU to mature students, earlier noted as at higher risk of attrition was discussed. RR noted that the changing reputation of Student Unions, traditionally thought of as a bar or a social club, has now changed and there is now a greater focus on academic and pastoral support, something which may attract mature students.

9.8 MP reported that the Chaplaincy has grown to support mature students in their own way as well, and the LGBT society has also found a regular home in the Chapel.

9.9 RW noted the unique and particularly positive relationship between Student Support, the Student Union and the Chaplaincy.

Action Log

Minute	Action	Owner	Deadline
5.9	Staff to be invited to make nominations for the role of University Chancellor	ADT	End of January
5.10	RW agreed to provide a further summary of data on the NSS weak areas as well as the strong.	RW / IL	Next Board meeting
5.15	For March or July a presentation to the Board from Ian Luke and Sarah Stevenson surrounding student outcomes and graduate employability.	IL / SS	March or July Board meeting
5.16	PG suggested that the internal auditors might be able to provide a credit score to further support the good news story surrounding the University and quash an continued rumours within the City.	US	Immediately following the meeting
5.18	More discussion on research at the Away Day and again at future meeting of the Board.	RW/MJ	March or July meeting of the Board