

**University of Central Lancashire**

**Minutes of the Board Meeting Held on 21 September 2023 at 5.00pm in the Student Centre, Preston Campus**

**Present:**

David Taylor (Chair)

Graham Baldwin  
Jon Baldwin  
Luke Fitzgerald  
Ridwanah Gurjee  
Sue Ion

Lesley Lloyd  
Ruth Lowry  
Anne McCarthy  
Lorraine Norris  
Lis Smith

**Also in attendance:**

Lisa Brooks (Governance and Compliance Manager)  
George Charles (Chief Finance Officer)  
Ruth Connor (Deputy Chief Executive)  
Ian Fisher (University Secretary and General Counsel and Clerk to the Board)  
Andrew Ireland (Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning & Teaching)) - for Item UB1156  
Carolyn Johnson (Executive Officer to the Vice-Chancellor)  
Ken Lee (Chief People Officer)

**UB1150. Welcome and Apologies**

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

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

**UB1151. Declaration of Interests**

Mr Taylor, Professor Baldwin and Mr Charles declared their non-financial interests as directors of UCLan Cyprus Limited.

**UB1152. Chair's Announcements**

(i) *Reserved Minute - Text Redacted*

(ii) *Outgoing Chair*

Professor Baldwin wished to acknowledge that this was Mr Taylor's last Board meeting as his 10-year tenure as Chair came to an end. This would be formally recognised by a tribute at the end of the meeting.

Dr Ion added that Mr Taylor had been an unparalleled champion for the University and the city of Preston, whose expertise had steered the University through challenging times to create a stable environment. On behalf of the Board, she expressed enormous gratitude to Mr Taylor and acknowledged the significant impact of his work on the success of the University and its impressive campus.

**UB1153. Reserved and Unreserved Minutes of the University Board Meeting held on 29 June 2023**

The Unreserved and Reserved Minutes of the meeting held on 29 June 2023 were agreed as a true record and signed by the Chair.

**UB1154. Matters Arising**

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

**UB1155. 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 developments:

(i) *Reserved Minute - Text Redacted*

(ii) *Teaching Excellence Framework ("TEF") Results*

Having made a strong submission, the University had now been awarded an overall TEF rating of Silver. This was an excellent result which acknowledged the University's diverse mix of students and courses and provided a strong foundation for further work ahead of TEF 2027.

(iii) *Reserved Minute - Text Redacted*

(iv) *Reserved Minute - Text Redacted*

(v) *Reinforced Autoclave Aerated Concrete (RAAC)*

An assessment of all University buildings had been commissioned following recent news reports about RAAC and an update was expected shortly.

(vi) *Research*

The UK now had access to Horizon Europe research funding which was good news for the sector.

(vii) *Knowledge Exchange Framework ("KEF")*

The KEF was designed to assess how HE providers worked with business and other partners to ensure that knowledge was used for the benefit of the economy and society. UCLan had been assessed within Cluster E, as a large university with a broad discipline portfolio, and the recent results were very positive.

The University performed at or above average in its cluster for six of the seven perspectives and had demonstrated "very high engagement" in the areas of: *Continuous Professional Development ("CPD") and graduate start-ups; Local growth and regeneration; and Working with the public and third sector*, being one of only three universities within the cluster to be put in the top tier for this area.

The University was also in the top 20% nationally for: *Local growth and regeneration; Skills, enterprise and entrepreneurship; and Working with the public and third sector*. It was intended to publicise these positive outcomes once the embargo had been lifted.

**Resolved:** That the Vice-Chancellor be thanked for his detailed report and that the positive TEF and KEF results be commended.

## **UB1156. Access and Participation Plan Update**

*Professor Andrew Ireland, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students & Teaching), joined the meeting for item UB1156.*

The Pro Vice-Chancellor (Students & Teaching) presented an update report on the implementation of the University's Access and Participation Plan (APP), including a summary of changes in the Office for Students (OfS) approach. A copy of the report is included in the Minute Book.

Professor Ireland explained that Access and Participation was divided into three areas, namely: access; student success; and student progression. The University data revealed a mixed picture in terms of performance, which was unsurprising given the breadth and complexity of the student population. Three priorities for the 2023/24 cycle had been identified based on analysis of the data, as follows:

- (i) Monitoring outcomes for IMD quintile 1 students, with the implementation of increased financial support in recognition of the cost-of-living crisis. With reference to the socio-economic data, Professor Ireland noted in particular that the progression gap between IMD quintiles 1 and 5 had increased to 12.1pp and was statistically significant.
- (ii) The Black/White attainment gap which had improved marginally but remained a priority. With reference to the ethnicity data, Professor Ireland added that

the continuation and completion gaps were small, although the former was close to the OfS threshold, and that progression recorded a negative gap, with black students performing better following graduation.

- (iii) Continuation and completion for mature students was a priority, given that the continuation rate for mature students had declined across the sector and was recorded at 78.2% at UCLan, which fell below the OfS threshold.

With reference to the disability data, the continuation gap had narrowed to 1.4% and the progression gap had narrowed to 1.8% which was lower than the sector average. In response to an enquiry, Professor Ireland clarified that neurodiversity was not specifically addressed in the APP, although it did form an important part of the University's broader EDI strategy.

With reference to student progression, the rate of progression had increased to 88.8% of UCLan graduates in employment, however, the rate of improvement in high skilled employment was below the sector average due, in part, to the region.

Professor Ireland summarised the key outreach activities being progressed to promote access and raise aspirations to progress to higher education, including: the School University Network; the Go ahead and Collaborative Outreach programmes; the Lancashire Science Festival; the Young Scientist Centre; and the UCLan Scholars programme. He welcomed Mrs McCarthy's observation that each of the graduate awards at the Cyprus Campus was sponsored by a local business.

Dr Ion pursued the specific steps that were being taken to address the priority areas identified for 2023/24. Professor Ireland responded that in relation to student success, the University had set a strategic priority around retention and achievement, involving planned interventions across the whole student lifecycle, underpinned by a support system with strengthened links between academic and professional services and an enhanced data infrastructure. A range of initiatives were intended to address these strategic priorities alongside the APP priorities, including the following:

- (i) The new Personal Tutor scheme was designed to enable the early identification of students requiring support and referral into specialist support, including Achievement Coaches.
- (iii) The creation of the new Student Achievement Services was designed to remove barriers by bringing together key student-facing services, and to facilitate working in partnership with students in line with the commitments within the Student Charter.
- (iv) The Centre for Collaborative Learning was working with the EDI team to design inclusive approaches to learning and teaching, and to ensure that bespoke support was embedded within the curriculum.

In conclusion, Professor Ireland explained that the APP included an agreed level of financial investment which was reported annually to the OfS. In 2022/23 this had included: £1.4m investment in access activities; significant investment in financial support and hardship totalling £6.3m; and support for disabled students at £1.5m.

Moving forwards, the OfS had published new guidance for the authoring of APPs which was linked to the new Equality of Opportunity Risk Register ("EORR"). Workshops had been arranged with Deans of School within the new academic structure, to learn from best practice and ensure this was embedded in delivery plans.

Whilst acknowledging the significant investment in a range of excellent initiatives, Dr Smith enquired about impact and the extent to which the University could be assured that this was making a real difference to learners and ensuring the best outcomes. Professor Ireland acknowledged that, given the diverse range of issues and approaches at UCLan, ongoing evaluation was necessary to ensure real value, including focus group activities in collaboration with the Students' Union. Extensive work was being carried out around EDI and creating a sense of belonging and around the Mental Health Charter. It was pertinent to note that access and participation becoming more mainstream concerns, when UCLan's strategy had always been focused on widening access and success.

Mr J Baldwin added that in seeking to make Access and Participation more mainstream, it was important to consider UCLan's strategy and community, with the aim of fostering connections and understanding between staff and the demographic of students that the University was seeking to attract. Mr Fitzgerald agreed with his point, noting that the SU had been asking questions, with a view to matching students with someone they could relate to and framing this as "re-presentation".

Members noted the challenges faced by mature students, many of whom had jobs, and the value of speaking directly with those students. Professor Ireland responded that the University endeavoured to timetable classes at reasonable times, to set clear expectations around attendance from the outset and to speak with students through the Students' Union, to understand their lived experiences.

**Resolved:** that the Access and Participation Plan Update be noted.

**UB1157. Reserved Minute - Text Redacted**

**UB1158. Reserved Minute - Text Redacted**

**UB1159. Reserved Minute - Text Redacted**

**UB1160. Ethnicity Pay Gap Reporting**

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

The Chief People Officer reported that there was no statutory obligation on HE providers to publish ethnicity pay gap figures. However, in the interests of good practice and in line with its commitment to inclusivity, the University had drawn together figures showing the ethnicity pay gap over the last 3 academic years.

Mr Lee clarified that the ethnicity pay gap was not about equal pay for the same level of work, rather it was about the distribution of colleagues across different grades and the extent to which certain protected characteristics were represented at senior levels.

Overall, the figures were broadly in line with the limited amount of external data available and the gradual decline in the mean and median pay gap was encouraging. Nevertheless, there were no grounds for complacency and the University would continue to address the disparity in the context of its People and EDI Strategies.

Members thanked Mr Lee for the report and welcomed the University's commitment to continuous improvement in this area.

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

### **UB1161. Safeguarding Update**

The Clerk to the Board reported that there was an increasing expectation from sector regulators for governing bodies to appoint one or two members to take the lead in having strategic oversight of specific areas of interest.

Following discussion with the Chair and Chair Designate, it was proposed that Ruth Lowry and Jon Baldwin be appointed as Board Champions for Safeguarding and Prevent respectively. These were areas of growing importance, overseen by Ofsted and the OfS.

Mr Fisher gave assurances that, having adopted a holistic approach, the University had robust policies, procedures and structures in place to ensure the safety and wellbeing of its community and to fulfil its responsibilities in relation to Safeguarding and Prevent.

The Annual Prevent Assurance Report would be presented at the next meeting of the Board as part of the normal annual reporting cycle, including an update on the implementation of the University's Safeguarding Policies and the Annual Prevent Accountability Statement, as required by the OfS.

In the meantime, subject to the agreement of the Board, a briefing would be arranged for Ruth Lowry and Jon Baldwin with the relevant Executive Leads for Safeguarding and Prevent.

**Resolved:** that the proposed appointment of Ruth Lowry and Jon Baldwin as University Board Leads for Safeguarding and Prevent respectively, be approved and that a briefing session would be arranged with the relevant Executive Leads.

### **UB1162. Annual Report of the Clerk to the Board**

Mr Fisher presented the Annual Report of the Clerk to the Board, a copy of which is set out in the Minute Book.

With reference to the Register of Interests (Appendix D), Mr Fisher urged members to complete and return their forms for 2023/24 as soon as possible and thanked those who had already done so.

With reference to the Register of Membership (Appendix B), Mr Fisher updated the Board on the recruitment process which was currently underway. There were three

strong candidates for the role of Independent Governor, two of whom had attended an interview with members of the Governance, Risk and Nominations Committee (GRNC). Having formed the view that these were exceptional candidates who performed strongly at interview and would add significant value to the Board, the GRNC wished to recommend to the Board that Jim Carter and Khalil Rehman be appointed as Independent Governors, subject to a formal induction and period of probation.

Dr Ion confirmed that Jim Carter and Khalil Rehman were both impressive candidates with significant non-executive experience across a number of enterprises, who would bring new skills that were different from those currently represented on the Board. Jim Carter had expertise in property management, construction and sustainability and an interest in the spectrum of education from apprenticeships to degrees. Khalil Rehman had a breadth of experience and across IT, research, teaching and audit and as a member of the Board of the East Lancashire Health Trust. Importantly, both candidates had a clear understanding of the distinct role of a non-executive director. Accordingly, the Board are recommended to appoint both as Governors.

In the meantime, arrangements were being made for the GRNC to interview the third candidate for the post of Independent Governor and the three members of academic staff shortlisted by the Academic Board, for the vacant post of Teacher Governor. Subject to the recommendation of GRNC, approval would be sought via written resolution to appoint these candidates as Governors, with a view to inviting them to attend the residential meeting of the Board in November.

With reference to the Statement of Primary Responsibilities (Appendix A) and the Committee Terms of Reference (Appendix C), Dr Ion commended these as important governance documents which clarified the duties and boundaries of Board members.

Finally, with reference to the planned Governance Effectiveness Review ("GER"), Dr Ion reported that she had asked Jim Edney to provide a degree of independence to the process given that he was no longer a member of the Board but had significant experience of the University. The next step would be for Mr Fisher to draw up draft terms of reference which would be presented to a future meeting of the Board for approval.

**Resolved:** That:-

- (i) the Clerk's Annual Report be noted;
- (ii) Jim Carter and Khalil Rehman be appointed as Independent Governors with effect from 9 November 2023, subject to the standard 12 month probation period, as recommended by the GRNC;
- (iii) arrangements be made to interview the third candidate for the post of Independent Governor and the candidates for the post of Teacher Governor and, if successful, their proposed appointments be considered by the written resolution procedure; and
- (iv) Mr Fisher would prepare draft terms of reference for the Governance Effective Review (GER), to be presented at a future meeting of the Board for approval.

**UB1163. Any Other Business**

Dr Ion stressed that it was important to resolve the position of the Chair of T2000, bearing in mind that Mr Tynan had since been appointed as Chair of the Resources Committee. Professor Baldwin reported that two new Directors had been appointed to T2000 and the position of the Chair would be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The Chair commended the results of the KEF and advised that this should act as a catalyst for greater proactivity in dealings with local businesses in seeking to turn connections into activities.

**UB1164. Date and Time of the Next Meeting**

The next meeting would take place on 23 November 2023 at The Belsfield Hotel, Bowness-on-Windermere, Cumbria.

**Ian Fisher**  
**Clerk to the Board**