

## University of Central Lancashire

### Unreserved Minutes of the Board Meeting Held on 29 June 2023 commencing on the rising of the Foundation Trust Meeting in the Student Centre, Preston Campus

#### Present:

David Taylor (Chair)

Fiona Armstrong*	Ruth Lowry*
Graham Baldwin	Anne McCarthy
Jon Baldwin	Lorraine Norris
Luke Fitzgerald	Raham Odjegba
Sue Ion	Lis Smith
Lesley Lloyd	Mike Tynan

#### Also in attendance:

Ian Allison (Executive Director of Digital Transformation) - for Item UB1144  
Lisa Brooks (Governance and Compliance Manager)  
George Charles (Chief Finance Officer)  
Ruth Connor (Deputy Chief Executive)  
StJohn Crean (Pro Vice-Chancellor, Research and Enterprise) - for Items UB1138 and UB1139  
Ian Fisher (University Secretary and General Counsel and Clerk to the Board)  
Carolyn Johnson (Executive Officer to the Vice-Chancellor)  
Ken Lee (Chief People Officer)  
Mike Sheppard (Interim Director of Estates and Sustainability) - for Item UB1137

\*via video conference

#### **UB1126. Welcome and Apologies**

The Chair welcomed all present, including the SU President Elect, Luke Fitzgerald, who was attending his first Board meeting.

Apologies for absence had been received from Ridwanah Gurjee and Richard Hext. Comments received would be passed to the relevant Vice-Chancellor's Group ('VCG') member(s) and/or fed into the Board's discussions.

#### **UB1127. Declaration of Interests**

There were no further interests, in addition to those previously declared and recorded in the Register.

#### **UB1128. Chair's Announcements**

There were no Chair's announcements.

#### **UB1129. Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting held on 25 April 2023**

The Unreserved Minutes of the meeting held on 25 April 2023 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair. There were no Reserved Minutes on this occasion.

#### **UB1130. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising not covered elsewhere on the agenda of the meeting.

#### **UB1131. Vice-Chancellor's Report**

The Vice-Chancellor presented his report, a copy of which is set out in the Minute Book.

Professor Baldwin stated that the report was largely self-explanatory and proceeded to highlight the following key points:

(i) *Office for Students ('OfS')*

The University had received a letter from the OfS, following the planned outreach visit to the Preston Campus. This confirmed that next year's investigations would focus on partnerships, particularly the management of domestic partnerships and sub-contractual arrangements. UCLan had robust quality assurance arrangements in place across a range of long-standing partnerships with FE colleges and would, therefore, be well positioned in the event of an investigation.

(ii) *Overseas Visit*

Professor Baldwin had recently returned from attending the graduation ceremonies at UCLan's partner institutions in China. There had been impressive progress at Hebei and Hunan Normal Universities, delivering degrees in collaboration with UCLan in the creative industries and sport/physical education, respectively.

#### **Text Redacted - Reserved Minute**

It was suggested that it would be helpful to facilitate a presentation/workshop for Board members on the University's range of partnerships and how they were managed.

(iii) *Industrial Relations*

Across the sector, the impact of industrial relations disputes was becoming increasingly significant. Fortunately, UCLan had not been too adversely impacted by the marking and assessment boycott and all finalists would graduate on time with a classification. The situation was challenging for the sector, with action taken against one university which had entered into an agreement with its local UCU branch in contravention of the principles of national bargaining.

(iv) *Complete University Guide*

The University ranked 99<sup>th</sup> out of 130 institutions in the Complete University Guide, maintaining the same position as last year despite improvements in 7 metrics, including Graduate Prospects. These metrics highlighted the need to improve in the areas of continuation and completion which had been impacted by increasing competition and the cost-of-living crisis, and further analysis was underway.

(v) **Text Redacted - Reserved Minute**

(vi) **Text Redacted - Reserved Minute**

(vii) *Artificial Intelligence*

Professor Baldwin acknowledged Mrs Lloyd's enquiry about UCLan's response to Artificial Intelligence ('AI') and summarised the various initiatives that were intended to maximise the potential of AI whilst minimising any threats to academic integrity. These included the establishment of special interest group with representation from LIS, the approval of a UCLan position statement by the Students and Teaching Committee and issuing guidance for staff and students. The impact of AI would continue to be monitored via the Risk Register.

(viii) **Text Redacted - Reserved Minute**

(ix) *UCLan Highlights*

Finally, Professor Baldwin highlighted a number of news stories, alongside award wins and other successes during the period, which had been achieved notwithstanding the challenges facing the sector.

**Resolved:** That:-

- (i) the Vice-Chancellor be thanked for his detailed report; and
- (ii) a presentation/workshop be arranged for Board members on the operation of partnership activities.

**UB1132. Text Redacted - Reserved Minute**

**UB1133. Text Redacted - Reserved Minute**

**UB1134. Text Redacted - Reserved Minute**

**UB1135. Text Redacted - Reserved Minute**

**UB1136. 2024/25 Tuition Fees Policy**

A copy of the Tuition Fees Policy 2024/25 was received, as set out in the Minute Book.

The Chief Finance Officer reported that the changes for 2024/25 were minimal and incremental, ahead of a comprehensive review of the Policy in 2024. The Policy had been agreed by the Resources Committee at its meeting on 12 June 2023.

**Resolved:** That as recommended by the Resources Committee, the 2024/25 Tuition Fees Policy be noted and approved.

**UB1137. Text Redacted - Reserved Minute**

**UB1138. Text Redacted - Reserved Minute**

**UB1139. Research Integrity Annual Statement**

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Research & Enterprise) presented the Research Integrity Annual Statement for 2022-23, a copy of which is set out in the Minute Book.

In summarising the report which was designed to comply with the requirements of the Concordat to Support Research Integrity (2019), Professor Crean highlighted the following:

*(i) Promotion of Research Integrity*

Measures were in place to promote research integrity at UCLan, including a suite of policies and procedures which were disseminated through staff and student induction, a programme of training and development in relation to research integrity and ethics, and membership of a number of external bodies including the UK Research Integrity Office.

*(ii) Governance Structure*

A clear governance structure was in place to support research integrity, whereby several sub-committees including the Animal Welfare Review Board reported into the University's Research, Knowledge Exchange and Ethics Committee which, in turn, had oversight of relevant University strategies.

*(iii) Changes and Developments*

Recent developments had taken place to ensure the maintenance of standards and compliance with the most up to date legislative requirements, including new quality management systems to manage compliance with the Human Tissue Act and the Animals (Scientific Procedures) Act.

*(iv) Research Misconduct*

There were robust policies and procedures for dealing with incidents of research misconduct, including mechanisms to implement lessons learned from investigations. There had been no formal research misconduct investigations at UCLan in 2022/23.

Members thanked Professor Crean for his report and Dr Smith noted the need to include reference to the use and potential misuse of Artificial Intelligence in relevant research policies and procedures.

**Resolved:** That the Research Integrity Annual Statement 2022/23 be approved for publication on the external Research Integrity webpages in September 2023 and submission to the Research Integrity Secretariat.

**UB1140. Annual Report of the Students' Union**

The President of the Students' Union ('SU') presented the Annual Report of the SU to the University Board, a copy of which is set out in the Minute Book.

Mr Odjegba summarised the key elements of the report under three substantive headings as follows:

*(i) Update on SU Recommendations to VCG for 2022/23*

The work undertaken by the International Task Force to improve the international student experience in the areas of finance, accommodation, academic integrity and English language ability was recognised. The SU was committed to supporting the further work required to assist international students, now this had been embedded into the University's governance structure.

The outcomes of the institutional review of racism and antisemitism were welcomed, along with the University's commitment to achieve the Race Equality Charter and deliver antiracism training to staff. The SU looked forward working with the EDI Committee to support this ongoing activity.

The SU welcomed the University's commitment to achieve the Student Mental Health Charter and looked forward to continued involvement in the various work streams.

*(ii) Progress against SU Strategic Themes*

Various activities had been undertaken to support students with the cost of living crisis, including working with the University to distribute additional hardship funds and launching the Community Fridge project.

Good progress had been made in enhancing the experience of black and ethnic minority, international and disabled students. The SU wished to acknowledge the excellent work in supporting disabled students achieved through collaboration between the SU Education and Welfare Vice-Presidents with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students and Teaching), around providing an inclusive learning environment and implementing reasonable adjustments.

The aim to amplify the student voice had been boosted by the Student Engagement Project and the appointment of a SU Schools Engagement Officer. Interventions had focused on five disengaged Schools, and overall levels of student engagement and empowerment had improved.

The Course Rep system had been enhanced and clarified, to foster a stronger bond between academic leads and students, leading to an increase in volunteers. Activities had been planned with the Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students and Teaching) to promote and embed the changes.

The SU had begun to develop its next Strategic Plan with a streamlined focus on the two specific areas of amplifying the student voice and enhancing student life, which contributed to the SU's mission 'to make student life the best it can be'. This would involve ensuring strong foundations in the areas of: EDI; empowerment; social enterprise; smart working; and good governance. Input and feedback from the University was welcomed in relation to the new Strategic Plan.

*(iii) Recommendations for VCG for 2023/24*

The SU President proposed a number of recommendations for the VCG to take forward in 2023/24 in collaboration with the SU, including: further work to improve the international student experience; supporting students with the cost of living; involving the SU in the catering review with a focus on diversifying and providing low cost options; maintaining momentum in the work on anti-racism and antisemitism under the new Director of EDI, including work towards the Race Equality Charter; maximising the impact of student feedback; and promoting the work of the SU.

The Chair thanked the SU for a positive and constructive report and re-affirmed the Board's commitment to continue to strengthen its relationship with the SU.

Members expressed thanks to Mr Odjegba for his contribution to the Board and best wishes for the future, as his term of office as SU President was coming to an end.

**Resolved:** That:

- (i) the Students' Union report be noted and the recommendation from the Resources Committee regarding SU funding be endorsed; and
- (ii) the key recommendations for VCG for the 2023/24 academic year be accepted.

**UB1141. Academic Board Annual Assurance Report**

A copy of the Academic Board Annual Assurance Report was received, as set out in the Minute Book. Professor Baldwin explained that the report was self-explanatory and would be taken as read.

The purpose of the report was to provide assurance to the University Board that the Academic Board had fulfilled the key responsibilities delegated to it through the Articles of Government and that effective academic governance was in place.

The report detailed how the Academic Board and its sub-committees had: (i) monitored and contributed to implementation of the University's Strategic Plan 2021-

2028 and associated sub-strategies; (ii) ensured compliance with the Office for Students ongoing conditions of registration, including those conditions relating to quality and standards; and (iii) reviewed emerging strategic issues to inform decision making.

It was noted that Mr Baldwin and Mrs Lowry had recently been nominated by the University Board to attend the Academic Board as a further method of providing assurance.

**Resolved:** That the report be approved as -

- (i) an accurate reflection of the business conducted through the Academic Governance structure during 2022/23; and
- (ii) providing appropriate assurance to the University Board that the Academic Board and its Sub-Committees had fulfilled the key responsibilities delegated to them.

#### **UB1142. Gender Pay Gap**

A copy of a report analysing the gender pay gap figures at UCLan for 2023 was received, as set out in the Minute Book.

The Chief People Officer reported that public sector employers had been required to publish their gender pay gap figures since March 2018. The gender pay gap was an aggregated comparison of male and female hourly pay, regardless of job role, rather than a question of whether men and women were receiving comparable pay for comparable work, which was covered by separate Equal Pay legislation.

The University's figures for the 2023 reporting round showed a 9.08% (mean) and 8.26% (median) gender pay gap. This could be attributed in part to the disproportionate number of men in more highly paid roles and a tendency for successful male applicants to negotiate higher starting salaries.

Mr Lee commented that the figures showed positive development since the previous year and compared reasonably well with the sector and with the national picture. However, there were no grounds for complacency and a series of actions had been identified within the context of the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy, focusing on: recruitment and development of female colleagues; reviewing the workload model and blended working policies; and supporting women to apply for senior positions.

Members thanked Mr Lee for the report and concurred that the University needed to continue to improve in this area.

**Resolved:** That the report on the Gender Pay Gap be noted and that the actions be approved to facilitate further improvement.

#### **UB1143. Staff Survey 2023**

The Chief People Officer presented a report on the results of the Staff Survey 2023, a copy of which is set out in the Minute Book.

Mr Lee confirmed that the report was self-explanatory and would be taken as read. In briefly summarising the report, he noted that there had been a steady improvement in most key performance indicators by comparison with previous surveys, notwithstanding the challenges currently facing the sector.

Priorities for action had been identified at both a local and University level in the areas of: (i) managing workload and stress; (ii) communicating a clear and motivating future vision; and (iii) giving confidence that action would be taken as a result of the survey.

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**Resolved:** That the main outcomes from the Staff Survey 2023 be noted and the priorities for action be endorsed.

**UB1144. Text Redacted - Reserved Minute**

**UB1145. Safety, Health and Environment Policy**

A copy of the latest version of the Safety, Health and Environment Policy was received, as set out in the Minute Book.

The aim of the Policy was to reinforce the University's commitment to reduce accidents and ill health to a minimum, achieve excellence in environmental sustainability and strive for continual improvement.

Members agreed to take the Policy as read.

**Resolved:** That the Safety, Health and Environment Policy be noted.

**UB1146. Board Appointments**

The Clerk to the Board reported that the Governance, Risk and Nominations Committee ('GRNC') had considered the need to formalise the terms of office of four Board members, namely, Mr Baldwin, Dr Smith and Mr Tynan who had now almost completed their probationary year, and Mr Hext who was nearing the end of his current term. The reason for the report at this time being that the existing terms of office of all four members expired prior to the September meeting of the Board.

Mr Fisher also asked the Board to consider a proposal to defer the appointment of Dr Ion as Chair to 1 November 2023. This would give Mr Taylor more time to seek to oversee the discussions about the future of the Cyprus Campus, given his close involvement to date in this complex matter. Accordingly, it was noted that his term of office extended to the end of October 2023.

**Resolved:** That

- (i) Mr J Baldwin, Dr Smith and Mr Tynan be appointed for a substantive term of three years with effect from 1 September 2023 as recommended by the GRNC;
- (ii) Mr Hext be appointed for a final term of two years with effect from 20 September 2023, as recommended by the GRNC; and



- (iii) the formal appointment of Dr Ion as Chair of the Board be deferred from 1 September to 1 November 2023 and Mr Taylor remain as a member and Chair of the Board until 31 October 2023.

## **UB1147. Committee Chair's Updates**

### **(i) Audit Committee**

Mrs Lowry briefly updated the Board on items considered by the Audit Committee at its meeting on 7 June 2023.

There had been a useful discussion about the role of Committee members in terms of governance and oversight of risk and the provision of assurance that actions had been taken following each audit. This had resulted in a number of points of procedure being clarified.

The Committee had considered the outcomes of the two most recent internal audits on Physical Security and Secure Remote Working & Operational Resilience. RSM had concluded that reasonable assurance could be given and had made recommendations for further enhancements.

With regard to the external audit plan and strategy, the Committee had considered the impact of two new auditing standards and noted that the risk profile remained largely consistent.

### **(ii) Governance, Risk and Nominations Committee**

The Clerk to the Board gave an update on the items considered by the Governance, Risk and Nominations Committee at its meeting on 12 June 2023.

These included updates on the University's OfS regulatory compliance which did not raise any particular matters of concern, and on the latest review of the Risk Register, including an update on the finance position and student recruitment.

The Committee also addressed the ongoing process of succession planning for the Board for a new staff member and independents. It was hoped that recommendations would be presented to the Board at its meeting in September.

### **(iii) Resources Committee**

Dr Ion briefly updated the Board on items considered by the Resources Committee at its meeting on 12 June 2023.

The Committee had endorsed a proposal to constitute an IP/Commercialisation Panel. Mr Fisher confirmed that he had since spoken with prospective members of the Panel and would aim to convene the inaugural meeting over the summer, with a view to reporting to the next meeting of the Committee.

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**UB1148. Any Other Business**

The Chair thanked Fiona Armstrong for her 10 years of service to the Board and wished her well for the future.

**UB1149. Date and Time of the Next Meeting**

The next meeting would take place at 5.00pm on 21 September 2023 in the Student Centre at the Preston Campus.

**Ian Fisher  
Clerk to the Board**