



BOARD OF GOVERNORS  
Meeting 1/2019-20  
13 September 2019, Room W210

Approved minutes

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**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
Mr Geoffery Gulzar	Student Governor (SU President)	GG
Mr Alex Hawtin	Independent Governor	AH
Prof Patricia Hind	Independent Governor	PH
Mrs Victoria Holbrook	Independent Governor	VH
Bishop Nick McKinnell	Independent Governor	NM
Mr John Searson	Independent Governor	JS
Ms Michele Shoebridge	Independent Governor	MS
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**

Mrs Kate Doodson	Attendee	KD
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 5**

Mr Simon Arthurs	Finance Director	SA
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**For item 7**

Mr John Bailey	Director of Estates and IT infrastructure	JB
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**For item 8**

Mrs Lucy Pengelly	HR Director	LP
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## 1. Apologies & declarations of conflicts of interest

- 1.1 Apologies were received from Pamela Greener, Claire Gibson, Laura Butler and Richard Stevens.
- 1.2 GR reminded governors that they were invited to attend the Graduation Ceremonies and encouraged everyone to do so.
- 1.3 GR invited governors to unstar items from Part B for discussion and nothing was identified.

## 2. Minutes of the previous meeting (12 July 2019)

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

## 3. Report from the SU President

- 3.1 GG noted some new campaigns launched surrounding mental health and sexual health amongst other things. The new Students' Union (SU) Assistant had been appointed and had been working closely with GG to plan the Freshers' events.
- 3.2 GG had Chaired his first meeting of the SU Trustees and had attended some training including an Advance HE Student Governor event.
- 3.3 Following Freshers' week, an NSS action plan would be developed, and GG planned to visit the top 5 SUs in the country to identify best practice.
- 3.4 The SU would also be working with the local Police and Taxi firms to arrange for a safe and free service for students to get home after a night out.
- 3.5 GG finally noted that elections for the part time SU Deputy President position are due at the beginning of term.
- 3.6 MS drew attention to the increasing importance of SUs organising alcohol free events, both for the rising number of UK students who do not drink and to provide a credible offer for international recruitment.

## 4. Report from the Vice-Chancellor including: Student Recruitment and Chancellor proposal

- 4.1 RW noted in addition to GG's report, that the University had been approached by the Brexit Party to have a stand at the Freshers' Fayre but had been informed that no political parties were able to attend as per the University Policy.
- 4.2 The Board noted that student political societies can be formed and political events, including Hustings can be (and have been) arranged but the Freshers' Fayre does not allow for attendance by political parties.
- 4.3 Students were also being encouraged to register to vote and MP further noted that current affairs debate and discussion groups are also being introduced.
- 4.4 RW noted that approving the budget and beginning the process for appointing a Chancellor were considered the key foci for the Board meeting.
- 4.5 RW reminded the Board that Marjon has been rated 1<sup>st</sup> in England for teaching in the NSS 2019.
- 4.6 RW noted that building upon the positive results, action plans for each area, including the SU would be put in place to ensure a continued outstanding performance.

- 4.7 **ACTION** the Board requested that a commendation be given to Academics for this fantastic result.
- 4.8 RW provided a brief update regarding the political environment including the reappointment of the HE Minister, Chris Skidmore. While nothing is certain in politics at present, it looks increasingly unlikely that the Augar Review will be implemented in terms of tuition fees; although there is more appetite for a reprioritisation of the role of FE.
- 4.9 RW noted that many universities have their largest cohort in year 3, reducing into year 2 and year 1. Marjon, however, has their largest cohort at year 1, meaning that with continued good retention, the total student body was anticipated to steadily grow.
- 4.10 RW noted that the architectural team have been appointed to create the Campus Development Plan and would give a presentation at the November Board meeting.
- 4.11 Meetings with the City Council and Derriford Hospital were planned, continuing to grow the civic engagement of the University. Developing Marjon as a health and wellbeing campus was also on the agenda.
- 4.12 RW presented some key new developments 'coming soon' including: a new Food Trailer, a Women's High-Performance Football Centre, a new Arts Centre Café, the BBC Journalism centre opening, including partnerships with BBC staff.
- 4.13 The Board queried the proposed term of office for the Chancellor and RW confirmed that while the Articles determine this, an earlier 'review' point would be prudent.
- 4.14 The position surrounding the Studio School was queried and RW confirmed that the Civil Servant responsible for this had been in regular contact, and a final decision was anticipated for the Autumn, likely for HE use.
- 4.15 **ACTION** the Board recommended that the Marketing strategy surrounding Marjon becoming a key health and wellbeing centre would need to be further developed. MJ noted that work surrounding this was underway, including the Sports Centre and Sport and health partnership work.
- 4.16 VH noted that the strategy for student experience, wellbeing and recruitment would also need developing. Considering what the student profile might look like going forward would also be important for the Board to consider.
- 4.17 RW noted that the definitive recruitment figures would be known by the November meeting.
- 4.18 **ACTION** RW agreed to provide some information on the student profile, and the tailored initiatives to recruit and support those students.
- 4.19 RW noted that the entry tariff would also be updated, as students were arriving with higher grades than the University was requesting.
- 4.20 MJ noted some initiatives surrounding international, encouraging international experiences and opportunities for existing students and developing the campus and staff base, to support future plans for international recruitment.
- 4.21 RW provided an update on student recruitment figures and confirmed position remains steady from previous years, particularly in relation with the sector position.
- 4.22 The Research Excellence Framework (REF) application had been accepted with no amendments and published on the website. MJ noted some correspondence with Research England and confirmed that all eligibility requirements had been met. Preparation for the

submission was underway and almost a third of staff were able to submit, which was a good position for the Research Degree Awarding Powers (RDAP) submission as well.

4.23 New Professorial appointments were also noted, and MJ indicated that a broader research culture is developing including a researcher development series, 'brown bag' lunch meetings, an Academy Series of lectures and writing retreats running. Supervision of PGR students were also being developed.

4.24 It was also noted that the Augar Review offered no position on PG fees, which is helpful.

4.25 The strategy to manage the anticipated demographic upturn in 18-year olds was queried and RW noted that improving reputation and building a strong programme provision would be part of this. **ACTION** the Board requested this be submitted to the Board in November along with the wider marketing strategy plans.

4.26 JS noted some links with Chinese teachers who have worked with Marjon previously and would be keen to do so again. NM noted that the Anglican community could also support the University further.

4.27 It was noted that MJ had undertaken a significant amount of work in this area.

4.28 Finally, the IHRA definition for antisemitism was set within a wider context of opposition to discrimination – Plymouth Marjon University readily endorses the IHRA statement on anti-Semitism. Our opposition to anti-Semitism is set within the context of our equal opposition to all forms of racism and related hate crime.

## 5. To receive and approve the updated and final budget for 2019/20 - Including Approval of SU grant in budget

5.1 SA joined the meeting and gave thanks to Richard Bayly and Alex Hawtin as the former and current Chair of Finance Committee and for the advice and support given.

5.2 SA noted the year-end and budget work that has been undertaken working with the Executive Dean and Pro Vice-Chancellor on the student recruitment figures and associated income.

5.3 SA noted that work surrounding this had been delayed and in future the budget would be set much earlier in the year.

5.4 Financial liability and risks surrounding Brexit were discussed as this was not outlined in the budget report. SA confirmed that conversations surrounding this were underway with key suppliers including catering. Some stockpiling was also happening.

5.5 SA noted the recommendation from SMT and F&R for the revenue budget to be approved at a break-even position. This would be reviewed again once student figures were confirmed in November and prior to the submission to the OfS in December.

5.6 MJ noted the Marjon Ambition Programme was due to be formally launched this month to review the efficiency and effectiveness surrounding the work of the University.

5.7 Cost cutting, and scenarios were queried, and SA provided assurance that there are credible plans and back-ups in place. Staffing provision was queried, and SA confirmed that this would of course fit in with a wider HR and People Strategy developed and led by HR. Supporting staff in development and training onsite would continue to be a priority.

5.8 LTW noted that as the Professional Services Governor she hoped that professional staff would

- be treated equally to Academic staff with regard to recruitment and replacement of staff as needed. MJ confirmed that academic staffing provision would be reviewed in the same way but teaching staff would need to be replaced more urgently to support timetabled requirements.
- 5.9 SA noted that the internal auditors had requested that the SU grant allocation was formally approved (as a separate line in the budget) on an annual basis. The SU Grant allocation was therefore noted and **APPROVED**.
- 5.10 This had increased on previous years but reduced in cash terms due to the resignation of the elected Deputy President and consequent recruitment from the alumni of a University staff member who was seconded to the SU to work with the President, as the best quick solution to this staffing shortfall. RW noted that the bar and Sports Federation were also funded by the University but not through the SU directly.
- 5.11 Benchmarking was felt to be of value and a Chief Executive role to the SU was also suggested for consideration.
- 5.12 **ACTION** RW confirmed a benchmarking report and review of finances would be submitted to a future meeting.
- 5.13 SA outlined the capital planning budget and noted the process for review through SMT working with the Estates Director. The depreciation allocation would also be considered further.
- 5.14 The revenue budget was noted and **APPROVED**.
- 5.15 The capital budget was noted and **APPROVED** at a £1.95million capital allocation for 2019/20.
- 5.16 **ACTION** SA requested that staff governors meet with SA to ensure communications regarding the budget were accurate.

## 6. Annual Chaplaincy Report

- 6.1 MP noted that the Chaplaincy staff were preparing for the new term and the Chapel continued to be a safe place for staff and students alike as well as offering signposting for other areas.
- 6.2 EvdL noted these successes, including the 'Heart of the University' award being given to Michelle Parkman.

## 7. Estates Development Update

- 7.1 JB joined the meeting and confirmed that Architype had been appointed as the Architect to develop the Campus Development Plan. They had demonstrated significant HE experience and were considered best in England for sustainability and energy performance. They had been appointed following the receipt of 31 tender returns and a full procurement route compliant with EU regulations.
- 7.2 JB noted that some staff had been involved with the interview process and confirmed that the contract value was £204,000, based on the original budget of £200,000.
- 7.3 Stage 1 had commenced until the end of the year, consisting of high level consultation and an opportunity for the Estates Group to meet with Architype. Stakeholder mapping and consultation with those identified will also take place.
- 7.4 Stage 2 (from January 2020-March 2020) would be the development of the Campus Development plan itself and stage 3 would consist of taking forward the plan to ensure that

the University's needs were met, with the 10-year development plan ready for approval to take forward in line with the Growth Plan and aspirations.

7.5 LTW noted a hugely exciting plan for the long-term campus development and noted that open mindedness and aspiration will be needed.

## 8. Staff Survey report

- 8.1 LP joined the meeting and outlined the key areas for improvement within the staff survey results, while reminding Governors that the overall results are sector-leading. This included issues surrounding stress levels and discrimination - in terms of role and position.
- 8.2 LP noted that there are a number of initiatives in place to support health and wellbeing and counselling and support services for staff. Wellness action plans are also due to be delivered. Further development of the 'NeverOk' campaign was underway and had been opened up to allow staff to raise concerns and additional 'Balance' programmes are also in place.
- 8.3 An increase from 40% to 68% in the staff survey surrounding the University 'caring for staff health and wellbeing' was noted but LP suggested there was still room for further improvement.
- 8.4 The Academic Workload Allocation Model (AWAM) was also due to be reviewed and a consultation opened surrounding this.
- 8.5 LP noted that the flexible working offer was good but would be revisited to ensure staff felt supported.
- 8.6 The rewards and recognition plans would also be reviewed as part of the people strategy to ensure that staff felt valued.
- 8.7 Mental health training was queried, and LP noted that there had been some online mental health training offered and some sessions for key staff, however a widescale training opportunity for staff was planned.
- 8.8 The Board queried the level of cultural shift in terms of a review of staffing and change management in relation to reported stress. LP noted a gradual and positive shift and a move from the 'HR' to 'People' focused Strategy.
- 8.9 **ACTION** the Board requested some insight into the People Strategy and vision and how this fits with the EDI (equality diversity inclusion) strategy. LP confirmed that she would consult with governors accordingly.
- 8.10 The Board further noted the Anglican heritage and values of the University should be embedded in the People Strategy.

## 9. Handbook for Governors

- 9.1 US noted the draft document for annual review and approval. Specifically, the Board and Committee Chairs and Deputies and the committee Terms of Reference required approval.
- 9.2 The Board **APPROVED** the ToRs and Chairs for the new Academic year.

## 10. AoB

- 10.1 As this was RB's final Board meeting, GR thanked him for his contribution and RB offered some reflections from his time on the Board.

## Part B – for information only

### **11. Matters Arising**

11.1 Matters arising were received for information with no queries.

### **12. Minutes of sub-committees**

12.1 Minutes were received for information with no queries.

### **13. Report on legal**

13.1 This report was received for information with no queries.